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**The Closet Door: The Gateway to the Self?
Fashion, Identity, and Self-Expression**

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**A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Sociology and Anthropology**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

The Closet Door: The Gateway to the Self? Fashion, Identity, and Self-Expression

Jennifer McLeod

This study explores the relationship between the decisions we make surrounding fashion, our sense of 'self,' and our attempts at self-expression through fashion. This thesis is based on the premise that material items and first impressions or appearances are important in our culture. Referring to postmodern theories of identity and symbolic interactionist approaches to the self, I will argue that our sense of 'self' is continuously developed through social experiences, and that the decisions we make about fashion are shaped by this sense of 'self.' With fashion we choose to either express our sense of 'self,' and/or display a 'desired self.' This is done by working with cultural codes established in part by the mainstream fashion industry. Included in this relationship is a discussion of the dialectical process of choosing between distinction and conformity when dealing with pressures from the mainstream fashion industry. Participant observation and a series of interviews will both support and add to this theoretical argument, as well as outline the continuous shift between expressing our sense of 'self' and displaying our 'desired self.'

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I was also lucky to have peers such as Andrea, Bill, and Jan to push me when I needed a push, and to calm me down when I was panicked.

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*I dedicate this thesis to anyone who has ever stood in front
of their closet and said, 'I have nothing to wear!'*

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Introduction

Every morning I rip my closet apart trying to decide what to wear. When I have an event to attend I immediately head to the mall in search of the perfect outfit that will be appropriate while at the same time eye-catching. There are numerous bumper stickers devoted just to the relationship between women and fashion, yet this relationship is neither biologically determined, nor culturally insignificant. Looking at the number of clothing stores in North America, the amount of money spent on fashion, the fast-pace in which styles change, as well as the stress many of us undergo when having to get dressed each day, fashion is more than just a superficial component of the material culture in which we live. Clothing is present in all of our lives each day, while its importance varies among us, we cannot deny its presence. Due to the fact that fashion is a part of all of our lives, it makes for an interesting subject matter. It may not be the most critical or crucial component of our existence, but it is something that each of us shares as an element of our everyday lives.

The purpose of my research is to sociologically analyze the complex relationship between the decisions we make about fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression. I believe that this is a topic important to sociology because it focuses on the communicative social relationship between the individual's sense of 'self' and others, and how this relationship is at play in our attempts at self-expression. This study looks at the connection between our sense of 'self' and our social experiences, as well as how this shapes our decisions about fashion. Taking from this, I developed the following research question, 'how does fashion participate in our daily processes of self-expression?' I

hypothesize that fashion participates in communicating our sense of 'self,' and this daily construction or bricolage, is organized around the images presented by the prevalent fashion industry. This thesis will show that our sense of 'self' is continuously developed through social experiences, and that the decisions we make about fashion are shaped by this sense of 'self,' and thus our social experiences. With fashion we choose to either express our sense of 'self,' or display our 'desired self.' This is done by working with cultural codes largely established by the mainstream fashion industry, as well as the cultural context in which we live. Fashion is an integral component of social experience because it is used as a means of communicating our sense of 'self,' or desired 'self,' and in turn, it can be used to maintain or change that self-image. The influential role of the mainstream fashion industry will be considered in this analysis because aside from its general presence, it is one of the primary institutions contributing to the production of cultural codes used to read the messages embedded in fashion.

The following quote by Kennedy Fraser, outlines the importance of clothing as a means of expression in our daily lives. "‘I haven’t got a thing to wear’ does not, of course, mean that we must resort to nakedness or seclusion; it means that our wardrobes contain nothing that might match our mood or offer a just reflection of our current lives" (Fraser, 1985). This statement on fashion and communication echoes the work of many theorists such as Diana Crane, Joanne Entwistle, Joanne Finkelstein, and Malcolm Barnard. This thesis will demonstrate that fashion does in fact communicate aspects of our perceived 'self' such as mood, feelings, values, and beliefs on the one hand, and social positions or roles on the other. Moreover, because fashion is an important element

of self-expression, working within our social limits, we can also use fashion to construct or reconstruct our sense of 'self.'

In addition to producing the clothes for consumption, the mainstream fashion industry is largely responsible for introducing the latest trends and styles. With help from the media, the industry participates in establishing and maintaining a norm. While the limited scope of this study does not allow me to explain the processes of the creation of images by the mainstream fashion industry, it will look at how this norm communicates to the public what is fashionable and what clothes represent. Writings by Georg Simmel, Thorstein Veblen, and Jukka Gronow, amongst others, will lead me to an exploration of the dialectical process of imitation and differentiation. My study will look at how an individual chooses to respond to the prescriptions set by the mainstream fashion industry by either choosing to imitate, differentiate from, or maybe, even both. This analysis will outline how the daily construction of our sense of 'self' is developed and communicated through our choice in clothing, and that this choice is our response to the mainstream fashion industry.

The first chapter will discuss the relevance of the topic of fashion in social sciences. This will be done by introducing the relationship between the individual and fashion and the importance of fashion to academia. The discussion of the individual and fashion will be constructed around the premise of the significance of material items in our culture, and the weight of first impressions and appearances. This chapter will provide a brief literature review of the three main areas of interest in the study of fashion: fashion theory, the history of fashion, and identity and fashion.

The second chapter will theoretically present the complex relationship between our choices in fashion, our sense of 'self,' and our attempts at self-expression through fashion. The first section will introduce the concept of our sense of 'self' as a combination of postmodern and symbolic interactionist approaches. The second section will discuss the communicative nature of clothing, and argue that our sense of 'self' may be constructed and communicated through fashion. This will lead to an examination of the balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry, as well as a discussion of the dialectical process of choosing between distinction and conformity in dealing with these pressures.

Chapter three will discuss the research findings and analysis. It will begin with an outline of the methodological framework chosen for this study. I decided to use a combination of interviews with open-ended questions and participant observation to explore the complex relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression presented in chapter two. I will explain the demographic elements of the case studies, my considerations on participant observation, and the methodological design of the interviews. By exploring the main themes of the argument that our sense of 'self' is developed through social experiences, and that it shapes the decisions we make surrounding fashion, this chapter will move into an examination of the processes at play in the decisions that we make about fashion. The analysis will be organized around five themes: the importance of fashion in our culture, the importance of appearances and first impressions, our sense of 'self,' fashion as a form of self-construction and self-expression, and the influence of the mainstream fashion industry.

Chapter One

Fashion and the Social Sciences

Introduction

Fashion is a topic important to the understanding of social relations for two reasons. First of all, the topic of fashion focuses on the social relationship between individuals. Fashion, as a form of communication, has an active role in social interaction. Clothing is one of the ways in which individuals can express their sense of 'self' to other individuals. Secondly, by studying fashion we can look at the shared experiences between individuals and consumer culture. This chapter will begin with a discussion of the importance of fashion in our everyday lives with a focus on the significance of material items in our fast-paced consumer society, as well as the importance of appearances, first impressions, and personal image. Looking at the importance of material items and first impressions will illustrate that fashion can be more than just a superficial factor; it is an important component in our daily social experiences. The discussion of the relationship between individuals and fashion will pave the way for a compendious literature review. There is an array of writing connecting fashion with social life, this chapter will map these writings out into three sections: fashion theory; the history of fashion (including the fashion industry and its cycles, consumerism and the economy); and finally, fashion and identity (including gender, feminism, sexuality, youth, subcultures, and economic class).

The Relationship Between Individuals and Fashion

The relationship between individuals and fashion stems from the importance of material items in our fast-paced consumer society and the significance of appearances, first impressions, and personal image. While I don't need to convince the reader of the relevance of material items and first impressions, this discussion will illustrate that although fashion can easily be conceived as superficial, I argue that it is a significant factor in social interaction. This discussion will set the forum for the proceeding chapter by introducing the role of fashion in identity formation and self-expression.

The importance of material items in our fast-paced consumer culture

Material items, such as clothing, hold importance in our society because in a culture largely comprised of commodities, they function as a significant means of communication. The relationship between fashion and consumerism is a topic of interest to theorists from a variety of fields and disciplines. Joanne Finkelstein argues that fashion is a system of conventions (Finkelstein, 2000: 267). It is an institution with a set standard or understanding. In other words, other members of our culture commonly understand the meanings embedded in our clothing, and as such we dress accordingly. Fashion is something that is easily understood because its meanings are socially developed and reproduced. Finkelstein lumps fashion in with other commodities when she argues that they all have narratives attached to them (Finkelstein, 2000: 268). Clothing is a representation; it is symbolic because its meanings are commonly understood, and therefore it is used as a means of communication. As a result of being a

system of conventions with attached narratives, fashion can be 'read' by others, and conversely, 'written' by the wearer. Finkelstein's arguments that the fashion industry holds a norm, and that the articles of clothing within this system carry recognizable meanings indicates the importance of fashion in our culture, as well as the weight of fashion in the transformation and reproduction of cultural codes.

Finkelstein argues that fashion does not distinguish individuals, but rather it embeds them (Finkelstein, 1991: 144). Then, it can be said that clothing functions both as a means of establishing and maintaining a societal norm. By influencing what styles will be made popular and presenting such trends to the public, the fashion industry establishes a set of conventions, or a norm that unites individuals. Similarly, Jukka Gronow writes, "fashion offers a 'norm' according to which individuals can orient their actions and choices" (Gronow, 1993: 94). As suggested by Finkelstein, there are messages embedded in fashion that are understood by all, and therefore the 'norm,' which is created by the fashion industry, can be used as a guideline for sending messages through fashion. For instance, there is a common understanding of what makes for 'professional attire,' by referring to examples illustrated by the fashion industry, the individual can imitate the look when he or she wants to give off an impression that suggests he or she is 'professional.' As explained by these authors, a norm is established by the fashion industry because it lays out a set of standards. Not only does this point at the weight of material items in our culture, but it also hints at the communicative nature of fashion.

Gronow continues by arguing that fashion serves as a social marker because it "unites members of a social class while demarcating classes from one another" (Gronow,

1993: 95). Material items, such as fashion can be considered social narratives because they reinforce difference. Clothing functions as a means of differentiation because it visually divides one group from another. While this may not be a positive thing, it shows the power behind fashion. It indicates that fashion is more than just a superficial commodity; it is a tool which individuals may use to differentiate themselves from others, or conversely, transgress norms and class differentiation. Similarly, in her discussion of the relationship between fashion and consumerism, Kim Sawchuk writes, “you are what you wear” (Sawchuk, 1987: 68). Simply put, this statement implies that fashion is an indicator of who the person behind the clothes is. This argument is made especially clear when discussing social class. Clothing is often considered to be a reliable way of reading someone’s social economic status.

In addition to producing and reproducing norms and differences, as a component of consumer society, Finkelstein explains that fashion places emphasis on the importance of the new (Finkelstein, 1991: 145). Like consumer culture, the fashion industry is based on rapidly changing trends. Not only does this adhere with the argument of the function of fashion as creating and recreating class differences, but it also reflects modern consumer societies. New styles allow for easier distinction between those with economic resources, and those without, but new styles may also feed the individual’s craving for change. Fashion’s emphasis on the new is likely a by-product of our contemporary technology-based world. On the one hand, this is a result of ever-changing tools and resources, but on the other, fashion’s rapidly changing trends are examples of the common fast-paced mode of living. As consumers, we may tire easily and quickly get bored with what we already have. Not only is this the case with fashion, but it can also

be demonstrated with the continuous longing for new things such as entertainment (music, movies, computer/video games, or television programs), toys, or gadgets. There seems to be a constant yearning for the latest trends because there is an assumption that they are necessary to stay up to par in our culture.

As a result of rapidly changing trends and styles, the fashion industry creates desire (Sawchuk, 1987, Finkelstein, 1991, and Gronow, 1997). This is a desire for the new, as well as a desire for change. With the onset of industrialization in the latter part of the nineteenth century, a society based on desire was born; this can be seen in the fashion industry, as well as various other components of our everyday world (such as those mentioned above). In addition to quickly becoming bored of what they already own, many individuals also want what they cannot have. As suggested above, part of contemporary western living is a constant striving for more, for better, and for the latest. Many of us continuously work harder and harder in order to acquire more. Not only do we want to fulfill our personal ambitions, but there is also lust to own what others own. We may suddenly feel a need for a certain sweater or pair of boots because we see someone else with them.

There are many theorists who respond to the production and reproduction of such norms and desires by the fashion industry with resistance. These academic writings support the premise of the importance of material items in our culture. Sawchuk, for example, argues that because fashion is a “reflection of the social onto the body...it is a commodity to be resisted” (Sawchuk, 1987: 65). This statement suggests that clothing makes differences (such as monetary or physical) visible, and for this reason it is something which should be opposed. Although fashion may be more than just a

superficial component of everyday life, and while it does carry a lot of weight in social interaction, it is something that is critiqued for producing and reproducing difference. Many resist the mainstream fashion industry because it aids in the production and reproduction of difference, which leads to discrimination and social inequalities. While we can argue the importance of material items in our society, it must not be assumed that their presence is always favourable.

Julia Emberley is another author who critiques the mainstream fashion industry. From a slightly different perspective than Sawchuk, she argues that fashion produces the 'anti-fashion subject' because although fashion appears to offer liberation from the mundane, it actually controls individual choices (Emberley, 1987: 47-49). Emberley's position supports the argument that fashion, as a material item holds an important place in our consumer culture because it implies that fashion can enliven the consumer, and empower the industry. Yet, in accordance with Sawchuk, Emberley suggests that due to its controlling reign, fashion is something to be resisted. The two theorists differ, however, in their focus. While Sawchuk points at the ways in which fashion reproduces difference, Emberley is critical of the fashion industry for denying the consumer complete freedom of choice. This lack of freedom also implies doubt in the theory that fashion can be a means of self-expression. It is debatable as to whether or not the individual can ever truly express his or her 'self' because the fashion industry is in control of what is made available to the consumer. This is a topic that will be returned to in the following chapter.

Malcolm Barnard outlines two different modes of consuming, active and passive consumption. Barnard writes, "while the passive consumers...reproduce their

circumstances and conditions by means of fashion and clothing, active consumers criticize and resist those circumstances and conditions by means of fashion and clothing” (Barnard, 1996: 126). The passive consumers merely take what’s given to them, whereas the active consumers use clothing as a means of resisting social happenings. Examples of active consumers outlined by the author include, but are not limited to, jeans in the 1950s, punks, and bra-burners (Barnard, 1996: 127-137). While clothing can be used as a means of opposition, as in the case of active consumption, it can also be used, as suggested earlier, to reinforce norms and maintain social order, as in the case of passive consumption.

The importance of appearances, first impressions, and personal image

Outlining the weight of first impressions will further develop our discussion of the significance of material items in our consumer culture. Many theorists agree that though they may be superficial, appearances and first impressions are important in daily social interactions (See for example Goffman, 1959; Synnott, 1993; Fischer-Mirkin, 1995; Hollander, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; and Rubinstein, 2001). Anthony Synnott, for example, argues that, “the impact of physical appearances is pervasive” (Synnott, 1993: 74). First impressions are significant not only in the way that they reinforce norms and class differences, but also in the way that they can create positive social experiences. Joanne Entwistle explains that appearances are important because in the modern city individuals have only brief moments to impress others (Entwistle, 2000: 112). In some cases then, first impressions are crucial to social relationships. However, they are limiting, and thus not everyone benefits from first impressions.

Erving Goffman argues that it is necessary to 'get off on the right foot,' and it is therefore crucial to recognize the importance of first impressions (Goffman, 1959: 22). He explains that when a newcomer enters a group, others immediately look to acquire information about that person. Though cues can be picked up in a variety of ways, one of the initial methods is through appearance. While first impressions may be positive or negative, Goffman's argument implies that individuals must be aware of their importance. The individual can attempt to control the situation with awareness. Although there are inevitably factors that are beyond our control, if we recognize that first impressions bare at least some importance, we can act in a manner that we feel is appropriate for the situation. For example, knowing that to a certain extent potential future employers are going to evaluate you based on the clothes you wear to the interview, you might choose to dress professionally. However, it is also true that this is merely a first impression; a negative impression may change to a positive one, or vice versa.

In his explanation of the importance of first impressions, Toby Fischer-Mirkin argues that we should learn how to use clothing and appearances as tools of empowerment because people form impressions based on superficial features such as fashion (Fischer-Mirkin, 1995: 7-8). As suggested by Goffman, personal appearances and first impressions are things that can be constructed and should be used to one's advantage. We should try to predict the situation that we intend to enter, and dress accordingly. Again, using the example of a job interview, it is often suggested that the interviewee research the company's dress codes prior to the interview to ensure that he or she is dressed appropriately. Entwistle holds a similar position to Fischer-Mirkin in her

argument that appearances are malleable (Entwistle, 2000: 123). To a certain degree, first impressions should not be assumed to be authentic. Appearances are most often the means of a first impression. The individual can use fashion to create appearances, and in turn give off a desired position or demeanour. So, just as an impression can change, an appearance or an impression can be created. Again, using the example of the job interview, the interviewee can create a responsible, professional image, but this may not necessarily represent who he or she really is. This topic will be further developed in the proceeding chapter.

Theorists such as Juliet Ash, Elizabeth Wilson, and Joanne Entwistle argue that fashion makes us social beings (Ash and Wilson, 1993: 6; Entwistle, 2000: 7). Clothing allows for, or promotes interaction among individuals. This idea is crucial to outline the importance of fashion because it suggests the significant role fashion plays in social communication, as well as social relations in general. Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan Voso Lab argue that, “clothing [is] an indicator of our personal worth, values and beliefs as well as those of the culture in which we live” (Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 1). We can argue that one of the ways in which clothing makes individuals social is by sending messages. The authors continue by writing, “we often expect others to be able to understand what we are communicating through these sartorial devices, and we in turn read the clothing messages sent by others” (Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 2). This suggests that clothing is used as a means of communication in terms of sending messages to others, as well as receiving messages from others. In addition, it supports the argument of the importance of fashion for first impressions because it indicates that fashion and personal image are mediums of expression.

Fashion can be considered a status symbol. The body, adorned by fashion, represents one's social standing. Synnott writes, "the body is both an individual creation...and a cultural product" (Synnott, 1993: 4). That is to say, the body, as a social entity, is not only a product of the individual, but also of his or her surroundings. Entwistle argues that, "the body is the bearer of social status" (Entwistle, 2000: 134). While we use our body to express our 'self' (for example, through fashion), our body also communicates our position in our culture. While fashion has become more accessible to a wider range of individuals since the industrial revolution, and class divisions are no longer as obvious as they once were, fashion still functions as an indicator of socioeconomic class. Although more people have access to a wider range of clothing, dress can still be considered a representation of socioeconomic class because those with more wealth can afford the newest items, more of such items, and finally, the labels suggest the price of them. Again, some may consider fashion an empowering tool, but others might see it as a superficial means of reinforcing difference.

On the same note, Cunningham and Voso Lab write, "clothing helps to define our identity by supplying cues and symbols that assist us in categorizing within the culture" (Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 11). In our culture, there are shared understandings of fashion cues. As a result of the public understanding of the symbols behind fashion, not only can we predict someone's social status, but we can also express our own, or display a desired one. This connection between social interaction and the knowledge of the importance of first impressions will be demonstrated again in the upcoming chapters. In her discussion of the public understanding of clothes, Ruth P. Rubinstein uses the Menendez trial as an example. She explains that the Menendez brothers were instructed

to wear sweaters in order to appear juvenile or innocent. (Rubinstein, 2001: chapter 1). Another example would be the common use of suits to achieve an authoritative status. This use of fashion is widely visible among recognized figures such as politicians or newscasters. Then, appearances are important because of this public understanding of clothes. A first impression is likely to be at least partially influenced by the individual's attire because it communicates a message about who the person is.

Appearances, first impressions, and personal image also hold such great value in our culture because there is a common belief that clothing is a representation of the person within. Synnott argues, "the body...is the prime symbol of the self" (Synnott, 1993: 2). Beyond economic class and social status, the body (adorned by fashion) is considered to be a portrayal of the individual. Characteristics such as personal interests, values, or group affiliation can be represented through dress. For example, often times we can get a sense of what kind of music or hobbies someone is interested in by looking at their clothes. There are many generalizations or stereotypes about what kind of people wear what kind of clothes. Ash and Wilson suggest that, "perhaps style becomes a substitute for identity" (Ash and Wilson, 1993: 9). Fashion is a potential indicator of individual personality. Similarly, Hollander argues that dress defines an individual in terms of factors such as social place and self-perception (Hollander, 1999: 107). In addition, Rubinstein explains that fashion can be used as a means to validate one's identity (Rubinstein, 2001: chapter 18). Clothing makes us social because it is a form of communication that is publicly understood in our culture, and therefore, fashion can be considered a representation (whether accurate or not) of the multifaceted person (intersected by social economic class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, personality, and so on)

behind the clothes. Again, this is a topic that will be given more attention in the upcoming chapter.

Finally, appearances and personal image are important because they provide us with a means of societal organization. As outlined above, there is a general shared understanding of the meanings behind fashion that allows us to 'read' individuals. Hollander argues that fashion binds people together (Hollander, 1999: 107). Individuals can form alliances with those whom they identify with. High schools are perfect examples of this; we can easily distinguish one group of youths from another by looking at their clothes. Although it is by no means the only method of group formation, fashion does have a role. As suggested earlier, when meeting someone for the first time, an individual can gather information about the other person based on the clothes they are wearing, this information will then play a part in the future relations between the two individuals. On the same note, Rubinstein explains that clothing is used to set group members apart from nonmembers (Rubinstein, 2001: chapter 15). Individuals may use clothing to tell the public that they are members of a particular group (be it a biker gang, or the corporate world). Conversely, members may be set apart from nonmembers on a more unconscious level. Through fashion, an individual may unintentionally tell the public that he or she is a member of a particular group.

The Importance of Fashion to Academia

The weight of fashion in our everyday lives has been discussed by outlining the significance of material items in our culture, as well as the relevance of appearances, first impressions, and personal image in social relations. Fashion, then, should be included in

the social sciences. Fashion is a subject that crosses a multitude of academic disciplines. Theorists from a variety of backgrounds research fashion from many different perspectives. Though the following discussion by no means gives justice to the different topics explored, it does offer a listing, as well as a brief summary of several of the areas. The remainder of this chapter will be organized into three sections: fashion theory, the history of fashion (including the fashion industry and its cycles, consumerism, and the economy), and identity and fashion (including gender, feminism and sexuality, youth and subcultures, and social economic class). This synopsis will illustrate why the topic of fashion should not be dismissed from social sciences, as it was for so long.

Fashion theory

Prior to the twentieth century, protection and modesty were the two prominent theories of fashion (Flugel, 1969; Roach and Eicher, 1976; Wilson, 1985; Craik, 1994; Fischer-Mirkin, 1995; Negrin, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; Entwistle, 2001; and Rubinstein, 2001). It was commonly believed that people wore clothes to protect themselves from the environment (namely, from dangerous heat and/or cold conditions) and to cover themselves up out of demureness. However, anthropologists exposed the falseness of these two theories by bringing to light cultures that did not cover themselves up for protection or modesty. It was proven that there are societies in which individuals are protected from the cold without large amounts of clothing, and in which individuals show no modesty. However, it is argued that there are no known cultures that do not partake in some form of adornment. Individuals in all societies are decorated in one way or another, through clothes, jewellery, cosmetics, and/or accessories. This suggests that the purpose

of fashion is personal adornment (for more information on the move from protection and modesty to theories of adornment, please see Flugel, 1969; Roach and Eicher, 1976; Wilson, 1985; Craik, 1994; Fischer-Mirkin, 1995; Negrin, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; Entwistle, 2001; and Rubinstein, 2001).

While there is a large number of academic writing on the topic of fashion, it is still a relatively marginal subject matter. Paul Sweetman explains that there have been three main movements in the study of fashion to date. He begins with Veblen and Simmel and their argument that fashion is a mechanism of social distinction between economic classes; he then moves to the mid-twentieth century and Blumer's study of the emergence of trends; and finally, he explains that presently there is an interest specifically in the individual and his or her relationship to the fashion industry, as a consumer (Sweetman, 2001). In the past one hundred years or so, there has been a shift from class analysis, to a focus on the fashion industry itself, to a combination of the two. Obviously, this does not include all theoretical approaches to fashion, including Sweetman's own interest in the connection between the body and fashion (see Sweetman, 2001 for more information on this topic), but it does outline the general movement in the social analysis of the relationship between the individual and fashion. The theoretical shift suggested by Sweetman is supported by the following findings.

Aside from Veblen (1899) and Simmel (1904), there were few theoretical analyses of fashion prior to Blumer (1969) (these theorists will be further discussed shortly). As suggested earlier, those who did study fashion at this time, looked at the function of clothes (see for example Hurlock 1929; Anspach 1967; and Flugel, 1969). While fashion was addressed by academics, their functionalist approach, relying on

cause-and-effect theorizing, can be critiqued for not addressing individual meanings, instability, or change. Theorists did not consider the relationship between the individual and fashion, nor did they explain how and why changes in style come about. Then, in the close to seventy years that passed between the time of Veblen and Simmel, and Blumer there was not much uncovered. As such, Blumer began his article by writing, “this paper is an invitation to sociologists to take seriously the topic of fashion” (Blumer, 1969: 275). The author pleaded to other theorists to consider fashion as a sociological subject. Not only did Blumer request a change in the way that fashion was understood in academia, he also shifted the focus from the function of fashion, to an analysis of the emergence of trends.

Since Blumer’s article there has been more social research on the subject of fashion, but in their arguments of the importance of fashion, academics still demand to be taken seriously. As mentioned, there has been a general shift over the last century from a functionalist approach to fashion, to a postmodern one. The importance of fashion is no longer argued solely in a functional manner; instead emphasis is put on its role as a cultural component of everyday life. Though there are many contradictory views to postmodernity, it is generally understood as the period following modernity. This time is characterized by a fast-paced economy as a result of rapidly advancing technologies, multi-skilled, multi-tasking workers, and more emphasis on the aesthetic role of culture than on the social class system. The role of fashion, as well as the trends in fashion in contemporary society, is considered by many to be a reflection of our postmodern times.

One way in which fashion participates in postmodern culture is in its ever-changing styles. The rapid change in trends corresponds with the ‘out with the old, in

with the new' attitude of our culture. Theorists such as Malcolm Barnard and Diana Crane explain that today's fashion offers a variety of styles for a wide-range of possibilities (Barnard, 1996: 154; Crane, 2000: 207). Both Barnard and Crane see fashion as a component of postmodernity that can be used to fulfill both individual and collective desires for change. Whereas Simmel and Veblen focused on class differences, postmodernists focus on individual differences. I, for instance, will look at the role of the individual in the relationship between fashion, identity, and self-expression. Due to the technological advancements in the fashion industry since the industrial revolution, it is easier to achieve a variety of looks for a variety of situations, and therefore produce a multitude of individualized styles. Similar to postmodern art, diversity is achieved through the 'recycling of styles.' Barnard explains that fashion today is composed of 'pastiche' and 'bricolage.' He outlines 'pastiche' as a collage of styles from past times or other cultures, and 'bricolage' as the very same collage with new meanings attached (Barnard, 1996: 163-67). In other words, postmodern fashion is a complex combination of a variety of sources with the on-going goal of creating a new look (see also Evans and Thornton, 1989: 59). The recycling of fashion trends is not only the way in which designers can cater to society's demand for continuous change, but also society's constant need to upgrade or improve.

In the one hundred years that fashion has been theorized, there has been a shift from a social collective, functionalist approach, to a cultural position at more of an individual level (such as my area of interest, the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression). Though this synopsis may seem crude or basic, it serves its purpose as a means of outlining the birth and evolution of fashion as a sociological

subject matter. While it did not go into detail on many of the specific arguments or findings, it has illustrated the importance of fashion in academia, and set the forum for an overview of some of the various areas of focus.

The history of fashion

I would argue that the majority of literature pertaining to fashion looks primarily at the historical aspects of dress. Historians have studied fashion for quite some time because it is a component that aids in the analysis of past cultures. By describing changes in fashion and/or costume between different historical periods, historians can paint a clear picture of the past. The theorist who excels in this area is Elizabeth Wilson. She outlines the historical evolution of fashion from the mercantile period through industrialization. Furthermore, she explains the role of the individual in fashion before and after the birth of mass production (Wilson, 1985; see also de la Haye and Wilson, 1999). Wilson, along with other fashion historians, unravels the significant events of the past that have made fashion what it is today. It is unsurprising then, that she and Amy de la Haye, also look at multicultural and religious aspects of fashion (de la Haye and Wilson, 1999). Similar to its role in the study of history, fashion is a prominent area in anthropological and religious studies. A precise analysis of other cultures is not possible without at least some attention to dress.

The history of popular culture in Western societies would be incomplete without an analysis of the fashion industry. Many researchers describe as well as analyze the fashion industry and its modes of operation. An example of such a theorist is Gronow (see for example Gronow, 1993; and Gronow, 1997). He looks at the fashion industry in

terms of its relationship to the public as a social marker (as outlined above), the two oppositional forces of distinguishing or imitating (a topic given much more attention in the proceeding chapter), and also the relationship between the fashion industry and the designers. Another example of a fashion theorist who looks specifically at the fashion industry is Angela McRobbie. Her position, however, differs from most; rather than focusing on the mainstream fashion industry, she studies the fashion industry from the standpoint of the 'Ragmarket' (McRobbie, 1997). Her analysis is of interest because its outline of the atmosphere of the Ragmarket suggests similarities to other consumer areas. Authors such as Gronow and McRobbie demonstrate that the fashion industry has a substantial role in our daily lives. The fashion industry, as a powerful institution, must not be overlooked because fashion is a prominent part of our culture.

A topic related to the study of the fashion industry is the 'fashion cycle.' This is an area of interest to many theorists, which dates as far back as the early 20th century. Elizabeth B. Hurlock, for example, described the fashion industry as a combination of rhythmic innovation and imitation (Hurlock, 1929: 4). It is Herbert Blumer, though, who is considered to be the pioneer of theories surrounding the fashion cycle. In his argument that fashion is a topic that deserves more attention, he argues that fashion's primary function is no longer class distinction, as suggested by Georg Simmel (Simmel's theories will be elaborated in the following chapter) and suggests that styles arise from collective motives (Blumer, 1969). From here, theorists have moved back and forth from a top down to a bottom up theory, currently agreeing, for the most part, that it is a combination of the two (see for example Fred Davis, 1992; and Peter Braham, 1997). Trends in fashion are born both from the upper class styles as well as from the street styles. An

example of a top down movement would be the popularization of expensive, high-quality labels, and an example of the bottom up theory would be the grunge movement of the early nineties, where fashion designers borrowed from the street, or specifically in this case, the music industry. Of course today we often see a blending of both approaches in one style.

A similar topic that is also popular among fashion theorists is consumerism. This often entails a discussion of the relationship between fashion and culture in terms of the role that fashion plays as a commodity in our material-based, capitalistic society. Although this subject does not always pertain specifically to fashion, there are fashion theorists who discuss this issue. Examples of such theorists include Braham and Gronow. Braham argues that there is a cycle between production and consumption, and in turn, an interrelationship between the fashion industry and retailers (Braham, 1997). Production leads to consumption and consumption is a result of production. An increase in consumption will lead to an increase in production, or vice versa. The continuous production of clothing leads to a desire for the new which results in consumption. Of course, the fashion industry responds to such consumption with production in hopes of profit. I will return to this argument in my own analysis of the relationship between the individual and the mainstream fashion industry in the following chapter. As mentioned above, Gronow discusses consumerism by focusing on the rapid changes in trends. He argues that the constant yearning for change on a societal level as well as the ongoing quest for personal style leads to a high rate of consumption and a sound economy (Gronow, 1997).

Fashion and Identity

The topic of fashion is also studied in terms of its direct relationship to the individual. There is an array of writing on the topic of fashion and identity because as already suggested; the presence of fashion in our daily lives is indisputable. This is a topic that covers a wide range of issues. One of the areas of focus is the relationship between fashion and the multi-faceted individual. Included in this analysis are social factors such as gender and sexuality. Davis and Wilson consider both of these elements (Wilson, 1985: and Davis, 1992). They look at the influence fashion has on gender and sexuality, as well as the way in which fashion is affected by gender and sexuality (similar to the bottom up theory of fashion). Other ways in which the relationship between gender, sexuality, and fashion can be explored is through the different uses of fashion for different individuals—such as the practice of cross dressing, or androgynous dressing.

Similarly, there are also many feminist studies of fashion. Wilson, as well as, Caroline Evans and Minna Thornton, for example, outline feminist theories of the institution of fashion. Evans and Thornton explain that with the women's liberation movement, fashion was rejected because it constructed women as objects; it was the fashion industry that defined and redefined what was feminine (Evans and Thornton, 1989: chapter 1). Feminists criticized fashion for objectifying women. It was thought that the fashion industry, along with many other spheres of cultural production that were comprised mainly of men, produced an unrealistic 'ideal woman' that women were forced to live up to. However, Wilson argues that feminists no longer condemn fashion because it should be seen as a means of expression (Wilson, 1985: chapter 11). While there are still visible problems with the influence of the fashion industry on women's

lives (most noteworthy, body image), theorists have come to see another side of clothing as liberating. Although the fashion industry is still largely criticized, clothing itself is seen in a positive light as a means of expression. So, as is the case with most theories, feminist writings of fashion have shifted over the last sixty years (for more information see Silverman, 1986; Sawchuk, 1987; Hollander, 1999; and Negrin, 1999).

The use of fashion among youth and/or subcultures is also a popular area of interest. Identity and self-expression are crucial to both youth and subcultures, and as mentioned earlier, clothing is considered to be a sign or a representation of something. It is for this reason that fashion plays such a prominent part in youth cultures and subcultures. Through fashion, as well as other means, individuals can express their rejection to society, political happenings, enforced laws, and so on. By going against the norm, individuals can use fashion to communicate resistance and make a statement of rebellion. Fashion is crucial in this communication because it is widely visible. An individual can easily express his or her disaccord by dressing 'alternatively.' Obvious examples of such self-expression include, but are not limited to, hippies, the beat culture, and punks. Moreover, in addition to self-expression, fashion is used, as mentioned earlier, by such individuals to demonstrate group membership. An individual can simultaneously communicate his or her resistance to society while placing his or her 'self' into a particular group (see for example Anspach, 1967; Wilson, 1985; McRobbie, 1987; and Evans and Thornton, 1989).

A final factor that is often linked with the study of fashion and identity is social economic class. Thorstein Veblen and Simmel were the first to really look at this issue. They discussed the use of fashion to distinguish oneself as a member of a particular

economic bracket, and this included the practice of imitation or conformity to appear as though one belonged to a specific group (Veblen, 1908; and Simmel, 1971). Theories regarding fashion as an indicator of social economic class have continued since then (see for example Hurlock, 1929; Davis, 1992; Gronow, 1993; and Gronow, 1997). While quality fabrics and expansive wardrobes were once the means of displaying upper class fashion, today it is more difficult to detect economic divisions through fashion because of inexpensive knockoffs. However, as mentioned above, fashion continues to function as a social marker because of the rapid change in styles. Social economic class is significant in the study of the relationship between fashion, identity, and self-expression because it poses a limitation for many, thus working to reproduce difference; this is a topic that will be returned to in the following chapter.

Conclusion

By introducing the communicative social relationship between individuals and the mainstream fashion industry, the importance of fashion as a sociological subject matter has been demonstrated. The relevance of fashion in academia has been argued by outlining the relationship between the individual and the mainstream fashion industry. This connection was made clear by illustrating both the importance of material items in our consumer culture, and the significance of appearances, first impressions, and personal image. By arguing the weight of both these things, and in turn the relationship between the individual and the mainstream fashion industry, it became obvious that fashion is important to academia. Finally, this argument was supported by an overview of the

evolution of fashion theory in the past one hundred years, as well as a brief summary of the variety academic works pertaining to fashion.

From here we can focus in on my specific interest—the relationship between fashion, our sense of ‘self,’ and self-expression. This will be looked at from two perspectives—the strategies involved in the everyday decisions surrounding the use of clothing, and the balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry (the dialectical process of distinction and conformity). Specifically, as mentioned in the introductory chapter, I will ask the question—how does fashion participate in the process of self-expression? This research question will be answered with my hypothesis—fashion participates in communicating our sense of ‘self,’ and this daily construction is organized around the prevalent mainstream fashion industry. This theoretical discussion will be developed in the following chapter by drawing from theorists such as Barnard, Crane, Finkelstein, Wilson, and Simmel. From there, the theoretical argument will be supported by personal research findings.

Chapter Two

Fashion, Our Sense of 'Self,' and Self-Expression

Introduction

Through an outline of the relevance of fashion in academia, the preceding chapter illustrated the many areas in which fashion is studied. This chapter will focus on one specific relationship, that of fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression. It will be argued that our sense of 'self' is developed through social experience, and that the daily decisions we make surrounding fashion are shaped by this sense of 'self,' and participate in the development of this sense of 'self.' Individuals choose whether they want to express their sense of 'self' or display a 'desired self,' and use clothing accordingly. This is done by referring to norms, which are largely a product of the prevalent fashion industry.

The following theoretical investigation will outline the communicative social relationship between the individual's sense of 'self' and others by concentrating on postmodern theories of identity and symbolic interactionist theories of the self. I have chosen these theoretical frameworks because the combination of the two supports my understanding of a multifaceted sense of 'self,' which is never complete because it is continuously produced and reproduced through social experiences. Once the analysis of the concept of our sense of 'self' is done, the forum will open up for a discussion of the relationship between the everyday use of fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression. Specifically, there will be an explanation of clothing as a form of nonverbal communication, as well as a deeper look into the notion that the 'self' is constructed and

communicated through fashion. This will be followed by a look into the balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry, and an examination of the dialectical relationship between distinction and conformity in our everyday decisions surrounding the use of clothes.

The Communicative Social Relationship Between the Individual's Sense of 'Self' and Others

The inward communication between the individual and his or her sense of 'self' and the social communicative relationship between the individual and others, in my view, are best looked at from a postmodern and a symbolic interactionist perspective because both positions are based on the dialogical relationship between the individuals. The symbolic interactionist approach is suited to the study of a relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression because it points at the connection between our sense of self and our social experiences. However, it is limiting in that it does not recognize that individuals may have a multitude of social experiences and that they may be faced with several norms or cultural codes. The postmodern approach compliments the symbolic interactionist position in its emphasis on 'difference,' but it also further develops the arguments made by symbolic interactionists. While both theoretical schools look at the social development of the self or identity, postmodernism goes above and beyond symbolic interactionism in their understanding of identity formation as an ongoing process stemming from a variety of social experiences which are unique to the individual. The postmodern approach looks at the multifaceted individual in a highly disorganized world. The following discussion of our sense of 'self' will be based on the

understanding that it is multiple and fragmented, as well as constructed and performed in relation to others. For the purpose of this thesis, the postmodern theories of identity and the symbolic interactionist theories of the self will be compressed into one understanding of our sense of 'self.'

Symbolic interactionist theories of the self

Symbolic interactionists argue that the self is developed and reproduced through interactions with others. This section will begin with an outline of George Herbert Mead's argument that the self is a product of social experience, from there I will move onto Herbert Blumer and his definition of symbolic interactionism, and finally, I will conclude this section with a discussion of Erving Goffman's theory of strategic interaction. This will stress the importance of social experiences in the development and maintenance of the self.

Mead begins his chapter entitled "The Self and the Organism" by writing, "the self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity" (Mead, 1934: 135). The self is a social product. It is something that is developed through interactions with others. The self gradually comes into existence through the individual's experiences with others, as well as the individual's experiences of the social activity. The self is a social structure based on direct interaction with other selves, and the overall experience of such interactions. The symbolic interactionist understanding of the self is similar to the postmodern theory of identity (to be outlined in the next subsection) because both theories imply that the

development is an ongoing process, which is dependent on the presence of others in social interaction.

Mead argues that the self is based on social interaction; we have different selves for different situations (Mead, 1934: 142). The self is developed through social experience and activity, and as such, various components of the self are born through different relationships with different people. We are not the same person in all of our social interactions because we are with different people, in different situations, and we will adjust our self to fit with those who we are with. It is for this reason that Mead argues that the structure of the self is a reflection of the other selves in the group (Mead, 1934: 164). That is not to say that we change completely, or that everyone in the group turns into the same person, but rather that the group will adjust to blend in with each other. Those individuals who make up the group likely share a common experience or attribute which will keep them together. However, when those individuals part into different groups another aspect of their self will arise for the new group or new situation.

Mead continues his theorizing of the self by explaining that it is a result of “the internalized conversation of gestures which constitutes thinking, or in terms of which thought or reflection proceeds” (Mead, 1934: 173). So, the self is a cognitive component of the individual. As mentioned above, the self is developed through social experience, and through the individual’s cogitation of the social experience. Mead explains this as the individual’s “I” and “me.” The “me,” he argues, is the attitudes of the others in the group, as understood by the individual, whereas the “I” is the individual’s reaction to the other’s attitudes (Mead, 1934: 175). The self arises from social interaction because the

individual reacts to the other members of the group by reflecting on their attitudes. The self is a cognitive reaction to the other.

Blumer, a symbolic interactionist to follow Mead, argues that individual actions are based on particular meanings that people have for things, and that such meanings stem from social experiences (Blumer, 1969b: 2). In accordance with Mead, Blumer believes that human action is a product of social experience because it is through experience that individuals come to define things or situations. Social interaction leads to shared understandings and in turn, common practices. It is through social experiences that individuals learn meanings from others, and as a result, future actions are based on such meanings; these can be thought of as 'cultural codes.' For example, from others an individual learns how to be a student. Through common understandings, definitions and expectations are developed. The 'student' defines his or her self based on cultural codes, and in turn, acts in a manner that is commonly expected from a 'student.' As such, Blumer argues that human action is based on taking into account the response of others (Blumer, 1969b: 15). If understandings or meanings were social products, then individual actions would be influenced by such meanings. If we learn how to define things from those whom we interact with, then we can predict how they would act in a particular situation, or how they would react to our actions in a particular situation. Blumer, like Mead, considers individual actions to be directly related to social interactions. We are never acting alone, whether others accompany us, or we are imagining the responses of others. Our actions and thought processes are at least in part related to, or influenced by those with whom we interact. Of course, these actions will vary according to different situations.

As mentioned earlier, Goffman argues that individuals immediately seek information when someone new enters the group. He explains that by gathering clues about the individual's conduct or appearance, they can compare him or her to others and then apply a stereotype (Goffman, 2001: 175). Through comparison we develop a first impression of that individual. Goffman quickly adds though, that there is a difference between the impression that someone gives, and the impression that someone gives off (Goffman, 2001: 176). A perception of the 'other' may be made based on the expressions that the individual intentionally gives off as well as those that are unintentionally given. There can be differences between the impressions that are made and those which the individual hoped to have made. What this suggests is that impressions may not always be authentic; an individual may use clothing to express who he or she is, or they may use it to express whom he or she wants to be. This is a topic that will be returned to shortly.

Goffman outlines four specific ways in which impressions are made. There are the expressions that the individual exudes, the individual's communication, the expressions that the individual makes through communication, and finally, the compilation of the information by the observer in order to respond appropriately (Goffman, 1969: 4-10). Information is collected through observing the individual's physical expressions (intentional and/or unintentional), the individual's choice of words, and the expressions that go along with that (again, intentional and/or unintentional). The fourth way in which an impression is formulated is by considering each of these three components together. In other words, according to Goffman, a true impression can only be made if all three forms of expression are taken into account. By considering all three

components, individuals attempt to draw accurate conclusions about others. From here, as already suggested by Mead, other members of the social group use the information to respond to the individual effectively. Goffman refers to this as a 'strategic expression game' because the social interaction that occurs within the group is tactical; it is controlled in order to achieve a desired impression. As suggested above, though individuals may attempt to make accurate impressions of others, the 'other' can (with clothes, perhaps) create a desired self-image, this concept will be returned to shortly.

As such, Goffman defines interaction as, "the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence" (Goffman, 1959: 26). It is a combination of the impression given by the individual, the impressions that he or she gives off, and it is the way in which others formulate the impression. As also outlined by Mead and Blumer, interaction is social because individual actions are a result of the actions and perceptions of the other members of the group. A central notion to group interaction in Goffman's work is that there is a degree of 'performance' in all social interactions. He explains this as, "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman, 1959: 26). In other words, because the individual is aware that he or she will influence others' actions, he or she may act in a particular manner to give off a particular impression or generate a particular response. Using a theatrical metaphor, Goffman suggests that there may be a degree of 'acting' involved in social interaction. Again, as mentioned earlier, the impression that an individual gives (or gives off) may or may not be authentic. This can be linked to the multifaceted individual to be outlined in

the following subsection. One or more identities may be performed at any given time, but they may change under different circumstances.

Goffman then introduces the concept of a 'part,' he explains this as, "a pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be presented or played through on other occasions" (Goffman, 1959: 27). Not only may an individual act in a particular way to give off a certain impression or generate a specific response, but also this particular mode of action (like our choices in clothing) may be planned. An individual may go into a situation with the intention of acting a certain way, or 'playing a part.' This way, the individual can (or at least try) to delude the other group members, or 'audience.' As such, Goffman argues, "to be a given kind of person, then is not to possess the required attributes, but also to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that one's social grouping attaches thereto" (Goffman, 1959: 81). As demonstrated by film, television, and theatre, becoming someone else is possible as long as you present yourself in the correct manner, and act appropriately. Meanings are social, so to be seen in a particular light, is as simple as following cultural codes and acting the way that others expect that person to act. Due to its symbolic nature, fashion may be used to represent the self or the 'desired self;' this idea will be returned to shortly.

Postmodern theories of identity

While symbolic interactionism recognizes the importance of social experiences in the development of the self, their theories were limiting in that they were based on normative roles. Postmodern theories of identity compliment symbolic interactionsist approaches to the self because there is emphasis on social experiences, but individual

identities are understood as multifaceted. With the help of theorists such as Zygmunt Bauman and Stuart Hall, what follows is an outline of the four basic characteristics of postmodern theories of identity that will be applied here. They will be explained as multiple, unstable, continuous, and based on the notion of 'difference.'

Postmodern thinkers disagree with essentialist theories of identity. Instead, they argue that identities are multiple and fragmented (see for example, Calhoun, 1994: 14, 26; and Grossberg, 1996: 89, 91). Emphasis is no longer placed on the notion of a singular identity, but rather on the multiplicity of identities. In addition, such identities are made up of a multitude of components. Stuart Hall writes, "identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions" (Hall, 1996: 4). This statement suggests that identities are multiplied and fragmented due to the post-Fordist conditions of late modernity. Our identities have evolved with societal changes such as the movement to a 'disorganized' state characterized by competition, less regulation, and semi-skilled labour. It no longer makes sense for us to think of a fixed, singular identity because we no longer lead fixed, singular lives. Individual lives are structured around an array of situations, and as such, our self-concept is influenced by our diverse, and often, unpredictable lifestyle. While symbolic interactionist theories were grounded in the notion that there are multiple components making up the self, the postmodern approach to identity as fragmented understands that there are a variety of different ways in which identities can be formulated. In other words, individuals identifying themselves as a student, a partner,

and a parent, may do so differently from other individuals who are students, partners, and parents.

Identities are also no longer considered to be stable. Zygmunt Bauman explains that in contemporary societies, identities have lost their constancy (Bauman, 1996: 23-24). Identities are not fixed; they can change again and again. Similarly, Lawrence Grossberg argues that identities are always “temporary and unstable” (Grossberg, 1996: 89; see also Hall, 1996: 3). One’s identity cannot be expected to remain the same throughout the unfolding of that person’s life. Our understanding of our ‘self’ reconstructs to adapt to the changes in the due course of our life. As we experience new things, see new places, and encounter new people, our sense of who we are adjusts to include our newfound knowledge or beliefs. For example, a woman may identify herself as a wife, a mother, and a student, and this self-characterization continues to change as the woman gains new experiences. Our identity is never stable because we continuously encounter new things, new people, and new situations. Moreover, due to the increasingly fast-paced culture in which we live, our identities are changing at a rapid rate. Interestingly, Bauman equates the ever-changing nature of our society to the restlessness and fickleness commonly found in individuals (Bauman, 1996: 32). There is a need to keep moving or to try new things. This constant striving for change is related to the discussion of the importance of material items from the preceding chapter, and it will be returned to again.

An implication of the unstable nature of identities is that they are continuous or never complete. Theorists agree that identity formation is a process that is never finished (see for example Calhoun, 1994: 10, 20; Bauman, 1996: 24; and Grossberg, 1996: 89). In

his discussion of identification, Hall writes, “[it is] a process never completed—always ‘in process.’ It is not determined in the sense that it can always be ‘won’ or ‘lost,’ sustained or abandoned” (Hall, 1996: 2). This suggests that an identity is not something that is achieved; it is something that is continuously developed. Returning to our example, a woman who identifies herself as a wife, a mother, and a student does so because she has gained those experiences. She was not born with this identity, it is something that she developed through marriage, giving birth, and enrolling in an educational institution. Postmodern theories of identity formation focus on the process because there is no final product. Thus, how individuals describe who they are is correlated to the journey taken to get there. We cannot define who we are without referring to or suggesting the experiences that made us such a person. Postmodern theories of identity are based on the lived experiences and lessons learned along the way, and as such, they always leave room for future endeavours. Of course, because identities are continuous, they can be contradictory (see for example Grossberg, 1996: 91). In other words, the multifaceted identity varies from situation to situation. We may define ourselves as one way under a certain set of circumstances, but another facet may dominate under other circumstances. Who we are is related to what we are doing, where we are, and whom we are with. Though the fragmented nature of postmodern identities may appear to contradict with this continuity, it must be understood that the multiple components are themselves incomplete; they are part of the ongoing process that varies from situation to situation.

Finally, postmodern theories of identity include the notion of ‘difference.’ Hall writes, “it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not...that the

‘positive’ meaning of any term—and thus its ‘identity’—can be constructed” (Hall, 1996: 4-5). One defines oneself by comparison to ‘the other’ (or more specifically, ‘others’). The ‘negative’ can only be understood by defining the ‘positive.’ ‘The other’ is necessary for self-definition because we can only understand who or what we are, by determining who or what we are not. For example, a woman who defines herself as a ‘student’ must understand who a ‘student’ is. This understanding is done by outlining the characteristics common to a student and in doing so she considers the qualities not common to a student. Similarly, Grossberg outlines the impossibility of authentic, original identities. He argues that identities are defined through the marking of differences (Grossberg, 1996: 89). Differences may include gender, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, sexuality, or body type. Grossberg, like Hall, is suggesting that the identity that we construct for ourselves is relational to our antitheses. Identity-formation is dependent on ‘the other’ because it allows us to mark out differences between ourselves and others, and by doing so self-understanding can be achieved.

The Relationship Between the Everyday Use of Fashion, Our Sense of ‘Self,’ and Self-Expression

For the purpose of studying its relationship to fashion, our sense of ‘self’ will be understood as outlined above; it is multiple, fragmented, and continuous on the one hand, and on the other, it is not only dependent on, but also a product of social interaction or experience. The following discussion will argue that clothing is a form of nonverbal communication with a multitude of levels. This will include the argument that our sense of ‘self,’ based on social experiences, is constructed and expressed through fashion.

After that has been established, we will look at the balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry. I will argue that self-expression or the displaying of a 'desired self' is based on cultural codes largely established by the mainstream fashion industry. This will involve a look at the dialectical process of choosing to distinguish ourselves and/or conform to the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry.

Clothing as a form of communication

As indicated in chapter one, fashion should not be looked at as a superficial product of our culture, but rather, as a significant means of expression (see for example, Rene Konig, 1973; Alison Lurie, 1981; Kaja Silverman, 1986; Kim Sawchuk, 1987; Malcolm Barnard, 1996; and Amy de la Haye and Elizabeth Wilson, 1999). Though fashion is nonverbal, it is an important form of communication. Barnard, for instance, explains that clothing, along with all other forms of communication (including verbal language) is based on signs (Barnard, 1996: 78). There are messages embedded in fashion, and as a result, there is communication involved with fashion. Though it may not always be conscious, fashion is an inescapable form of expression because there are invariably messages attached, and cultural codes to read such messages. A classic example would be the use of colour in baby clothes to represent the sex of the child; pink used to represent females, and blue symbolizing males. Although some parents may intentionally dress their child in the corresponding colours, those who do not follow the 'guideline' risk sending the wrong message about the sex of their baby.

Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne B. Eicher argue that there is always some form of social or psychological communication involved in the use of clothing (Roach and Eicher, 1973: 133-34). Therefore, not only should fashion be recognized as an important form of communication, but it must also be understood that there is constantly communication involved in fashion. This ongoing communication through fashion is one of the ways in which the biological body is transformed into a social being (see for example, Wilson, 1985: 2; Synnott 1993; and de la Haye and Wilson, 1999: 1-2). As suggested in chapter one, clothing can always be seen as a representation of something, and therefore one of the ways in which we become cultural entities is with the messages affixed to us through adornment. Individuals continuously use clothes to 'read' others because fashion is considered to be a social indicator. As outlined by symbolic interactionists, impressions are based on social experience, and fashion is a means of social interaction. Clothing is a social symbol, and as such our choice in clothing is argued to be a means of communication.

As suggested in the preceding chapter, as early as the 1920s theorists were looking at the role of fashion in society. Elizabeth B. Hurlock recognized the communicative nature of clothing when she argued that it was used to advertise oneself in the pursuit of attention from others (Hurlock, 1929: 27). Although she was referring to messages in fashion such as class distinction or the display of wealth, her argument indicates that fashion is symbolic, and it is a mode of expression used to send particular messages to others. Patricia A. Cunningham and Susan Voso Lab also discuss the public use of fashion as a means of communication. They explain that in social interaction we use fashion to both communicate and respond to others (Cunningham and Voso Lab,

1991: 2, 8). We can pick up on messages from individuals through their choice in clothes, and then react accordingly. If we apply what we learned from the discussion of symbolic interactionism, this of course suggests that there are common agreements about fashion symbols. These cultural codes help in communicating ourselves and responding to others in experiences of social interaction.

Similar to Cunningham and Voso Lab, Barnard explains that semiotic communication is a product of culture (Barnard, 1996: 29). The messages in fashion are culturally produced; they are a result of common understandings of particular signs or symbols. As such, meanings of fashion symbols are established through communication (Barnard, 1996: 31). In order for there to be a shared understanding of what something means there needs to be communication, and conversely, communication takes place upon shared meanings. Once communication occurs the group can establish a code, and from there the meaning can be spread and picked up by other groups. So, as suggested in chapter one, there are public meanings of fashion and, as argued in the discussion of symbolic interactionism, the communication that takes place through fashion is dependent on a group or audience who shares the individual's or performer's understandings of fashion. In order to send a particular message, there also needs to be common knowledge about the symbolic nature of clothing. This argument is best exemplified by considering the disparities in clothing messages between different cultures. For example, a woman wearing a veil in North America may just be making a fashion statement, whereas a woman wearing a veil in a Middle Eastern country is likely to be doing so for a combination of religious and cultural reasons (for more details see Ruth P. Rubinstein, 2001: ch.1).

The most commonly mentioned factors expressed through dress were mood, values, and beliefs (see for example, Roach and Eicher, 1973: 134; Wilson, 1985: 9; Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 1; and Barnard, 1996: 36). Clothing is considered to be an indicator of personal attributes. This can be as simple as wearing bright colours to express a good mood, or can go deeper to reveal hidden messages pertaining to personal desires or ideas. Barnard argues that fashion can be used to express a position, or challenge something (Barnard, 1996: 39). As suggested in the brief discussion of fashion and subcultures in chapter one, choice of clothing can reflect a personal position towards something such as a political happening or a societal norm. This is something that will be developed later on in the chapter with the discussion of the choice to resist or adhere to the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry.

Another common use of fashion as a personal means of expression is as a display of power. Clothing can be used to express personal self-worth, which in turn can communicate an authoritative position (see for example Barnard, 1996: 36, 39-40). Self-expression through fashion can result in the communication of privilege or dominance. A classic example of this is the use of business or 'power suits' among men and women. An individual in a suit represents power, whereas the same individual in jeans and work boots may be judged as a 'mere labourer.' Of course, clothing can also be used to communicate more concrete things as well. For instance, fashion is often a clear indicator of things such as gender, occupation, lifestyle, or group affiliation (see for example, Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 1). In most cases it can be assumed that an individual wearing a dress is a woman, an individual in a business suit is a part of the corporate world, and an individual in a sporting team cap is a fan.

In addition to being an indicator of personal attributes, fashion also says something about the culture in which the person lives (see for example Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 6). As outlined above, symbolic communication through clothing is based on shared cultural codes. Looking at popular fashion styles in a society can tell us about that culture. A perfect example of this is the differences in dress among women of various cultures. By looking at the disparity, one can easily learn about the level of equality among men and women of that society. Finally, such forms of expression must be understood as both intentional and unintentional (see for example Cunningham and Voso Lab, 1991: 6). As suggested by Goffman, an individual may make a conscious effort to send a message through his or her use of clothes, or the messages 'read' may be ones that the individual was not even aware of.

The construction and communication of our sense of 'self' through fashion

Fashion, then, is a form of communication. Although, as previously suggested, there may be contradictions or miscommunication in self-expression, this subsection will illustrate that fashion, nonetheless, participates in both the construction and the communication of our sense of 'self.' We will move beyond mood, values, beliefs, and group affiliation, to see how the multifaceted sense of 'self' is expressed through fashion. As already mentioned, our sense of 'self' will be understood as multiple, fragmented, and continuous, as well as the product of social interaction. I will argue that the decisions we make surrounding fashion are connected to our sense of 'self,' and as a result, shaped by social experiences. This will include a discussion of the use of fashion to express our sense of 'self' or display a 'desired self.' Once the role of fashion in communicating our

sense of 'self' is established, I will argue that the prevalent mainstream fashion industry also participates in this process.

Joanne Entwistle believes that the body is an envelope for the self (Entwistle, 2000:19). One of the many functions of the body is the representation of our sense of 'self.' Similarly, Anthony Synnott writes, "any construction of the body...is also a construction of the self as embodied" (Synnott, 1993: 37). That is to say, there is a connection between the body and our sense of 'self;' the two cannot be separated. It is impossible to display the actual 'self,' so in order for it to be expressed it needs to be represented in some way; one of the ways this is done, of course, is through adornment. Entwistle argues that, "dress in everyday life is always more than a shell, it is an intimate aspect of the experience and presentation of the self and is so closely linked to the identity" (Entwistle, 2000: 10). Not only does clothing play a significant role in the communication of our sense of 'self,' but it must also be understood that the two are intrinsically connected at all times. Due to the fact that the body serves as a representation of our sense of 'self,' the clothing that dresses the body expresses our sense of 'self.' Although it may not always be a conscious effort, clothing regularly communicates some aspect of our sense of 'self.' This is because there is consistently some level of thought in to what we chose to wear. Whether it's the decision-making when we purchase the clothes or when we chose to wear them, to some degree we always think about what we are going to wear. This thought process indicates that we are aware that clothing sends messages about our sense of 'self.' We want to 'look good' because we are aware that appearances, and thus fashion, influence the impressions others form

about us. Knowing that there are established cultural codes, the decisions individuals make about fashion are related to popular representations of who they are, or want to be.

Similarly, Joanne Finkelstein argues that, “clothes convey information to those skilled in reading them, and those who wear them purposefully” (Finkelstein, 1991: 108). This statement suggests that clothing is comparable to a vocabulary; it is a language that we use to express our sense of ‘self’ because we are aware that others will read it. The author continues her explanation of the symbolic nature of fashion by outlining that there are always personal attributes affixed to clothing (Finkelstein, 1991: 120). In other words, our sense of ‘self’ is always revealed one way or another through fashion. While the representation of our sense of ‘self’ may or may not be accurate, it does express something, therefore leading to an impression. As illustrated earlier, there are messages embedded in fashion and it is worn for the purpose of sending those messages. Others can ‘read’ fashion because there are common understandings of symbols in our culture. The wearer is aware of this; the individual knows that his or her clothes are going to be ‘read’ by others because he or she does the same. As such, although not everyone may strategize about fashion, to a certain degree, we all make decisions about what to wear based on what messages we want to send.

Entwistle stresses that, “not only is our dress the visible form of our intentions, but in everyday life dress is the insignia by which we are read and come to read others” (Entwistle, 2000: 35). In addition to communicating the messages we want to send to others, fashion is also one of the ways in which we are evaluated and evaluate others. Fashion inevitably becomes a marker by which we understand each other because it is considered to be a representation of our sense of ‘self.’ As argued in the first chapter, we

can reconsider our first impression of someone, but we cannot deny that we initially assess others based on appearance. Entwistle argues that identities are marked out through dress (Entwistle, 2000: 117). In a society where more and more people from various backgrounds are living together, clothing is one of the ways in which people can express themselves. Fashion may be used to express who you are (or are not), and in turn, can allow people to understand who you are.

Finkelstein explains that upon meeting a stranger, fashion is often considered to be a reliable representation of an individual's identity (Finkelstein, 1991: 128). This supports the argument throughout this paper that we understand others based on physical appearance. For instance, there are classic beliefs that an evil person looks one way, and a kind person looks another way. While these popular depictions have been proven false over and over again, they demonstrate that there are common understandings about symbolic representations (see also Synnott, 1993: chapter 3). Similarly, Juliet Ash and Elizabeth Wilson write, "perhaps style becomes a substitute for identity" (Ash and Wilson, 1993: 9). It is often considered that clothing and identity are intertwined. It may be that the individual 'self' is understood based on his or her attire. Whether correct or incorrect, popular understandings of symbols found in fashion allow us to form impressions. Moreover, these popular understandings also allow us to create an image in order to achieve a particular assessment. Not only does this suggest the power of fashion as a means of communication, but it also points at the relationship between the individual and the public in the use of fashion.

There is a connection between the construction and communication of our sense of 'self' through fashion and the position of the individual in society. Diana Crane, for

example, argues that clothing choices illustrate how people interpret culture and their place in it (Crane, 2000: 1). We know that there are messages embedded in clothes, but how do we choose what message to send? This is at least partially related to our understanding of our 'self' and our surroundings. The author continues by writing, "clothing choices reflect the complexity of the ways we perceive our connections to one another in contemporary societies" (Crane, 2000: 6). The messages we choose to send are related to how we understand our position of our 'self' in the social group to which we belong or are about to enter. The clothing we choose to wear will vary depending on whom we are with, or where we are. Just as our 'self' is an ongoing creation that continuously changes to suit different situations, our choice in clothes will also vary. Accordingly, because our sense of 'self' is a product of social interaction, our clothing choices will inevitably be influenced by social experiences.

Barnard explains that clothing is a sign by which you can read someone's social role and the expectations that come along with that role (Barnard, 1996: 60). Not only is fashion an indicator of an individual's social position, but it also suggests how that individual understands his or her position. For instance, someone may understand their social role as a parent, and then dress according to how they think parents are expected to dress. Again, this is related to the public understandings of symbols in our culture. Our understanding of our 'self' is directly connected to how we understand others. We use the same cultural codes on ourselves as we do on others. Although, they are not always followed, there are common expectations that parents dress 'responsibly' in order to set a good example for their children. This is why when many people see an individual, whom they assume to be a parent (i.e. with a child) dressed 'inappropriately,' they react in an

appalling manner. This can be seen in the large number of daytime talk shows devoted to outlining the difference between right and wrong. There are public understandings of symbols in our culture, as well as public expectations or assumptions. Again, as outlined by symbolic interactionists, meanings are socially created.

Barnard argues that 'ideal images' are created and reproduced through fashion (Barnard, 1996: 111). While people may use fashion to send a message based on cultural codes, they in turn, reproduce a stereotype of what makes an ideal parent, woman, man, teacher, and so on. Public understandings are based on stereotypes (as suggested earlier by Goffman), and in order to be seen in a particular light, individuals inevitably reinforce these stereotypes. While this is to be expected, the reinforcement of stereotypes or ideal images is not always advantageous. Due to the fact that we use certain symbols to send messages about who we are, these messages could get misread. Crane, for example, writes, "clothes as artifacts 'create' behaviour through their capacity to impose social identities" (Crane, 2000: 2). Fashion can force a particular identity upon the individual. As a result of cultural codes, identities may be socially inscribed upon individuals despite how they may define themselves. Referring to the discussion of first impressions, a perception may be made, but it may be false. Nonetheless, it will be held as true until it is proven otherwise.

Having established that clothing aids in the communication of our sense of 'self,' the role of fashion in the construction of our sense of 'self' must not be overlooked. Barnard argues that identities are established, sustained, and reproduced through fashion (Barnard, 1996: 39). In other words, an identity can be constructed and represented with clothing. Individuals can use clothing to temporarily create a 'desired self,' or simply to

maintain an existing self-image. This is made possible, as suggested above, because of public understandings of symbols. By using cultural codes, an individual can create a look that is commonly understood as a representation of a particular identity, or an individual can maintain a particular self-image by using clothing associated with that self-image (See also, Hollander, 1999: 105-109; Crane, 2000: 10). Due to the importance of appearances in our society, clothing may be used as a 'costume' in order to achieve a desired self-image. Finkelstein writes, "we create a sense of identity by dressing or behaving after a particular fashion or style" (Finkelstein, 1991: 1). Similar to the notion of 'performing' an identity, suggested earlier by Goffman, we can use fashion to 'be' someone else. Using adornment to express a desired self-image, we can convince others, along with ourselves, that we are that someone who are presenting ourselves to be (See also, Roach and Eicher, 1993: 142-43). However, while fashion may be used to create or maintain a desired self-image, it may also create or maintain an undesirable self-image.

Clothing, to a certain degree, can be used to control social interaction (see for example, Roach and Eicher, 1973: 190). Appearances are made malleable through the use of clothing and thus, one can use fashion to put forward a favourable image. Or, as Entwistle argues, clothes can be used on the one hand to reveal an identity, or on the other hand, they can be used to conceal an identity (Entwistle, 2000: 112). An individual may choose to present his or her sense of 'self' differently depending on the situation. In some circumstances there are certain things you want revealed and certain things you want concealed. For example, the way in which multifaceted individuals choose to present themselves for a formal job interview is different from the way they choose to dress when going to a dance club. By wearing a suit for an interview, individuals are

choosing to present themselves as responsible, organized, hard-working, and so on; they chooses to conceal the partying aspect of themselves.

The balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry

Fashion is used as a means of communication, and as such has a significant role in the construction and communication of our sense of 'self,' but how does this all fit in with the mainstream fashion industry? What role does the mainstream fashion industry have in the individual's coping with cultural pressures? How prominent is the mainstream fashion industry in the creation and maintenance of a desired self-image, on the one hand, and as a means of producing and reproducing cultural pressures on the other hand? The following discussion will demonstrate that in addition to being influenced by other individuals, the construction and communication of our sense of 'self' is affected by the cultural codes established by the mainstream fashion industry. I will outline that our sense of 'self' is expressed, or a 'desired self' is displayed based on cultural codes largely created by the images presented by the mainstream fashion industry. This subsection will introduce the issue of the balance between personal choices and pressures from the mainstream fashion industry, paving the way for an analysis of the dialectical relationship between decisions of distinction and/or conformity.

We may choose what to wear based on what messages we want to send, but are we not limited to the norms, desires, and trends made available by the mainstream fashion industry? It is the fashion industry that helps to decide what will be sold. Although it is the people who will choose whether or not they like the clothes, we must

not think that we have total control over the situation. The fashion industry continuously produces new items, therefore playing a large part in determining what will be made available. While it may be argued that it is the consumers that popularize trends, we must not forget that the industry does influence what many of us like. Through various marketing campaigns, the fashion industry can introduce new styles and convince the public to buy them. This is often done by attaching messages to the clothes themselves. The fashion industry can sell clothes through advertisements that tell the consumer that the clothes represent things such as status, lifestyle, or mood (See for example Wilson, 1985: 157-58). A commercial may seduce the consumer into thinking that by purchasing the depicted item, they will be transformed into the model. For example, if the model is wearing a business suit, and the advertisement is designed to give the impression of success, the consumer will be convinced that the suit represents success, and in turn if he or she buys the suit, he or she will be successful. Of course, this also applies to representations of what is 'sexy,' 'sporty,' 'sophisticated,' and so on.

We have a choice about what we wear, and what messages we want to send through our clothes, but we must not undermine the influence of the mainstream fashion industry in our daily decisions surrounding the use of clothes. Julia Emberley explains that while fashion appears to offer liberation and self-expression, it actually forces conformity (Emberley, 1987: 48-49). The individual may be given the impression that he or she can express personal messages through clothes, but in actuality, the messages may get lost because the individual may blend in with everyone else. The fashion industry controls the individual's attempts at self-expression because it limits what is made available. Similarly, Finkelstein outlines that we use fashion in hopes of distinguishing

ourselves, but it always fails because it ends up blending everyone together (Finkelstein, 1991: 143-44). Genuine self-expression is not possible because clothing inevitably embeds and integrates.

Some individuals may purposely go against the norm and not wear clothes that are popular or 'in style,' but their attempts of self-expression are also interrupted by the fashion industry because it is difficult to achieve a total original 'look' that would not in any way be a response to the mainstream fashion industry. Due to the cyclical nature of fashion, nothing will never be completely genuine; it's all been done before. Similarly, Roach and Eicher, argue that while someone may appear to have gained individuality, it is lost outside of his or her group (Roach and Eicher, 1973: 127). Although an individual may differ inside his or her group, he or she is inevitably lumped into a category. For example, 'punks' may individualize themselves with clothing, but to an outsider all 'punks' look the same. This can also be said about 'hippies,' 'goths,' and 'suits.' Also, an individual who chooses to go against the norm is still limited to the clothing that is available. Even if he or she chose to make his or her own clothes, they would still be understood in cultural codes shaped mainly by the mainstream fashion industry.

This argument does not necessarily imply that the premise of the mainstream fashion industry is to get the public to imitate one 'cookie-cutter' type image. Diana Crane argues that, "the consumer is expected to 'construct' an individualized appearance from a variety of options" (Crane, 2000: 15). The fashion industry does not enforce a uniform; it presents choices to the public. Although the consumer may decide to copy a complete 'look,' it is likely (and assumed, for that matter) that he or she will combine different pieces to create a 'look' of his or her own. While, as mentioned above, the

individual can never have complete freedom of expression, he or she can choose from the various trends set out by the industry each season. Although there are seldom huge differences between designers, they give us the impression that we have the power to choose what we want to wear. The mainstream fashion industry recognizes that there are conflicting desires among individuals to on the one hand, be 'in style,' and on the other hand, to individualize themselves.

Interestingly, we can see a shift in recent years in fashion advertising campaigns. Whereas companies used to sell clothes based on the notion that everyone wanted the same 'look,' the recent trend is to use alternatives to offer 'individuality.' Past advertisements would offer a style for all consumers to adopt alike, but companies are now marketing on individuality. 'The Gap,' for example, used to market clothes with the slogan, "everybody in...[insert Gap item here]," and now they offer a number of possibilities. Instead of using a group of models who all look alike and wear the same clothes, they have chosen to use celebrities from a broad spectrum of areas, who are all wearing Gap clothes in very different styles (another example is the Levi's slogan—"make them your own"). The company has tapped into the common desire among individuals to be their own person, and appear to offer choices to the consumer. However, it is questionable as to whether or not this is even a possibility. After all, it is still the mainstream fashion industry that determines the latest trends or styles. They set guidelines for the ideal body, hair, cosmetics, and clothes. They create an image, or alternative images, and sell them to the public as 'the' way(s).

The dialectical process of choosing between distinction and conformity when dealing with the pressures from the mainstream fashion industry

Although it has been argued that clothing is used as a form of self-expression, the preceding subsection demonstrated that the mainstream fashion industry is significantly involved. How do the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry influence our decisions about what to wear? Do we try to resist these norms, despite the fact that the possibility of this is questionable? Or, do we choose to adhere to these norms? I do not feel these questions can be given a straightforward answer. I think that individuals choose to both conform to the norms as well as distinguish themselves from others. In other words, there is always a dialectical process at play. By doing so, individuals can establish themselves as part of a particular group, while at the same time expressing their individuality. Choosing to resist and or/adhere to the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry is a necessary process in self-expression. In communicating his or her sense of 'self' or his or her 'desired self,' the individual must respond to the norms or cultural codes produced by the mainstream fashion industry.

Thorstein Veblen wrote of the relationship between fashion and social class. His writing described how the upper class was distinguished from other classes through fashion, and that there was an accredited standard set by the upper class (Veblen, 1908: 168). The other classes would conform to this guideline with the hopes of blending in. The implication was that everyone wished to be part of the upper class, and clothing was thought to be one of the ways in which people could attempt to fulfill that wish. However, by the time that such fashions spread to the lower classes, new styles had been adopted by the upper class. Of course, new styles arose so that those who could afford it

could distinguish themselves from those who could not. Veblen's theorizing is relevant because it demonstrates that the use of fashion is based on both conformity and distinction.

Georg Simmel argues that, "fashion represents nothing more than one of the many forms of life by the aid of which we seek to combine in uniform spheres of activity the tendency towards social equalization with the desire for individual differentiation in change" (Simmel, 1971: 296). Fashion is one of the several aspects in which we, as the individuals making up our culture, want to fit in, but stand out. Although his writing dates back to 1904, and he was speaking mainly of social class, Simmel's thinking in this area is still pertinent today. He explains how people want to stand apart from others, but in a good way! Not unlike Veblen, Simmel outlines that individuals want to be 'in style.' At the time of his writing emphasis was put on the trends set by the upper class and imitated by the lower class, but they can be applied elsewhere. While theorists no longer follow this top down theory of fashion, it can still be argued that imitation exists because people want to be 'up-to-date.' To a certain extent, individuals will adhere to a trend so that they will not stand out like a sore thumb.

Simmel's argument excels in his inclusion of the dialectical process of conformity and distinction experienced by the individual. He argues that, "it is peculiarly characteristic of fashion that it renders possible a social obedience, which at the same time is a form of individual differentiation" (Simmel, 1971: 305). The author is referring to the adoption of a trend, which is then individualized through intensification. Specifically, Simmel speaks of the individual who stands above all others, but still remains in the group. His example describes someone who adopts a particular fashion,

but carries it to an extreme (Simmel, 1971: 305). While the individual adheres to the popular fashion of the group, he or she differs in his or her omission or observance. The individual personalizes fashion by only including those elements that he or she favours. Therefore, by adhering to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry, there is social obedience, but individual differentiation can be achieved at the same time when the individual personalizes the trend.

Similarly, Jukka Gronow argues that, “fashion offers a ‘norm’ according to which individuals can orient their actions and choices without suppressing their individuality” (Gronow, 1993: 94). As suggested by Simmel, the fashion industry provides us with guidelines to follow, and from there we can decide how we want to dress. We may choose to copy the ‘look,’ or we may only want to purchase one piece. Whatever decision we make, it is our own choice, and as such we personalize that piece. Crane argues that there is a dialogue that comes with fashion because there is an expectation of the consumer that he or she reinvent the article(s) of clothing after they are purchased (Crane, 2000: 164). There is a broad spectrum of ways in which the individual can make the style his or her own. He or she may choose to add a simple accessory, or he or she may choose to reconstruct the whole ‘look.’ Of course, there is also the possibility that the individual chooses to wear the clothing in exactly the manner in which it was presented. Under such circumstances though, the individual will inevitably personalize the outfit with his or her physical attributes or personal behaviours.

The dialectic between distinction and conformity hints at the relationship between the individual and society. As argued earlier, fashion aids in the construction and communication of our sense of ‘self,’ but the mainstream fashion industry is involved in

this process. The fashion industry helps to illustrate the role of the group in the construction and communication of sense of 'self.' By choosing to conform to and/or distinguish themselves from the styles prescribed by the mainstream fashion industry, individuals are positioning themselves within their culture, and assessing themselves in comparison with others. Individuals must decide what 'look' they want and how to get it. Do they need to adhere to the norm? Or, do they need to resist the norm? Or, is it in fact, a combination of the two?

Conclusion

By outlining the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression, this chapter has argued that our sense of 'self' is developed through social experience, and that the daily decisions that we make surrounding fashion are shaped by this sense of 'self.' As such, in instances of social interaction, we use fashion to express our sense of 'self' or display an image of our 'desired self.' It was then argued that this process of communication is influenced by the norms and cultural codes set by the prevalent mainstream fashion industry. This argument began with an outline of construction of our sense of 'self' that served to introduce the discussion of the communicative nature of fashion. The development of our sense of 'self' was theorized in both a postmodern and symbolic interactionist manner. It has been understood as multiple, unstable, continuous, and based on 'difference,' while at the same time a product of social experience. The explanation of the communicative social relationship between the individual and his or her sense of 'self' and between the individual and

others allowed us to focus on the relationship between the everyday use of fashion, self-expression, and identity.

It became clear that not only is fashion a form of communication, but it is significantly involved in the social development and expression of our sense of 'self.' Fashion is present in the ongoing development of the fragmented sense of 'self,' through experiences of social interaction, and the use of clothing in such experiences supports the idea that we may 'perform' an identity. Moreover, the discussion of the relationship between the individual and the mainstream fashion industry further illustrates that we do not work alone in the construction and communication of our sense of 'self.' Our sense of 'self' or 'desired self' is constructed through social experiences and expressed or displayed with images based on cultural codes linked to the mainstream fashion industry. These theoretical findings have left me with a series of questions. How exactly do we decide what to wear or buy? Do we recognize the role of the mainstream fashion industry in our daily decisions surrounding fashion? If so, what is it? And, what other social factors influence our decisions? These questions, along with many others will be addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Research Findings and Analysis

Introduction

Upon completing the theoretical analysis of the preceding chapter I was left with a series of questions. For instance, how exactly do we come to make decisions about fashion? Why do we decide to wear certain clothes? How do we decide what to buy when shopping for clothes? What factors influence our daily decision-making processes surrounding fashion? Is it the mainstream fashion industry? Is it the company we keep? The events we attend? Or, are there more personal factors such as gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and social economic class? While the theoretical connection between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression has been made, do we recognize this relationship? Do we choose our clothes to express our sense of 'self?' I wondered whether or not the argument of the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression could be supported by research findings. This set of questions regarding the role of fashion in our everyday lives, led me to conduct twelve interviews.

Before I start to discuss my research findings, I need to outline the specifics of the methodological framework of this study: the demographic elements, my considerations on participant observation, and the interview process. After an explanation of how the material addressed in the preceding chapters led me to the specifics of the case study I will introduce the case studies and substantiate the argument of the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression. After an outline of the methodological framework has been made, I will introduce the research findings pertaining to the

interviewees' thoughts on the importance of fashion, first impressions, and appearances in their daily lives, as well as their comments regarding their sense of 'self,' fashion as a form of self-expression, and the influence of the mainstream fashion industry.

Demographic Elements

In pursuit of the best way to answer the questions and support the theoretical relationship between our decisions surrounding fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression within the scope of this master's thesis, I had to make some decisions about the demographic makeup of the case studies. I am aware that social factors such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, education, and occupation have an impact on our daily use of clothing, so I discussed them in the interview questions. I chose not to control for these factors specifically in my selection process because I felt that it would not be possible to sufficiently include everyone. The main demographic elements that I decided to stipulate were age and gender. The two following subsections will explain why I felt that these factors were important to my research of the complex relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression.

Gender

As suggested above, given the limited scope of this project, I've decided to focus on women. The relationship between fashion and social experience was made clear in the preceding chapter, taking from that premise, men's and women's connection to fashion are inevitably varied because their social experiences, as embodied 'selves,' differ. In addition to my own experiences (as a woman) with fashion, I made this

decision because I believe that there is a connection between fashion and the female body, and that historically women have been targeted more frequently by the mainstream fashion industry as the main consumers. As such, women's experiences with fashion differ from men's. Still, I want to argue that while the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression is by all means applicable to both men and women, my literature review has led me to the understanding that there is a stronger historical connection between women and fashion.

The relationship that women have with fashion can be linked to the cultural understanding of the female body in North America. As suggested in chapter one, theorists argue that the body is intrinsically social (see for example, Wilson, 1985; Silverman, 1986; Sawchuk, 1987; Finkelstein, 1991; Synnott, 1993; de la Haye and Wilson, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; Entwistle, 2001; Entwistle and Wilson, 2001; and Sweetman, 2001). The female body is more than just a biological entity; it is largely a product of culture. There is a connection between women's experiences with fashion and the objectification of their body. Their bodies shape women's experiences with fashion, and their relationships to their bodies are shaped by fashion. There are two main areas where the female body intersects with the study of the relationship between the individual and fashion: the historical objectification of the female body, and its connection to the fashion industry.

Throughout history, women's bodies have been culturally constructed as objects. The female body has been sexually objectified in art, photography, literature, and beauty pageants, not to mention, everyday social experiences. The construction of women as sexual objects was not widely criticized until the onset of the women's movement in the

1960s. Although the relationship between men and women is more egalitarian than it once was, in our culture, the female body is still largely an object of gaze. Women's experiences continue to differ from those of men because of a combination of physiological differences and cultural understandings. This is significant to the study of fashion because of the direct link between clothing and the body.

Women's relationship to fashion is also different from men's because of the connection between the female body and the fashion industry. Part of the way in which women have been socialized into particular constructions of femininity is through the mainstream fashion industry. Theorists critiqued the industry for using fashion to objectify women (see for example, Wilson, 1985; and Evans and Thornton, 1989). The fashion industry was built on dressing women, and as such, the models along with the women who wore the clothes became 'hangers.' The fashion industry has helped to produce and reproduce the female body as an object of gaze. Women's experiences with fashion can be understood as struggles around the hegemonic representations of femininity and the ideal body. The mainstream fashion industry has influenced women's experiences with fashion because it has defined what is 'feminine,' and as such pushed women into specific directions. The industry has also worked to impose 'guidelines' of the perfect female body.

Aside from, but not discounting, my own experiences as a woman, I argue that the historical relationship between women and fashion has deeper roots than that of men and fashion. That is to say, women, as consumers, are targeted more than men. Although men's fashion is gaining popularity, there are more stores and fashion lines catered to women. Moreover, it is safe to assume that in terms of clothes, accessories, and beauty

products, the annual retail spending of the average North American woman exceeds that of the average North American man. Due to the fact that the female body bares so much importance in our culture, the explanation of the significance of appearances, as outline in chapter one, becomes inescapable. There is a culturally produced 'ideal' that many women strive for. The beauty industry, including fashion, appears to offer ways of achieving this ideal. Magazines, along with advertising campaigns through television and billboards, demonstrate the weight of fashion in many women's lives.

The discrepancy between men's and women's experiences with fashion is largely a result of the sexual objectification of the female body in our culture, the relationship between the female body and the fashion industry, as well as the differences between men and women as fashion consumers.

Age

Again, working within the scope of this master's thesis, I limited myself to a specific age range. As was the case with gender, the argument of the complex relationship between our decisions relating to fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression is applicable to individuals of all ages, but their experiences differ. In the future I may choose to do long-term research that follows women through different stages in their life, but for these purposes the case studies are comprised of one age group. They are made up of young adult women, specifically, between the ages of twenty and thirty. I believe that this ten-year period allows for a range of possibilities while keeping a clean boundary.

I feel that if I were to include adult women of all ages there would inevitably be intervening factors that could taint my study. These factors may include family responsibilities, changes to the body, and/or notions of what type of clothing is appropriate for what age. While these elements may not need to interfere, it would be dubious to think that women of all ages experience fashion in the same manner. As outlined above, women may share similar experiences because of the undeniable relationship between fashion and their body, but we must not overlook other potential factors. So, why have I chosen specifically women in their twenties? To answer this question I must explain why I am not studying women under the age of twenty.

Fashion plays a crucial role as a means of expression in the daily lives of youth, but as mentioned in the literature review, this is a study in and of itself (see for example, Anspach, 1967; Wilson, 1985; McRobbie, 1987; and Evans and Thornton, 1989). While an analysis of youth culture would definitely support the argument of a complex relationship between our decisions about fashion, our sense of 'self,' and our attempts at self-expression, I believe that there are too many intervening factors. It is my feeling that individuals under the age of twenty are more likely to change styles frequently, be heavily influenced by peers, and use clothing as a means of rebellion. That is not to say that these factors are not present in women in their twenties, but I do not believe that they are the main elements of decisions surrounding the use of fashion. The influence of peers and the use of clothing as a means of resistance are important to the study of fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression, but they are not the elements that I chose to focus on.

I chose to continue the exploration of the relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression from the theoretical position I began with. If you will recall

from the preceding chapter, I decided to look at our sense of 'self' from both a postmodern and symbolic interactionist position. I felt that interviewing women in their twenties was a good starting point. Women who fall into this age-range are in a situation where they must negotiate different facets of their identities. As outlined by postmodern theorists in chapter two, identities are multiple, fragmented, continuous, and based on the 'other.' I believe that each of these characteristics of the postmodern identity can be found in women in their twenties. The negotiation of a variety of positions such as student, work, partner, and family leave women with multiple, fragmented identities which are always a work in progress. Moreover, the multitude of relationships that the woman in her twenties has with others allows us to look at her relationship to fashion with both a postmodern and symbolic interactionist lens.

Finally, as suggested in the above discussion of gender, another reason for choosing the twenty to thirty age-range is that I fall into it myself. I thought that me being a woman in her twenties would aid me in the connections I hoped to make with the interviewees. I felt that the women would open up to me because I share their experiences. Then, as was the case with gender, it would be foolish to attempt to argue the relationship between fashion, identity, and self-expression with women from a variety of age groups. While women may share experiences of the body, the social factors that come along with age cannot be ignored.

Considerations on Participant Observation

The case studies will focus on the daily decision making process involved in the act of dressing. They will uncover the relationship between the individual's construction

and communication of her sense of 'self' and fashion. In the process, I will attempt to determine whether or not the individual communicates her sense of 'self' by imitating and/or differentiating from the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry. I will also be considering how this decision-making is related to the individual's position in a postmodern society. In other words, does the interviewee exhibit a multifaceted 'self,' and does her personal style shift accordingly?

Before conducting the interviews I took a retail job in a shop that sells mainstream fashion, and caters mostly to young women. I used this experience to observe the process of shopping. I was not looking for precise information, but rather clues on how women rationalized what to buy, and how this related to the expression of their 'self' or display of their 'desired self.' By listening to them try on clothing I observed negotiations of what to wear. This experience allowed me to consider the questions I was left with upon completing the theoretical analysis of the preceding chapter, as well formulate additional questions for the interviews. While my findings will be discussed shortly, I can say that my participant observation helped me see the three main questions considered by women when trying on clothes: where would it be worn? How popular or trendy is the item? And, how does it fit the woman's body? These issues will come up again in the interview questions.

Methodological Framework

The following subsections will outline the specifics of the case studies. They will explain who will be interviewed, what they will be asked, and how it will be done.

Who will be interviewed

Although age and gender were the only two factors I controlled for, I did consider other dimensions. Without making them stipulating factors, I tried to gather women from an average economic bracket, with an average body size. I also took note of their occupation, sexuality, and cultural background, in case they had an influence on their responses. While I do not think that any of these factors would interfere with my research, I cannot dismiss their presence in everyday life. Women's decisions surrounding fashion are directly related to their disposable income, their line of work, as well as self-identifying elements such as ethnicity, sexuality, and body type. Decisions about what to wear are limited to what you can afford, and whether or not you have to follow a dress code. Also, as argued again and again, an individual's self-conception, which may be a product of socioeconomic class, occupation, level of education, sexuality, ethnicity, and body image, is linked to daily decisions surrounding fashion.

I began interviewing the women during the participant observation and from there the interviews progressed in a snowball manner. After confirming their age, I interviewed the women who then introduced me to other women, and so on.

The questions

The interview questions for the case studies take into account these factors, along with all other elements discussed throughout this paper. There were thirty-five open-ended questions in total (the questions can be found in the appendix). While none of the questions repeat themselves, there is some overlap in order to ensure that they be answered, as well as to make certain that all sides of an issue are covered. Although the

questions are not divided up in the actual interview, they can be grouped into five themes. The interview began with a set of questions covering the topic of the importance of fashion in the individuals' daily lives. This was followed by questions addressing the importance of first impressions and appearances in the individuals' lives. The respondent was then asked questions surrounding the notion of their sense of 'self.' Following that was a series of questions about the individual's experience of fashion as a means of self-expression. Finally, the interview concluded with a few questions dealing with the influence of the mainstream fashion industry in the individual's experiences with fashion. While these questions can be grouped as such, as a whole they serve to explore the women's relationship to fashion, as a means of self-expression, and the role of the mainstream fashion industry in this process.

The interview process

I decided to interview twelve women in their twenties. I felt that this was a great enough number to ensure validity while at the same time it was a small enough number for the purposes of this master's thesis. The interviews were conducted in person. I decided against a written questionnaire because I predicted that I would have to push the respondents to dig deeper when formulating their answers. I chose to interview in person instead of over the phone so that I could consider the interviewees' paralinguistic messages. In previous studies I have learned that much information can be found in body language and nonverbal cues such as shifts in pitch, tone, or timbre. Using these signs I could push the interviewee further, rephrase the question, or ask the questions in a slightly different order, if I felt that it was necessary. I tape-recorded the interview to be

sure that all elements were captured. Then, in preparation for the analysis, I transcribed the recordings into detailed notes (these can be found in the appendix).

Analysis

I analyzed the interviews by grouping all of the responses into the five themes outlined in the preceding subsection. While all of the women's statements were grouped together into each of these categories, they were divided further to outline their different points of view. This division helped me to point at the dialectical process of distinction and conformity.

The importance of fashion in our culture

In chapter one, I put forward the premise that fashion is important in our North American culture. It was argued that amongst other things, fashion, as a material item, holds significant weight in our culture as a means of creating and maintaining societal norms, and producing and reproducing differences. In attempting to confirm this notion, I began each interview with the question, 'how important is fashion to you in your day-to-day life?' This was followed by three other questions on that topic. Three quarters of the respondents claimed that fashion bared at least some importance in their day-to-day lives. While the women's responses varied from somewhat important to very important, there were only two women who felt that fashion was not important in their daily lives. There were two responses that particularly stood out.

When asked how important fashion is to her in her day-to-day life, one woman answered, "pretty important, only because if I'm getting ready for work and if I feel that

I'm not dressed well, I lose confidence for the day." I thought her response was interesting because it suggested a relationship between fashion and her sense of 'self.' Although she did not directly say so, the woman suggested that her self-worth is connected to the perceptions others make of her. Fashion is a key factor because it helps her to feel comfortable with whom she is. The other response to this question that caught my attention was, "I'd probably say not that important because I'm not really extremely into what I'm wearing everyday, but I sometimes have those days, where you know you freak out over what you wear." I thought this was interesting because although she claims not to care much about what she wears, she does admit to 'freaking out' at times. This suggests that the interviewee has an idea about how she should dress for different circumstances, and therefore when she encounters a new situation or crowd she puts much more emphasis on being dressed well.

An issue of importance to many of the women asked about the role of fashion in their daily lives was 'comfort.' While many of the women said they like to 'look good,' there was also emphasis on being 'comfortable.' For example, one woman answered, "not very important. I need to be comfortable." So, although she doesn't think that fashion plays a big role in her daily life, it is important for her to be comfortable. This could imply being physically comfortable in her clothes, or it could mean being socially comfortable in her clothes; being comfortable with her appearance. One might argue that while it might not be important for her to be 'fashionable,' her emphasis on comfort suggests that fashion is significant because there is time and thought into having the right clothes to be comfortable. Another woman answered, "I like to look nice. Sometimes I don't even have to look nice, I have to be comfortable. So, basically that's my criteria."

Again, having comfortable clothes is important to the respondent. Therefore, fashion has a significant role in her day-to-day life, as being comfortable.

In the discussion of the importance of fashion in North American cultures presented in chapter one, there is an argument supported by Finkelstein that fashion places emphasis on the importance of the new. I outlined how fashion is significant in our culture because it functions as a social marker, and maintains societal norms. The attention to the 'new,' as argued by Finkelstein, indicates that rapid changes in fashion trends continue to mark out differences and create norms, while simultaneously leading to feelings of desire by individuals as well as the public. One respondent, for example, said, "I get bored of my clothes really easily." Similarly, another woman admitted to regularly looking through fashion magazines. These accounts point to a need to be up-to-date. They support the argument that fashion produces and reproduces feelings of desire among individuals.

The importance of appearances and first impressions

Related to the discussion of the importance of fashion was the argument that appearances and first impressions are also significant in our culture. In chapter one it was outlined that in our fast-paced culture, appearances are especially important because often we only have a brief period of time to make an impression. Moreover, it was argued that appearances, or fashion, might be used as empowering tools in impression management. While there was a general consensus that they were not the most important things, each of the twelve respondents agreed that both appearances and first impressions are significant. The interviewees acknowledged that first impressions may be wrong, but as

much as they would have liked to, none of the respondents could deny the impact of appearances and first impressions in social interaction. One woman, for example, said, “you obviously judge on your first impression, but if you meet them again, it can totally change.” Similarly, another woman gave the following answer to the question as to whether or not first impressions were important, “yes. As much as I’d like to say they’re not—yes, they are,” and another woman responded, “yes. Because that first impression lingers in your mind when you think about that person.” And yet another woman said, “I think they are to the world, but I don’t think that they are to me” when asked if looks were important to her, and, “the fact is that a lot of people are influenced by first impressions, and you kind of just have to take that by person to person” when asked if she thought first impressions were important. So, despite the fact that appearances and first impressions might be misguided, the women interviewed all agreed that they were an undisputable part of North American culture.

The interviewees’ responses above support the arguments made in chapter one by theorists such as Joanne Entwistle and Erving Goffman. They suggest that appearances and first impressions are important because they are thought to be a representation (whether accurate or not) of the individual. As such, appearances can be considered status symbols or, similarly, tools of empowerment. In addition to the preceding statements, the following responses specifically indicate the link between appearances, positive first impressions, and power. When asked if looks were important, one woman said, “depending on the context, sure. At a job interview, yes, I believe your appearance is important,” similarly, another woman responded, “I know for an interview, it’s important to be proper and business-like,” and finally, a woman states, “I think that if

you're in a professional environment, looks are important." The likeness of these responses suggests that there is a common understanding in our culture about what is and what is not acceptable attire. They indicate that dressing appropriately for a situation can be empowering. By purposefully dressing 'professionally' for a job interview, the individual may convince the interviewer that he or she is suited for the position (whether this is the case or not).

Our sense of 'self'

Chapter two outlined the understanding of our sense of 'self' as a combination of postmodern theories of identity and symbolic interactionist theories of the self. I argued that this made for an appropriate approach because it suggests that our sense of 'self' is developed through social experiences. This understanding implies that because there are multiple social experiences, there are numerous components to our sense of 'self,' and as such it is unstable and continuous. This notion of our sense of 'self' can be applied to individuals today because it refers to a multifaceted 'self' that encounters several instances of social interaction.

It was difficult to pose the question: 'does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?' Six of the twelve respondents seemed to take offence to the inquiry. While I did try to explain the theoretical nature of the question, I did not want to persuade the respondents one way or another. Those who answered 'yes' to the question confirmed the postmodern and symbolic interactionist understanding of our sense of 'self' in this thesis. They spoke of a sense of 'self' that was unstable, due largely in part

to the 'other.' Each of these interviewees explained that their sense of 'self' and the corresponding actions varied according to diverse situations.

The three following statements were from women whose comments support the understanding of a multifaceted sense of 'self.' One woman answered, "I think that your sense of self is affected greatly by who you encounter. Different parts of you are going to be active depending on who you're with. If I'm attracted to someone or if I hate them, there are going to be different impressions of who I am." Another respondent said,

I always know who I am, and what I'm all about, but I think that it changes in terms of how you express yourself etc. Like say, I'm hanging out with my friends who are all into arts etc., it's just a totally different vibe. And then, if you're with people you don't really know, I tend to be shy sometimes and not as lively.

Finally, one woman simply stated, "it just varies from situation to situation because a new trait will arise depending on the circumstances." These responses support the postmodern and symbolic interactionist approach to our sense of 'self' because they suggest that it changes depending on the situation, as well as the other individuals involved in the situation. Our sense of 'self' is not a fixed entity because it is dependent on the 'other.' Our sense of 'self' has been understood as a product of social experience based on social interaction. As such, it is fragmented, unstable, and ongoing. The interviewees' statements imply that because our sense of 'self' changes, it is multiple, and therefore never complete. There are many components of our sense of 'self' for various situations. As argued in chapter two, our sense of 'self' is a work in progress because it adjusts and adapts to the situation and the other individuals included in the situation.

Our sense of 'self' is developed through social experiences because it is constructed based on cultural codes and our reactions to others. The women's references to other individuals, support the postmodern stipulation of 'difference' and the symbolic interactionist's emphasis on the 'other.' Their experiences with other individuals shape the development of their sense of 'self' because the others help them to see who they are or are not. Moreover, the others bring out the different aspects of their sense of 'self' that are 'suited' for the situation. For example, the woman who said her impressions change depending on the situation, and the woman who spoke of being shy around people she didn't know, point at the effect others have on our sense of 'self,' and how this determines what components of our sense of 'self' will be active. Due to the fact that our sense of 'self' varies from one situation to another, the changes can be seen as a result of the individuals' comparison of his or her sense of 'self' to others. Based on cultural codes, which are more or less established by the combination of societal norms and the mainstream fashion industry, the women assess the situation, and present themselves in a manner that they feel corresponds to the other individuals. In doing so, the individual communicates an aspect of her sense of 'self.'

Fashion as a form of self-expression

When asked how important fashion was in communicating a sense of their 'self' to others, only half of the women said that they used fashion to express themselves. However, in addition to the statements regarding the communicative nature of fashion discussed in the preceding chapter, there were further indications of a complex

relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and the decisions we make in choosing to express this sense of 'self.'

Those interviewees who recognized this relationship had the following to report. One woman said, "all my clothes say something about myself," another woman stated, "I'm sure that if someone saw me they could form an opinion based on what I'm wearing." Other respondents gave more specific answers when asked what they thought their clothes said about themselves: "I think I look like a student, like someone who's not working a business-type job;" "I really enjoy the simple things in life. I'm laid back and relaxed;" and, "I think they say something. Comfortable, and that I have a hip-hop influence, so that represents my interests, what I enjoy." Then, perhaps style really is a substitute for identity, as suggested by Ash and Wilson in chapter two. These statements support the argument that fashion is a form of self-expression. Moreover, they indicate that the women are aware of the communicative nature of fashion and that there are cultural codes used to 'read' the messages. Not only do the women think that their clothes are a form of expression, but the specificity of the latter responses points at the use of cultural codes in their understanding of fashion as a form of communication because they imply that there are detailed messages attached to clothing. Although only half of the women felt fashion was important to self-expression, and only a couple said they made a conscious effort to represent themselves through fashion, these findings indicate that the women are aware that fashion is a form of self-expression that is recognized by others. As argued in chapter two, there is always some form of communication involved in fashion, and this communication is based on shared cultural

codes. We can use these codes to 'read' others, be 'read' by others, and 'write' or express ourselves.

While half of the women reported that they did not think that their sense of 'self' varies, the interviews suggest that the decisions they make surrounding fashion are largely guided by the situation that they are about to enter. This supports the notion that different aspects of our sense of 'self' are present depending on the circumstances because their choices in clothing were shaped by the situation, and these decisions about fashion are considered to be based on expressing their sense of 'self.' Many of the women admitted to changing clothes depending on the circumstances. One woman told me, "I do dress to fit where I'm going or who I'm going to be with." When asked, 'what role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?' she responded, "they do play a role, because when I'm doing certain things I know I can dress a certain way. Like when I was doing exams, I could wear jogging pants everyday, but when I go looking for a job, obviously I'm not going to go in jogging pants." Another woman said, "obviously I'll dress how I feel for the situation. Like when I go to visit my friend in Montreal, I'll dress however I want because I don't know anyone there." The women's statements regarding the link between their situations and their decisions about fashion support the argument that the choices we make about clothing are connected to our sense of 'self,' which is developed through social experiences and understandings of appropriateness and normativity. With cultural codes, we can evaluate the situation and our place in it. We will make a decision about the best way to present ourselves, and create an image accordingly. The woman who wears jogging pants during exams does so because she knows that it is acceptable for that situation. Her note that she dresses differently for a

job interview indicates that she makes decisions about fashion based on cultural codes and societal norms.

The argument of a complex relationship between our sense of 'self' and our daily decisions surrounding fashion is also supported by the following response to the same interview question, "If I'm confident I'll go bright and sexy, and if I'm not confident, I'll go dark and demure." This answer suggests that the woman's choice in clothes is related to how she feels about the situation she is entering. Similar to the interviewee visiting her friend in Montreal, the respondent makes decisions about fashion according to her sense of 'self,' which is constructed through specific instances of social interaction. In chapter two it was suggested that meanings and practices are created through social interaction, and that these meanings, or cultural codes, shape our social experiences. These women are using this knowledge to assess the situation, formulate their sense of 'self,' and dress accordingly. Goffman explained that impressions might be made from appearances; taking from this, these two women evaluate the situation and the others involved in it to determine what impression they will try to make. If they are confident around the people, or don't care what they think, they will present themselves differently than if they were concerned about giving a particular impression. This suggests that their sense of 'self,' or level of confidence, is linked to their social experiences. It varies according to the situation at hand, and the people involved. This sense of 'self' then shapes the decisions they make about fashion.

The 'other' (or others) has a significant role in terms of the decisions individuals have to make about clothes. As suggested by symbolic interactionists, our actions are based on social experiences. We act, or dress, in a particular manner as a way of

preparing ourselves for the social interaction to come. There are cultural codes we can use to assess the situation and understand the context. Using the information we can create the right 'look' in order to express our sense of 'self,' or display a 'desired self.' When shopping for something to wear to a Christmas party, one woman exclaimed, "I don't know why I'm stressing so much about my outfit. Why do I care so much about what other people think?" Similarly, a woman who needed help picking out an ensemble said, "I need to dress according to the other people attending the party." These statements clearly indicate that many women make decisions surrounding fashion based on their sense of 'self,' which is shaped by social experiences and social pressures.

The emphasis on the 'other' was also apparent among the interviewees. The following statements will suggest that the decisions that several of the women make about fashion are connected to making an impression for others. It appears as though many of the interviewees dress with others in mind. That is to say, they make decisions about what to wear based on what others will think. When asked how important fashion was in communicating a sense of her 'self' to others, one woman said, "I guess if you dress up or look good all the time, it shows that you actually care about yourself, but if you look like a bum all the time, and look like shit, then you know that you aren't portraying the greatest image." Similarly another woman told me the following, "I don't want to look like a schlep. I want to look like I know how to dress myself, and maybe that I'm not shopping at Good Will." Statements like these suggest that the interviewees feel that it is important to portray a positive self-image for others. This positive self-image is constructed based on cultural codes and societal norms. The women choose an 'appropriate' outfit based on what they think they should look like for the situation and

the other individuals involved in it, and this 'look' is largely a produced in reference to the popular images presented by the mainstream fashion industry. Referring to those images, the women can express their sense of 'self' in a manner that will be understood by others. In the second statement, in addition to achieving the 'right look,' is a notion of the 'right store.' There is emphasis placed on where the item was bought, what label it has on it, and how much was paid for it. In a culture that is taught that 'you get what you pay for,' there is a belief that a higher priced item is superior. This conception, of course, does not work in everyone's favour. As outlined in chapter one and two, these cultural factors may be empowering for some, but may pose a limitation for others.

Yet another interviewee indicated a connection between self-expression and the 'other' in the personal decisions we make about fashion. When asked how she decided what to wear that day she said, "because [I was] coming to work, I knew that I wanted to look a bit nicer. Plus, I knew that people would be looking at what I was wearing," and when I asked if her sexuality influenced the decisions she made about fashion she replied, "I have a boyfriend. Sometimes, I'll wear something that I know he really likes, so I'll be excited because I know that he really likes it." Similarly, when asked the same question, another respondent answered, "I like to look good if I'm going out. I try to look the best that I can, so that I take up a place in your mind, and you don't continue to just walk on by." Finally, when asked whether or not she tries to maintain a stable style, an interviewee said, "I like to create a 'new Sharon' especially when I see old people." Similar to the classic case of looking good for your high school reunion, the respondent supports the argument throughout this thesis that, to at least a certain extent, decisions about fashion are related to our sense of 'self.' She considers the individuals who will be

involved in the social experience, and she decides on the best way to either express her sense of 'self,' or display her 'desired self.' These responses suggest that the interviewees think about others when they get dressed. That is not to say that all of their decisions are based on others, but it does indicate that fashion is often used as a means of self-expression, and thus done with others in mind. The expression of our sense of 'self,' or the display of our 'desired self' is done for an audience. As suggested by Goffman in the outline of 'strategic expression games' in chapter two, the social interaction that occurs within a group is tactical because the individual controls it in order to achieve a particular impression. We can see here how easily the expression of our sense of 'self' slips into a display of a 'desired self.'

One woman answered, "working in a clothing store, I see women who I relate to, or who I wouldn't want to be like." As argued, the decisions we make about what to wear are related to our sense of 'self,' which is shaped by our interactions with others. This interviewee is suggesting that by referring to others, she can decide who she wants to be, what that person looks like, and then choose to present herself in a similar manner. Not only does this suggest the importance of the 'other' in the decisions we make about what to wear, but it also implies that there are 'ideals,' which guide us in deciding what is appropriate attire. As already suggested, there are cultural codes regarding what to wear for different situations. Our sense of 'self' is constructed in part by our relationship to fashion. There is a non-linear connection between the expression of our sense of 'self' and the construction of our sense of 'self' through fashion. The woman refers to other women's decisions about fashion to make her own. She decides whom she does and does not want to be based on her perceptions of others and their use of fashion. Many

shoppers came into the store with preconceptions about fashion. For example, one woman said to her friend trying on a blouse, “white satin shirts are old;” another woman pointed at a rack and said to a fellow shopper, “this is the Britney Spears dress;” finally, another woman came out of a changing room and said, “I feel like a church lady in this outfit.” These statements point at the many cultural codes relating to fashion which aid us in the construction and communication of our sense of ‘self.’

As suggested by Goffman in the discussion of symbolic interactionism in chapter two, an individual may use fashion to ‘perform’ an identity. Individuals are aware that they may be assessed and as such, they will present themselves in a manner in which they can attempt to give off a particular impression. In my experiences of participant observation, one woman told me, “I wore gold earrings because I was wearing a lot of scarves and I wanted to look like a gypsy.” Using recognizable cultural codes of what a ‘gypsy’ looked like, this woman recreated the look. Similarly, a frustrated shopper looking for the ‘right dress’ for a party said, “I feel like I’m trying to be something I’m not.” This woman had a conception of what type of dress she wanted for the party, but she did not feel comfortable in it because she felt that she was presenting herself as ‘someone else.’ In trying to achieve the ‘right look’ for the situation, the individual refers to cultural codes or popular images, and displays their ‘desired self,’ as oppose to expressing their true sense of ‘self.’

Many of the respondents claim to have used fashion to create a ‘look.’ Interestingly, they spoke of two prominent images: ‘sexy’ and ‘professional.’ As argued in chapter two, by working with the popular images provided by the mainstream fashion industry, individuals can create an image that represents something or someone. These

women displayed themselves as 'sexy' and/or 'professional' by utilizing pieces of clothing that are understood as representations of those things. These representations are understood as such because of societal norms and cultural codes, which of course can be linked to the mainstream fashion industry. One woman states, "sometimes when I go out to a nightclub I pretend that I'm something that I'm not." Another interviewee said,

sometimes when you go clubbing on a Saturday night you want that 'sexy-slutty' look, so you're going to dress accordingly, but obviously if you're going to dinner with like executives or something, obviously you want to dress to present yourself as an educated person.

Similarly, when asked if she ever used clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part,' a woman gave the following response, "if I want to convey a certain image. If I'm applying for a loan at the bank, I certainly don't show up in my track pants." Later, the same woman, when asked if she ever used fashion to express a particular image, said,

for instance, that day I had to give a presentation in front of a hundred and fifty students, I didn't walk in dressed like this, because who am I at that point. So, I obviously dressed a little more mature, a little more 'dressed-up,' and took some care into my appearance that morning. I know that a lot of people take image upon first glance, so before I open my mouth, I want to gain some sort of respect.

These responses suggest that it is not the individual's sense of 'self' that is being expressed, but rather it is a display of their 'desired self.' Taking into account the situation, the individuals decide what image they want to communicate, and thus how they want to be seen by others. They then create this image through fashion. Working with cultural codes, the respondents are expressing a created image of what is 'professional' and/or 'sexy.' This commercially produced image then makes them feel 'professional' and/or 'sexy,' and be seen by others as 'professional' and/or 'sexy.'

Another woman explained, “if I have a job interview or something, I’ll wear a suit because all of sudden I’m this important person.” Similarly, when I asked an interviewee if she kept a stable style she said, “if I’m trying to make an impression, like going to a job interview, then it’s totally different. Not, totally different, but different enough.” When asked whether or not she consciously tries to represent her ‘self’ through fashion, one woman said, “let’s say if I have to teach, I will make a conscious effort to make sure that the clothes appear professional.” These responses all support the argument that fashion can be used to express our sense of ‘self,’ or display our ‘desired self.’ These women recognize that there are certain cultural codes that are publicly understood, and they use these to create or convey an image.

Many women come into the store with notions about what is appropriate. They expressed thoughts regarding what they could or could not wear, and they also had ideas about what was appropriate for others. Several women uttered the words, “I like that a lot, but not for me,” or turned to their friend and said, “that jacket is so you!” These statements suggest that many of us have a style or a ‘look’ that we need to work with; we cannot venture too far one way or the other. The idea of conforming to standards was also apparent among a few of the interviewees. When asked how fashion contributed to presenting herself in different situations, one woman simply stated, “it’s appropriateness; it’s common sense,” and when I asked her what the most important factor was in her decision making about what to wear that day, she answered, “what’s appropriate.” This suggests that it is important to the interviewee to be dressed ‘properly.’ Working with cultural codes, constructed in part by the mainstream fashion industry, the woman must decide what image she feels is appropriate, and then present herself in that manner.

Similarly, when asked how her occupation influenced her decisions about what to wear, a respondent said,

the level that I'm at now, I tend to think—well, I'm almost thirty. It's time for me to grow up and wear proper clothes and start wearing makeup. I like to be dressed well. I don't like to spend lots of money on clothes, I'd prefer to have a big wardrobe, than a small, select, expensive wardrobe. I like to go to the stores where I feel like I should be shopping, not Old Navy, not The Gap, more Banana Republic, Tristan, Club Monaco.

This answer clearly indicates that the interviewee has an idea about how she should be dressing for her age and her line of work. The notions of what is and what is not appropriate stems from a multitude of cultural institutions, one being the mainstream fashion industry (which will be discussed in the following section).

The way we determine what is appropriate for us to wear is partially related to our understandings of the way other people dress. Referring to societal norms regarding fashion, individuals choose what messages they want to send. We can look at the way other people dress, 'read' the messages embedded in their clothes and decide whether we want to send similar messages. While we may not be able to express the exact same messages because of differences in physical attributes, we can still use their choice in clothes as a guideline when deciding what messages that we want to communicate.

Although only half of the respondents said they thought fashion was important to them for self-expression, ten of the twelve interviewees admitted to using fashion to 'read' others. These women reinforce the premise that fashion is a means of communication, and it suggests that perhaps their own uses of fashion are more expressive than they thought. When I asked whether or not she felt she could read someone's identity through their clothes, one woman answered, "I'm reluctant to say yes, but ya. It's kind of like one of those things that you don't want to admit." I found this

answer interesting because it implies that the woman does not feel she should be 'reading' others based on their clothes. As was the case when I posed the question, 'do you think your sense of 'self' changes from one situation to another?' I got the impression from some of the women that this was a question they were hesitant to answer truthfully. Although the majority of the respondents answered yes, I think that the women felt the question about whether or not we could 'read' others' identities through their clothes suggested that we 'judge' others based on appearances, and that this is something that we should not be doing.

When I asked the same question to another respondent she replied, "I think in certain friends and stuff, ya I totally see them through their clothes because that's what they use to show other people their personalities." This statement indicates that the respondent is aware of the communicative nature of fashion. She thinks some people use their clothes to express themselves, and that we can 'read' them through their clothes. Her statement supports the argument that the decisions we make surrounding fashion are shaped by our sense of 'self.' It implies that some people purposefully make an effort to express their sense of 'self' through fashion. Another interviewee said to me, "I think that you can read their mental state." This suggests that the woman sees a connection between the decisions we make about fashion and our mood at that time. This supports the argument made by Roach and Eicher, Wilson, Cunningham and Voso Lab, and Barnard in chapter two that the most commonly expressed attributes through fashion are mood, values, and beliefs. Clothing can be worn in a way to express a good mood or a bad mood, or it may be worn to reveal personal desires or ideas. The respondent who

spoke earlier of wearing bright colours when confident or dark colours when not, is an example of someone who expresses their 'mental state' through fashion.

In her explanation of why clothing was important to her for self-expression, one woman said, "you know when you meet someone and they look really put together, it's dumb, but you think—wo, they look really good. You notice that." When I asked if she felt an image could be created through clothes she answered, "ya, because a lot of times when you look at someone and what they're wearing, you can tell a lot about them." Finally, when discussing how she makes decisions about what to buy, she told me, "people can tell if you don't feel good in what you're wearing." Although none of these responses directly answered the question of whether or not she felt she could 'read' someone's identity through their clothes, they all suggested that fashion is a form of communication. The interviewee's statements indicate that she 'reads' and responds to what people are wearing, and that she expects others to do the same. The respondent recognizes that she 'reads' others based on their clothes, therefore she assumes others will do the same to her. Thus her decisions surrounding fashion are shaped by her sense of 'self,' and how she feels she should express it. Moreover, she thinks that you can tell a lot about someone by his or her attire. Her answers support the notion that there are cultural codes used to 'read' others, and that these same codes are used when deciding what to wear. Taking from popular images produced by the mainstream fashion industry, the woman can 'read' others, and in turn create an image of her own.

The influence of the mainstream fashion industry

In chapter two it was suggested that although our clothing choices are based on what messages we want to send, the mainstream fashion industry is intrinsically involved in this decision-making process. The daily decisions we make about fashion are shaped by and around the prevalent mainstream fashion industry. The connection between decisions regarding fashion and our sense of 'self' has been argued. We have also outlined that the expression of this sense of 'self,' or the displaying of a 'desired self' is made possible by referring to cultural codes. These codes are largely produced by the norms established by the mainstream fashion industry. The images presented by the mainstream fashion industry through the media tell us how something is represented, and from there we can use that image in our efforts to communicate.

Three quarters of the respondents told me that to some degree, the mainstream fashion industry influences them in the decisions that they make about fashion. In addition, half of the interviewees said that the media, as a promotional vehicle for the mainstream fashion industry, also had an influential role. One woman said the following about the topic, "everywhere you look, there's some kind of advertising that impacts us." Another woman exclaimed, "only if you were your own designer could you get away from the fashion industry and their influences." These statements are interesting because in addition to suggesting the prevalence of advertising in our contemporary culture, they also indicate that the women are aware of it, and the effect it has on them as consumers. The women feel that they are targeted by the mainstream fashion industry, and it is something that they cannot get away from. As such, the women's relationship to fashion

is inevitably connected to the mainstream industry. Their attempts at self-expression are inescapably influenced by the popular images presented by the mainstream fashion industry. The women are bombarded with advertisements that shape the decisions they make about fashion.

There are other women who share these feelings. Two women, for example, told me that the decisions they make about what clothes to purchase is related to what is made available by the mainstream fashion industry. The first of the two respondents said, “I just buy what’s there, and what’s there is generally what’s popular;” and as the interview progressed she added, “I might be like—look what so and so is wearing, I love it—it’s just because it’s there and in your face.” The second interviewee gave the following anecdote,

when the cropped pants came out at The Gap, I got a pair of beige ones, beige embroidered ones, red ones, yellow ones, and jeans. I do wear them to death, but if they hadn’t been there, I wouldn’t have bought them. I will look into magazines and say—I like that—but, I won’t go out and look for it. I’ll say—I like that style, I’ll look for something similar. I’ll buy what’s in the stores.

As outlined in chapter two, although we, as consumers, may popularize trends, it is still largely the mainstream fashion industry that decides what will and what will not be sold. Both of these women are excellent examples of how, to a certain extent, the mainstream fashion industry can persuade the public to adopt a particular trend. The items were there when the women were shopping, and because they were there they bought them. Even if they had no intention of purchasing an item of that sort, they were somehow convinced to do so. These women show how the industry shapes the decisions we make about fashion. Neither of these two women made an effort to create an image outside of the mainstream

industry. Instead, as suggested in chapter one, the fashion industry creates desire for the 'new.' The women bought the items because they were there, and the reason why they were is because they were the latest styles. By being 'there,' the mainstream fashion industry can convince the women that these are 'must-have' fashions. Both of these women explained that they buy things because 'they're there.' The woman who bought the cropped pants from The Gap would not have bought them if they weren't there, but they were, and so she bought five pairs. Moreover, because they were there, 'she wears them to death.' This reinforces the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry, and it strengthens the persuasive nature of the industry.

Other interviewees recognized the power behind the mainstream fashion industry, but did not consider it to be such a controlling force. In her explanation of the most important factors in her decision-making about what clothes to buy, one woman said, "what looks good on me, and something that is part of the trend that suits me. Like, I like those printed purses, but I'm not going to go out and buy the pants, and the jackets too. I'll buy one thing of the trend that suits who I am already." On the same topic, another respondent answered, "stuff that looks different. I don't like to buy the stuff that everyone has. That's the most important thing." These two responses suggest the influential role of the mainstream fashion industry, but they indicate that the respondents did not feel a loss of control. Although the women did not venture outside of the mainstream fashion industry, both interviewees take what is in style, and pull out what they like. The first respondent buys pieces that are popular, but still fit in with her sense of 'self.' She knows who she is and what style works for her, so she selects items that work to maintain her 'look.' The second woman uses the trends made popular by the

mainstream fashion industry as a guideline of what she does not want. She wants to be different, so she'll choose the items that not everyone is wearing. While they may not be resisting the mainstream fashion industry, they are not exactly adhering to it either.

In chapter two, I outlined the role of the mainstream fashion industry as the institution to establish, and to a certain extent, enforce norms that we must choose to resist and/or adhere to. It was suggested that many individuals would not choose one way or another. Individuals will assess their sense of 'self' within the context of the mainstream fashion industry, and then, using cultural codes established in part by the industry, they could pick an image that they feel is best suited for them. They can then purchase the pieces of that image and display them as their own. Three quarters of the interviewees said that they neither resist nor adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry. Although the responses above indicate that the women feel that mainstream fashion industry imposes conformity, and that some of the women choose to create their own 'look,' the majority of the respondents choose a combination of conformity and distinction when having to deal with the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry.

One interviewee told me, "I like to pick and choose. I never think—oh, I want to look like that—but, I'll be like—those are cool pants, but I don't like this. If I don't like it, I won't get it just because it's the cool thing. And, if I do like it, I will get it." Another respondent explained,

whatever! I know that everyone is going to buy those clothing because that's what they're selling. I don't want to dress like everyone else, but if there's something that I like, like let's say, a jacket from the whole outfit, then I might buy that. But, I am more in-between. I just go with it!

Another woman said, “I go with it, but not directly. I’ll see what I like in the store, but I don’t pay any attention to what’s trendy in the media.” Similarly, another respondent answered the question as to whether or not she resists or adheres to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry by saying,

I don’t think I either resist or adhere. For sure, I do resist some styles, but not just fashion, like fashion has become intertwined with popular culture. Like for example, Nikita has this whole look, a lot of black, a lot of leather, very tailored clothes, and I get kind of sucked into that.

Each of these women admits to following the trend in some cases, but they will not wear something if they do not like it. While many spoke of the influential power of the media and the mainstream fashion industry earlier, these women try to make their own decisions about what to wear based on their personal preferences.

As outlined in the analysis pertaining to the importance of fashion in the day-to-day lives of these women, it is important to many of the respondents to be comfortable. These statements suggest that in addition to being physically comfortable, these women need to feel socially comfortable in what they’re wearing. Much of this can be linked to the earlier discussion of the ‘other.’ Many women will not adopt a complete look just because it’s popular due to the fact that they would not feel comfortable in those clothes. If they do not like the item and it does not fit their style, they’re not going to feel ‘comfortable’ in it, especially when in the presence of others. As argued, much of the decisions made by individuals regarding fashion are shaped by their sense of ‘self,’ and thus social experiences. Our sense of ‘self’ is developed in relation to the ‘other,’ and our clothing is used as a means of communication among others.

Although none of the interview questions specifically asked about the role of the body in the respondent's decision-making about fashion, there were a lot of instances where the subject of the body arose. In fact, many of the women did mention their body when discussing their everyday experiences with fashion, especially when answering questions surrounding the mainstream fashion industry. One woman, for example, said, "especially when I'm going to class, I notice a difference between what I'm wearing and what some of the other girls are wearing. My income is the biggest thing that sets me apart, and my actual body-type because I can't wear those clothes anyways." Another woman explains, "you want to pick something that is in style, but it has to fit your body type. I'm not going to wear low-rise jeans and stuff. I'm not going to force myself into them just to be in style." Although these women want to be 'in-fashion,' they recognize that what is in style does not work for everyone. The mainstream fashion industry markets clothes for a small body, which in turn creates an 'ideal.' Up-to-date styles are made for a particular body-type that a small proportion of our society actually has. As suggested by Emberley and Finkelstein in chapter two, the mainstream fashion industry appears to offer choices, but in reality consumers are limited. Our decisions surrounding fashion are shaped by our sense of 'self' and social experiences. Often times these are limiting because they are related to other factors. Although the industry may offer a multitude of styles, we are confined to those that we can actually wear; body-type and income are two of the determining factors.

While the above respondents appear to be comfortable with their body, and aware of the limitations that come along with it, other women have a more difficult time dealing with the pressures placed on the body by the mainstream fashion industry. When

discussing the decisions she makes about what to wear, one interviewee stated, “I just like to not look too fat. I like to disguise the weight that I am.” Similarly, when asked how she makes decisions about fashion, another woman said, “number one, do I look fat in it?” Finally, another interviewee answered the same question as follows, “I wore sweatpants until I was fourteen, I never wore jeans, so that probably supports my comfort theory. I was also overweight as a teenager, so that explains the comfort. I didn’t try to be sexy as a teenager, I just tried not to be seen.” These responses suggest that the women’s experiences with fashion are greatly affected by their body types. Their actual weight or dress size is irrelevant. These women are continuously bombarded with feelings of inadequacy when it comes to dress.

The relationship between fashion and the body, as experienced by these women, is without a doubt linked to the prevalence of underweight models and the creation of an unrealistic ideal by the mainstream fashion industry. Again, these women do not feel they have a choice about what to wear. Looking at the dialectical relationship between distinction and conformity that underlies the discussion of a connection between fashion, our sense of ‘self,’ and self-expression, these women do not have the freedom to choose one way or another; they are limited to the clothes that actually fit them. While their decisions about fashion are shaped by their sense of ‘self,’ and they use cultural codes to express this sense of ‘self,’ they are still limited to the clothing available to them. The popular images presented by the mainstream fashion industry that help establish cultural codes are of women of a particular size. Many of the ‘looks’ or styles represented are directed specifically at thin women.

Conclusion

While not all of the respondents agreed with the connections I made between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression, and at times I had to dig deep to uncover the women's true feelings on the subject, I did gather enough data to support my thesis that the daily decisions we make surrounding fashion are shaped by our sense of 'self,' which is developed through experiences of social interaction. I argued that the individual chooses to express this sense of 'self' or display a 'desired self,' and this is done by referring to cultural codes, largely shaped by the mainstream fashion industry. Beginning with a discussion regarding the importance of fashion, as well as appearances and first impressions in the interviewees' everyday lives, I confirmed the premise that fashion is a significant component of daily social interactions.

Although only half of the women felt that their sense of 'self' changed from one situation to another, the statements made regarding this issue allowed me to substantiate the postmodern and symbolic interactionist approach to our sense of 'self.' Many of the women's descriptions of their sense of 'self,' and their decisions about fashion in various situations were multiple, fragmented, and continuous. Moreover there was much emphasis placed on the importance of others. These findings helped me to set the groundwork for an analysis of the complex decision-making process surrounding fashion.

Many of the women's decisions about fashion were shaped by their situations and the other individuals to be involved in them. I outlined that although the respondents' statements did not articulate it, fashion, as predicted, is in fact a significant means of self-expression, and that it is done with others in mind. This was especially clear in those responses regarding 'reading' others' identities through fashion. This discussion pointed

at the factors at play in the decisions we make about fashion. It suggested that our decisions are shaped by our sense of 'self,' and thus our social experiences, and as such we will choose to either express our sense of 'self,' or display our 'desired self.'

Finally, the interviewees were well aware of the influential role of the mainstream fashion industry in their daily experiences of fashion, and their anecdotes helped me to substantiate this argument. The construction and communication of their sense of 'self' was done through cultural codes that were largely shaped by the prevalent mainstream fashion industry. The women's decisions surrounding fashion were dialectical because their sense of 'self' is not unstable, nor singular; it is multifaceted. Working with and/or against the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry, they could construct various images of themselves catering to the different components of their sense of 'self,' and/or their 'desired self.'

In addition to reaffirming the theoretical argument made in chapter two, this research also provides us with further information on the topic. First of all, I was surprised that there were so few statements of resistance by the interviewees. In chapter one, Sawchuk argued that fashion was a commodity to be resisted, and Emberley suggested that fashion creates an 'anti-fashion subject.' Even though the women spoke of the mainstream fashion industry as influential and controlling, there were no indications of resistance or active consumption outside of the boundaries of the mainstream fashion industry. While this may only be the case for this sample, there appeared to be more normative representations of the sense of 'self' than deeper expressions. The experiences of fashion reported by the women were of more traditional, manufactured desires and fantasies.

Secondly, the research findings indicate that we cannot draw a clear line between the expression of our sense of 'self' and the displaying of a 'desired self.' Due to the fact that many of the women's decisions surrounding fashion were shaped around understandings of what they 'should be' wearing or what is 'appropriate,' it is difficult to distinguish the expression of their sense of 'self' from the displaying of their 'desired self.' Instead, the two are intertwined.

Lastly, I was surprised that only half of the women claimed fashion was important to them for self-expression, especially given the way that they answered the other questions. It was demonstrated in this analysis that many of the women's decisions about fashion were linked to their sense of 'self,' and as such, we could conclude that fashion was in fact important to self-expression. Moreover, the way that the respondents suggested the importance of fashion can be seen as part of the ongoing process of creating a specific image. Part of the image that they are constructing and displaying is of 'not caring.' By denying the importance of fashion to them, they are in fact displaying a 'desired self.'

Conclusion

I began this research by asking how fashion participates in the process of self-expression. This thesis was based on the premise that material items and first impressions or appearances are important in our culture. It did not offer a critique of this, but rather, it attempted to see how they play out in the daily decisions we make about fashion. The first chapter outlined the relevance of the topic of fashion to social studies by explaining these two propositions. The relevance of fashion in our culture could be seen in the nine out of twelve respondents who felt that fashion bared at least some importance in their day-to-day lives. Moreover each of the twelve respondents reported that first impressions and appearances were important in their daily lives. As such, not only was it suggested that fashion could be used as a tool of empowerment in social experiences, but that it could also create and reproduce differences and inequalities based on factors such as body-type or socioeconomic class. The emphasis on social experiences in this discussion paved the way into an analysis of our sense of 'self.'

I hypothesized that fashion participates in communicating our sense of 'self,' and this daily construction or bricolage is organized around the prevalent mainstream fashion industry. This hypothesis has been substantiated through a literature review, a theoretical argument, and my own research findings. As suggested by Sawchuk in chapter one, 'you are what you wear.' I have learned that fashion is consciously and unconsciously used as a means of self-expression, and that the mainstream fashion industry is significantly involved in this process. As my research progressed, I asked myself whether the process of making decisions about fashion was an act of adornment, communication,

construction, or a mechanism of distinction. I noticed that the dividing line between self-expression and 'performance' could not always be made. Instead, there is a continuous shift (often unconscious) between the two.

Combining postmodern theories of identity and symbolic interactionist approaches to the self, I constructed an understanding of our sense of 'self' for this thesis. It was argued that our sense of 'self' is multiple, fragmented, unstable, and continuous, while at the same time dependent on the 'other.' Our sense of 'self' varies according to the situation and the individuals involved, and as a result, is never complete. One of the ways in which we express our changing sense of 'self' is through 'performance.' The individual, taking into account others' responses and perceived expectations for the particular context of interaction, decides what kind of impression he or she wants to make.

The discussion of our sense of 'self' led to the argument of a complex relationship between fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression. This was introduced with an explanation of the communicative nature of fashion. It was argued that there are messages embedded in clothes, and as such, there is always communication involved in fashion. This form of expression is done based on cultural codes, and 'read' with the same cues. Grounded in the understanding that clothes are a form of communication, it was outlined that fashion participates in the construction and communication of our sense of 'self.' The body, and the clothes that adorn it, were argued to be a representation of our sense of 'self.' It was suggested that individuals construct their understanding of their sense of 'self' according to their experiences of social interaction. This sense of 'self' is then expressed through fashion.

In chapter two it was argued that clothes are used to express things such as mood, values, beliefs, personal interests, and social positions, and this argument was supported in chapter three with my own research. Although, as suggested above, the 'self' that is expressed may not be an authentic representation. Individuals may choose to express a 'desired self,' or perform an identity. The women interviewed suggested that their use of clothing is situational and they often create a specific 'look.' This practice indicates that the women are using fashion as a means of 'performance' for different circumstances. It seems as though they assess the situation, make a decision as to whether or not they want to express their sense of 'self,' if they do not, they must decide what type of impression they want to make, and then display that 'desired self;' this process can be both conscious or unconscious. Moreover, because the women find themselves in various situations, there is an ongoing construction and communication of quite different aspects of their selves. Of course while there may be a multitude of 'desired selves' they may not necessarily differ to a great degree. Individuals create and display a 'desired self' by working with their own sense of 'self,' and while the two may differ, they may intertwine. By displaying a 'desired self' the individual may come to understand his or her self in the manner that it is being performed. This thesis has pointed at the continuous slipping of the expression of our sense of 'self' into the construction and displaying of a 'desired self' through fashion.

The daily decisions we make surrounding fashion are related to the messages that we want to send to others, but the mainstream fashion industry is also involved. It was outlined that the images we choose to display are linked to the images presented by the media for the mainstream fashion industry. As suggested by Synnott in chapter one, the

body is both an individual and a cultural construction. While individuals may feel that they are making their own decisions about fashion, the decision-making process takes place within a cultural context and is influenced by specific industries. In chapter two it was argued that individuals choose to resist and/or adhere to the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry. I suggested that many individuals do not choose one way or another. This was the case with the women interviewed, they all claimed to make their own decisions about what to wear. However, it was argued in chapter three that although some individuals may resist the norms set by the fashion industry, each of the twelve women interviewed were 'making their own decisions' within the boundaries of the mainstream fashion industry. That is to say that all of the women interviewed, could be classified by Barnard as 'passive consumers.' Although the fashion industry appears to offer choices to the public, it was argued by theorists, and supported by my research findings, that we are in fact limited in terms of what is made available, what we can afford to buy, and what works for our body-type. This limitation is a contradiction to the suggested notion that we have freedom of expression. In chapter two it was outlined by Hall that the notion of 'difference' implies that we understand who we are based on whom we are not. Due to its controlling forces, the mainstream fashion industry interferes with the development of our sense of 'self' because it does not provide us with alternatives. While we may be told that we have the right to choose what we want to wear and what messages we want to send, the dialectical dynamic at play is articulated under the umbrella of the mainstream fashion industry.

My findings have left me with a series of questions, which will be considered for future studies. As outlined in chapter three, one of the limits of my research was that

although the respondents' statements could be understood as supporting the relationship between our decisions about fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression, when asked if fashion was important to them for self-expression many of the women were reluctant to say 'yes.' I would like to continue my exploration of this relationship and see just how aware the individual is of it in her daily decisions surrounding fashion. Do the women recognize the weight of fashion in their daily expressions of their sense of 'self' or displays of their 'desired self?' Would further research help me to better answer this question, by either interviewing the women again, or working with another sample? Similarly, I mentioned that I was surprised to learn that none of the women truly resisted the mainstream fashion industry; there were no active consumers in this sample. Perhaps further research with a larger sample will allow me to get a better idea of how controlling or influential the mainstream fashion industry is in our culture.

In addition, because my research was conducted with the assumption that there would be women who resisted the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry, I initially considered the decision-making process surrounding fashion as dichotomous, rather than dialectical. I now know that the decisions we make about fashion are based on choosing to both resist and adhere to the norms set by the mainstream fashion industry. The research has demonstrated that similar to the way in which we move back and forth between choosing to express our sense of 'self' or display our 'desired self,' we will shift between distinction and conformity. This dialectic is necessary if we consider our sense of 'self' to be multifaceted and never complete.

Finally, I am also interested in looking into what specific factors are communicated through fashion. This study explained that fashion is a form of

communication, and it gave some examples, but it did not uncover the details of what is communicated through clothing. In chapter two Goffman outlined that fashion is a means of communicating norms and stereotypes, are they the most prominent factors? If so, how much of all of this is a product of our times? The desire for the new, the multifaceted individual, and ever-changing styles are all linked to our contemporary fast-paced culture. What does that say about the past and future relationships between decisions about fashion, our sense of 'self,' and self-expression?

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Appendix One
Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?
2. Do you get attached to clothes?
3. Do you put a lot of time into clothes—i.e. shopping, getting dressed?
4. Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?
5. Do you think looks are important?
6. Do you think first impressions are important?
7. Does your sense of ‘self’ change from one situation to another?
8. What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?
9. Do you think an image can be created through clothes?
10. Do you ever use clothes to ‘perform’ an identity, or ‘play a part’?
11. How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?
12. How do they work as an ‘ensemble’?
13. How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your ‘self’ to others?
14. How did you decide to wear those clothes today?
15. What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?
16. Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?
17. Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?
18. What do these clothes say about your ‘self’?
19. Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes ‘represent’ you?
20. What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?

21. What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?
22. What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?
23. What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?
24. What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?
25. Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?
26. What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?
27. Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?
28. When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?
29. How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?
30. When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?
31. Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?
32. What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?
33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?
34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?
35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

Appendix Two
Transcribed Interviews

Interview One

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-I like to look nice. Sometimes I don't even have to look nice, I have to be comfortable. So, basically that's my criteria. If there is a special event, or if I have to go somewhere, I'll make a special effort.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes. I only recently threw out the shirt I wore on the first day of grade 9. I haven't worn it in years. Which is odd because I'm not particularly fashion conscious.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-Not at all.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-Not at all. I ask for them for gifts.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Yes.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Yes, definitely.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Yes, it does.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-Sometimes clothes change from situation to situation.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Definitely.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-I think the closest to that is if I'm going to the theatre or a performance—out of respect for the performance.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Today, my pants are somewhat trendy, but they're really practical as well. Everything is very 'wash and wear', very easy. I'm a student, so it's not particularly the newest thing—except for my shoes, they're quite expensive, really good quality too! They're for comfort, they have good support and they're waterproof too. They support my lifestyle.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-They were the most accessible things in my closet—they were the first things to jump out at me.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-It was nice enough that I could work in it, and casual enough that I could wear these running shoes.
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Yes.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**

18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I think I definitely give off a particular image, which I'm aware of. I think it shows that I have no money. And it's practical that I try to be somewhat trendy—I don't want to be out-of-date, especially when I'm working in fashion. I think I look like a student, like someone who's not working a business-type job.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-Not always. Because I'm an older student... Especially when I'm going to class, I notice a difference between what I'm wearing and what some of the other girls are wearing. My income is the biggest thing that sets me apart, and my actual body-type because I can't wear those clothes anyways. So, I wear what works for me and what I think looks best.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I'm sure it does, but I'm not so much aware of it.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-What I wear going out on a date is different than what I've got on now, often. I'd wear something a little dressier, and I would probably wear makeup.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-What I can afford to buy.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-Working in a clothing store, I see women who I relate to, or who I wouldn't want to be like.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I don't know. I don't really think so.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-I think there are certain items that are obvious that I don't understand, like gangs. But, I think generally people dress for a reason and they make it fairly easy to pick up on things.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-I think it's actually their posture and their expressions. I don't think it's necessarily their clothing, which may be why I don't put much value on what I wear.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-I have a very limited budget, so my clothes tend to work together, which means very neutral colours, unfortunately.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
-I have done that, both aggressive and seductive. I think it's more of how you feel wearing something and how you feel that day. On the flipside of that, if I'm home

with my mom, I don't care whatsoever what I'm wearing. It's more mood in that you can express a lot through your attitude. Like a black sweater can mean lots of things.

29. How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?

-It didn't, not at all.

30. When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?

-I usually shop on a need basis.

31. Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?

32. What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?

33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?

-I'm not a label shopper. I know that people try to resist it because of labour practices that may be happening, but that's true for most companies. I don't feel comfortable going into a Gap store, I feel like instantly I'm being manipulated or something. I tend to shop in smaller stores that have a variety of labels. Like, a place like the Bay, where you can just shop.

34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?

-Well definitely. I think that because I consciously stay away from a lot of shopping environments, it limits me. And, in that sense, it is reflecting what I'm wearing because I'm avoiding...

35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

Interview Two

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-Somewhat important. It came a bit more important once I started working at a clothing store because I was immersed in all of the trends. I went to a catholic high school and we wore uniforms, so I wasn't as conscious of it as I am now.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes. I have certain sweaters that I like and my parents make fun of me for living in them, but if it's comfortable...
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
More getting dressed than shopping. I hate shopping and because I work at Animation, it's faster for me. It's just putting things together because I get bored of my clothes really easily.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-In between. I always look for a good sale.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Yes and no. I think for first impressions, but after that, no. I know for an interview, it's important to be proper and business-like. I think it depends on where you live too.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-I think I always try and be myself. Sometimes I get more nervous than in other situations, but I love being around people, so I guess I'm pretty confident, unless I'm in some situation that is very unusual.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-I'm pretty attracted to a certain type of clothes. My main concern is comfort. I like to be somewhat in style, mainly because of where I work, because I am aware of the trends. I want to be a part of... I think in the media we are so bombarded with how people dress and look, it matters to me to a certain extent because I want to fit in, but I don't want to feel like I'm buying into it. I really applaud people who have their own unique style.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Definitely. I think just adding personal touches, and people where things differently too—different bodies.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Definitely. Especially if you go clubbing, I know that I'm going to be surrounded by girls who are gorgeous and in tight clothing, so I start thinking of what I'm going to wear. Whenever I have to go to a club or a formal event, I get really stressed out, and I start crying because I think, oh my go, I look so terrible. I know that I shouldn't compare my self to other people, but I can't help it. When I'm in that kind of situation, I really start thinking about what I'm going to wear just so I think, 'oh I'm wearing a new top...' it will ease my anxiety a little bit.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**

13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-Just somewhat important. It is a little bit important because that's the first thing that people see—what you're wearing and how you put yourself together. I want to come off like I'm at least a little bit up-to-date with what's happening, but not beyond that.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-In terms of going to school, I'm always very casual. I don't put in as much effort into what I'm going to wear, as if I was going to work, or if I'm going out.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-Now that I'm working more than I have been in the past, I tend to spend a little bit more on clothes. I try to take care of myself really well, so that I can wear it for a long time, so that I don't have to spend so much money.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-No, I'm not an observant person. I might think to myself, 'oh, I like what she's wearing, or that's really cool.' I like jewellery, so that's probably the first thing that I notice. It's not the most important thing. But, sometimes when I go to clubs I become judgemental, and I feel really bad.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-The price is probably the number one thing. But, if it's pants and they fit me properly (because I have a problem finding pants that fit me properly usually) the price will matter, but not as much as like a top or a sweater, just because I know I'll wear pants more. Usually, just something that catches my eye.

- 31. Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Definitely, because working at the store and both my best friends are fashion oriented, and sometimes I feel like when you go out with certain people that are like that, I want to be like that too. But everyone is different and everyone has different body types and everyone earns different amounts of money. Everywhere you look, there's some kind of ad advertising that impacts us.
- 32. What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
- 33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-Whatever! I know that everyone is going to buy those clothing because that's what they're selling. I don't want to dress like everyone else, but if there's something that I like, like let's say, a jacket from the whole outfit, then I might buy that. But, I am more in-between. I just go with it!
- 34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
- 35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**

Interview Three

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-On a scale of 1 to 10, like a 5. Some days it's important, and on others it isn't.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Sometimes. But, not on a regular basis—like maybe one thing in my whole life.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
- No. I hate shopping. In the morning I just roll out of bed.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-It goes in fluxes. Most of the time, no.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Yes.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-No, I'm constant.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-They're important. Like if I'm going to an interview... It's appropriateness; it's common sense. Clothing is important because it gives you confidence.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Oh ya!
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Maybe. Sometimes when I go out to a nightclub I pretend that I'm something that I'm not.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Comfortable.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-Comfortable, but not sloppy—I hope not!
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-I guess if you dress up or look good all the time, it shows that you actually care about yourself, but if you look like a bum all the time, and look like shit, then you know that you aren't portraying the greatest image. But for me personally, it's important somewhat, but not a lot.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-These are the only pants that fit me, and the only ones I have that I can wear to work that aren't too dressy, they go with sneakers, I mean. And, the t-shirt is comfortable for work.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-What's appropriate. If I'm going to an interview, obviously I'll think about it.
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Ya.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Yes.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-That I'm not going to squeeze myself into shoes that are going to make my back hurt. That I can be put together if I need to be. That I'm practical, I'm not out to show the world that I'm a supermodel.

19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-No, it's not conscious. Sometimes it might be, like if you go for an interview you want to present yourself as a professional person.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-No, it doesn't play a part. I'm not going to put on a Hungarian outfit. When I was little I did, just to stick out. But, now, no.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-The fact that I like men has nothing to do with the way that I dress.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I think it's unconscious. If you can only afford to wear salvation army clothes, then that's what you're going to wear. But you can still be put together in that. Like, my grandmother has never had money, but she looks better than some people who are super rich.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I think it plays a part somehow, but I just don't know how.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Partially, but it's not necessarily true.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-I think it's the way they are, and I think that you really have to ask them. It's a personal choice.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-No. I don't really think that I have a style. My mom harps on that, she gives me magazines to find out who you are.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
-It didn't. I have to go to work after.
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-Necessity. Or, sometimes I just like it. When I used to go clubbing a lot, I would think—that would look so good, and then I would spend so much money on tops.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Ya, totally. Not, to a huge degree, but...
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
-What looks good on me, and something that is part of the trend that suits me. Like, I like those printed purses, but I'm not going to go out and buy the pants, and the jackets too. I'll buy one thing of the trend that suits who I am already.

- 33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-I wouldn't resist, and I wouldn't necessarily go with it. I would go with it to a certain extent, but a small extent.
- 34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
-To a certain extent, ya.
- 35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**
-Friends, family. It's all personal preference.

Interview Four

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-I guess it depends on what I'm doing, where I'm going. Sometimes you just want to wear jogging pants and a sweater, and some days you want to dress up and look good.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes, you have certain clothes that are your favourites.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-I put a lot of time into shopping. I shouldn't but I do. Getting dressed, just because sometimes I just don't know what I want to wear, I'll get dressed and undressed several times.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-Yes, but don't tell!
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Not really, obviously that's the first thing you judge someone on, but in the end it matters more who you are.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-I don't know. I don't think so. You obviously judge on your first impression, but if you meet them again, it can totally change.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-I don't think so.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-Yes they do play a role, because when I'm doing certain things I know I can dress a certain way. Like when I was doing exams, I could wear jogging pants everyday, but when I go looking for a job, obviously I'm not going to go in jogging pants.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Partially, but as soon as you open your mouth, the image can totally be changed.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-I don't think so. I might!
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Just regular everyday clothes.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-I would say casual, but someone might not!
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-I don't know if it's that important. Obviously, I'm going to put an effort into how I look, but more important is how I interact with people, because that is going to be judged more than what I'm wearing.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-They were clean and easy to find in my room.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-No, because some days I have the time to think about it. It depends on if I got up late or if I'm running early.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**

18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I'm sure that they say something, but what, I don't know! I'm sure that if someone saw me they could form an opinion based on what I'm wearing.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-I just pick clothes that I like, and not worry about what someone else might think. I pick clothes that fit my style, my lifestyle, what I'm doing.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-It doesn't play a part.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-It doesn't play a part.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I don't make enough money to buy just anything.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I don't think that it has an effect.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-No. You could form an opinion, but that might not necessarily be who they are.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-Talking to them. Just getting to know what their values, thoughts, ideas are.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-I guess. I mean, everything is pretty much the same regardless of where I'm going. Unless I'm really tired, and really couldn't care less.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
-I do dress to fit where I'm going or who I'm going to be with.
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
-It didn't.
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-What I like and what fits me. If it's comfortable, and falls within my price range.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Ya, because if I like one thing and no one's making it, then I can't buy it.
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
-If I can afford it, and if it fits.
33. **Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-A little of both. I don't consciously try to resist it, and I don't consciously try to go with it. I just buy what's there, and what's there is generally what's popular.

34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?

-Again, yes and no. I might like something from five years ago, even if it's not still in the media. And what I see, I might be like—look what so and so is wearing, I love it—it's just because it's there and in your face.

35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

-Friends, family, work, and things you see in the media. Just because it's there; you see it all the time.

Interview Five

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-It's pretty important. But, since I'm a college student it's kind of gone down hill—it's more whatever is comfortable and fast. If I'm going out or not at school, it's pretty important.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-Not really. I'll just find it and go. I don't spend time searching stores and stuff.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-Yes, too much! Especially since I work in retail. When you're in retail you're always around fashion, so you're more aware of it.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-To a certain extent. I think it's important to make yourself look good, presentable, but when it comes down to like getting to know somebody, or meeting somebody, no. I wouldn't not talk to someone because they didn't look good.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Ya.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Not really. I think when I was younger it used to, but now it's more stable.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-I think they play a pretty important role. You know when you meet someone and they look really put together, it's dumb, but you think—wo, they look really good. You notice that.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Ya, because a lot of times when you look at someone and what they're wearing, you can tell a lot about them.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Oh ya.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Comfortable.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-Comfortable, casual. I didn't spend too much time thinking about it.
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-It's fairly important because you have your own style, but it's not who I am, but it is important.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-Because I slept in a little, I didn't have much time, so I grabbed whatever was quick.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-A lot of it is time, especially in terms of hair. If I have a lot of time, I'll actually spend the time to put together a nice outfit and do my hair. But when I don't have much time, I kind of just throw everything together.

17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Yes. Like, if I know I'm going out at night, and I don't have time to go home to change, I wouldn't be dressed like this.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I don't know. I guess they're kind of fun.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-Not really, but I think that all of the clothes I have just automatically do that.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I guess you can kind of tell sometimes that I'm a student by the way that I dress.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-I think you can get a good idea or understanding of what they're like.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-They're personality, I guess.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-I try to, but one day I will be dressed really nicely and be completely put together, but the next day, I will be the total opposite, so it's kind of hard to.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
-When I go out to a club, I'll wear low shirts or something like that.
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-I think mainly if it makes me feel good. If I see pants that I really like, but don't like them when I try them on, I won't buy them. People can tell if you don't feel good in what you're wearing.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Oh ya, for sure.
32. **What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?**

33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?

-I like to pick and choose. I never think—oh, I want to look like that—but, I'll be like—those are cool pants, but I don't like this. If I don't like it, I won't get it just because it's the cool thing. And, if I do like it, I will get it.

34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?

-Probably partially.

35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

-That I like it myself, and that I'm comfortable, and it's not too expensive for my budget.

Interview Six

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-I'd probably say that it's a mediocre priority.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Sometimes, ya. Like if you find that one pair of jeans that you never want to give up, even if they don't fit you anymore.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-Not really. I'm not a big shopper.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-When I do go shopping, yes, I do spend a lot of money on clothes.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-I think that there is a certain importance, but I don't think that they are the most important thing.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Ya, because that first impression lingers in your mind when you think about that person.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Ya, it just varies from situation to situation because a new trait will arise depending on the circumstances.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-They don't really play a role. Like, I can be in the best mood ever, but still be wearing bummy clothes because I just want to relax.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-I don't think in me personally, but I think in certain friends and stuff, ya I totally see them through their clothes because that's what they use to show other people their personalities.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Oh ya. Not so much to fit in, but for example, sometimes when you go clubbing on a Saturday night you want that sexy slutty look, so you're going to dress accordingly, but obviously if you're going to dinner with like executives or something, obviously you want to dress to present yourself as an educated person.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Very laid back. Jeans, turtleneck...
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-I think they create an everyday look.
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-I don't think it's important at all. I'm a very outspoken person, so fashion doesn't help me much.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-Actually, I didn't decide today, I decided yesterday. And basically, my decision was based on the fact that I hadn't done my laundry.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Well, I guess it depends on where I'm going. Like if I'm going to school or work...

17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Yes, they did.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I don't think they say anything.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-I don't think so, no.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None, whatsoever.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-To a certain extent. I'm sure that if I won a million dollars, I would buy the better quality item.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Ya, I think I can. But, I've been totally off base. Like sometimes you see someone and think that they like this type of music, but sometimes you're totally wrong and they just like dressing a certain way, but that's not who they are.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-Basically, just a conversation with that person.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-Ya, I believe so. I like the whole jeans thing, but I like the whole dress pants and a top for my everyday look.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
-I don't think that I have a certain way of doing it, but I do do it.
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
-I forgot this morning that I was going to talk to you.
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-Basically, what fits me the best.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-To a certain extent, yes. Like, you want to pick something that is in style, but it has to fit your body type. I'm not going to wear low-rise jeans and stuff. I'm not going to force myself into them just to be in style.

- 32. What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
-If I feel comfortable in it, and it fits me, but I will also ask the advice of my friends.
- 33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-I'm not one of those people who go into a store and say—give me something that's in style. But, sometimes I do see my taste being influenced by what I see everywhere.
- 34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
-I think sometimes my taste is influenced by fashion, the media, and what everyone is wearing, but not to a big extent.
- 35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**
-I go into a store, I see what I like, I try it on, and I'm gone. So, it's basically necessity.

Interview Seven

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-I'd probably say not that important because I'm not really extremely into what I'm wearing everyday, but I sometimes have those days, where you know you freak out over what you wear like if you want to look funky if you're going to a funky martini bar, or something like that. But, compared to other people, it's not very important to me on a day-to-day basis.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Ya. For example I have these combat boots that I wore all throughout high school, but I don't want to throw them out even though I don't wear them anymore. I think that I'll restructure the heel or something like that, but I'll still probably never wear them again. Also, I'm constantly wearing the same clothes. Like, I always wear these jeans, so if they were to get damaged I would probably get upset.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-No, because I recently went through a poor stage of life, so I didn't go shopping or looking at clothes, so that got me out of the habit. But, I still look through fashion magazines and stuff, but more creatively, like how can I revamp the clothes I already have. But, it's a creative thing, I don't ever think—oh, I have to go get that sweater.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-No. I probably spend less than half of my pay on clothes per week.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-It's for sure not important. I'm very confident in how I look on a day-to-day basis. And, in terms of other people, it's only important if you're trying to look professional, and not necessarily, like if you dress sloppy, you're half the person as the person wearing the suit, but I think that if you're professional it just gives an air about yourself that people will take you more seriously. I think that if you're in a professional environment, looks are important. When I worked in an office, if I looked good and professional, I felt better about myself and the work that I was doing.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-In the sense of like the actual person. I guess everybody is guilty because you can easily label somebody through what they wear. Like you can see someone and think—oh, she's such a gina—like a modern valley girl, but then you'll meet her and she'll be really smart. And, I've encountered that in my own life. But, a lot of is also what the person says, how they come across.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Ya, I think so. I always know who I am, and what I'm all about, but I think that it changes in terms of how you express yourself etc. Like say, I'm hanging out with my friends who are all into arts etc., it's just a totally different vibe. And then, if you're will people you don't really know, I tend to be shy sometimes and not as lively.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-Obviously I'll dress how I feel for the situation. Like when I go to visit my friend in Montreal, I'll dress however I want because I don't know anyone there.

9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Ya, you can create an image through clothes. But, I think that it's more how you're feeling, and I think that people can pick up on that. If I'm in just a neutral mood I'll just wear my jeans and a sweater, but if I'm feeling a little more confident, I'll dress more edgy, like maybe I'll wear a top with a very low v-neck or big hoop earrings.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-No, 'perform an identity,' no. You are trying to portray something with your clothes, but I don't like the wording, 'perform an identity.'
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Comfortable. My usual rings and usual watch, my one pair of good jeans. Just comfortable. I like my watch though because it's funky. One word though, it's everyday.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-Jeans, I knew I was going to wear because I wore my skirt yesterday. My sweater, I looked into my closet, and said—"I haven't worn this in a while."
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Ya because what I've been trying to do is rotate my clothes as much as possible, wear things that I haven't worn in a while.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Yes, because coming to work, I knew that I wanted to look a bit nicer. Plus, I knew that people would be looking at what I was wearing, so I wasn't going to wear my gross sweatpants. And, I'm only working for 4.5 hours today, so I knew that I would just be going home to get changed anyways.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-For example, my shoes, I like them, they're comfortable. That's the two main things to me. Comfort with a funk.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-No, I don't think so, because I think that all my clothes are like that. I can say that sometimes I do make a conscious effort. Like when I was working in a new environment, I was making a conscious effort to look good, I put thought into what I was wearing and I would wear makeup, but once you get comfortable with your environment, you let that all go, and let loose. I will sometimes, obviously, but I think that everyone does.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I've never been affected by that, except when I was younger I had to look nice for my grandmother because she's traditional European.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-Well, I have a boyfriend. Sometimes, I'll wear something that I know he really likes, so I'll be excited because I know that he really likes it.

22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I could say that if I was rich I would have more clothes. If I was famous, for sure, you would get caught up in so much superficial crap.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I know that I'm not going to wear my schleps to work, but I know that I'm going to look decent, but I don't have to dress in a professional manner.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I'm not in school right now, and I haven't hit post secondary, so if I'm going to spend fifty dollars on a sweater, that's not going to be my food for the next two weeks.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Sometimes it's easy to tell, depending on what labels they're wearing, you can tell how well off they are. Otherwise, no, I don't think so. I've learned better than to judge someone.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-No influence from anything, just to sit down with the person and just talk.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-All my clothes are the same.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Only if you were your own designer could you get away from the fashion industry and their influences.
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
-#1 Sales. #2 I seriously consider whether or not I'm going to wear it for more one year. It's practicality.
33. **Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-Whatever, I buy what I like. Sometimes, I make a conscious effort to go to different stores because they're just harvesting all the same stuff. I find myself more drawn to independent stores because it's different.
34. **Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
35. **Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**

Interview Eight

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-Not that important.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Ya. I have a long history of people wrecking clothes on me. Like putting sweaters in the dryer and stuff. And, I get super angry about that, even years later. Even, if I don't like it!
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-No.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-I don't put a lot of money into clothes, no. I usually buy clothes that are...I usually buy stuff that I know are going to last.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Of course, ya.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Yes.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-From my perspective, I think that your sense of self is affected greatly by who you encounter. Different parts of you are going to be active depending on who you're with. If I'm attracted to someone or if I hate them, there are going to be different impressions of who I am. More often than not, I do recognize my different selves. But, often I am surprised with my only actions.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-They do play a role.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Yep.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Yes.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Comfortable.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-Comfortable.
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-I just finished doing a yoga video, and these clothes were on the top of the laundry pile.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-No. Depends on what my day is like. If I'm teaching I dress differently.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-Certainly, all my clothes say something about myself.

19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-No, not a conscious effort to make sure that the clothes represent me. But, let's say if I have to teach, I will make a conscious effort to make sure that the clothes appear professional.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-Like I would never pick up Fubu, and that's probably based on my ethnicity.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-There's the decision to appear feminine, or the feminine aversion of the butch. But, I think that it has to do more with hair. You can get away with a lot more if you have longer hair.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-No.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-A conversation.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-No, I don't think so, actually. I consciously try to change things up. I like to create a 'new Sharon' especially when I see old people.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-Price. I like it to be in fashion.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Of course, ya.
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
33. **Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-I don't think I either resist or adhere. For sure, I do resist some styles, but not just fashion, like fashion has become intertwined with popular culture. Like for example, Nikita has this whole look, a lot of black, a lot of leather, very tailored clothes, and I get kind of sucked into that.
34. **Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
-Yes.

35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

-I have to shop with someone to get a second opinion.

Interview Nine

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-I care about what I wear, but I wouldn't say that the opinions of others make me dress that way.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Oh ya, I do. Ratty old sweat pants and stuff like that.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-I think, honestly, I put too little time into it. When I was a kid, ya, but now that I'm older I have a lot less time, and a lot less money. So, I don't get around to shopping. If I see something that I like, I'll get it.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-No.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-I think they are to the world, but I don't think that they are to me.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-I don't think that they are as important as everyone makes them out to be. I mean everyone should be given the opportunity to change, and the concept of first impressions doesn't make that possible. But, the fact is that a lot of people are influenced by first impressions, and you kind of just have to take that by person to person. I've had a lot of people not impressed by my first impression.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Ya. Without a doubt, and it's actually really reflected in my clothing.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-If I'm confident I'll go bright and sexy, and if I'm not confident, I'll go dark and demure.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Yes, without a doubt. Well, I guess it depends. If that person wears that particular type of clothes all the time, then yes, but if they go out one night and dress out of the ordinary, then no.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Yes, well, not really. I guess, kind of, like if I'm going to go to a stockholders meeting, then I'm not going to wear jeans and a t-shirt. So, I'm going to go with 'no' on that one, with a potential 'yes'.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-I would describe them as I have been cleaning the house and walking the dog.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-Slob.
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-I wouldn't say very important. I tend to feel that if I'm defined by what I'm wearing, then whoever is defining me that way is pretty shallow.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-It was on my floor and close to my bed, but today is Saturday.

16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-No. Pretty close though, when I wake up in the morning to go to work, I generally stay in bed, before I can manage to get myself out of bed, thinking about what I'm going to wear. Really, a number of factors has to do with it, but really whatever pops into my mind first that works together.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Ya. I don't really have a diverse lifestyle. Work clothes are work clothes. Obviously if I'm going to go skiing, or to the theatre, or to a business lunch, then obviously that would play a part.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I really enjoy the simple things in life. I'm laid back and relaxed, and I would rather look comfortable in sloppy clothes, than uncomfortable in nice clothes.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-I wouldn't say so, no. My clothes do represent who I am, but it's more because I make them that way, than because I pick them out to be that way.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-The fact that I'm white doesn't matter.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I like to look good if I'm going out. I try to look the best that I can, so that I take up a place in your mind, and you don't continue to just walk on by.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Ya. Not, identity, I think that you can read their mental state.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-Whatever is cheap and looks good.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-I don't feel it influences what I buy, I feel that it forces what I buy, because the fashion industry declares what's on sale.
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**

33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?

-I don't think that I try to adhere to the norm, but I don't think that I try to resist it. I had a lot of friends in high school who did, but I wasn't one of those people. I wouldn't wear a mini skirt because it's in fashion either.

34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?

35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?

-I wore sweatpants until I was 14, I never wore jeans, so that probably supports my comfort theory. I was also overweight as a teenager, so that explains the comfort. I didn't try to be sexy as a teenager, I just tried not to be seen. I'm a fairly sporty individual, I'd rather be outside, than inside. So, I'd say that there are a number of factors, basically, my lifestyle.

Interview Ten

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-Pretty important, only because if I'm getting ready for work and if I feel that I'm not dressed well, I lose confidence for the day.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes. I buy clothes and I think that they're special clothes, and I'll only wear them on special occasions. I tried to throw out clothes today, and there's this one sweatshirt from when I was teaching swimming, and I just can't get rid of it.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-I try to keep it as simple as possible. Shopping I take a long time to do when I do it, but getting dressed, I try to keep it as simple as possible.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-Yes. But, for me, it's all relative. I used to buy all my stuff at the Gap, but now I'm into Banana Republic, but I always buy stuff on sale. Last summer I bought 4 pairs of new shoes, but they were all on sale. So, it's justified. But, there was this time this summer when I spent an exorbitant amount of money in one store. I bought a skirt, a blouse, and a jacket for \$400 and I still haven't worn the skirt.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Yes.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Yes.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-I don't think so. I'm pretty much the same person whether I'm up north or in the city. I don't think that I change that much from situation to situation.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-Well, on Monday we've got clients coming into the office, so I have to remember to wear a suit that day. I have a real stigma with having clothes for different occasions. I have my work clothes, and I can't wear those out to the bar. So, what do I wear to the bar? That's when I get all upset.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Yes.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Yes. Suits. If I have a job interview or something, I'll wear a suit because all of sudden I'm this important person. I love Halloween or going to masquerade balls because I get to dress up and become this new person.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Black and blue. I don't know, this is a really old shirt that I've loved for years. I took really good care of it, but I don't anymore, so now, it's my schlep around shirt. But, the sweater is really good, it's from Banana Republic, I got it before the wedding, to take to Paris. And, the jeans are from the Gap.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-I just like to not look too fat. I like to disguise the weight that I am. I don't want to look like a schlep. I want to look like I know how to dress myself, and maybe that I'm not shopping at Good Will.

14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-The jeans stretch, they're really comfy. This shirt, I really like, it's so comfortable, even though it's ratty. It was the first thing in my closet and I thought—oh well, what the hell, I'll wear that. .
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-Comfort. We went shopping today.
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Ya, probably. Comfort.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Probably to a point. If I'm hanging around the house, I'll just wear sweat pants. But, if I know I'm going out to see people I'll put on something that I think is a little funkier.
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I don't know, what do you think they say? The socks I've had since I was like 16. These jeans, I don't know, they're from the Gap, they're casual. My other jeans, make my hips look big. I'm comfortable.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-No. I wear what I like.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I don't like the word class.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-The level that I'm at now, I tend to think—well, I'm almost 30. It's time for me to grow up and wear proper clothes and start wearing makeup. I like to be dressed well. I don't like to spend lots of money on clothes, I'd prefer to have a big wardrobe, than a small, select, expensive wardrobe. I like to go to the stores where I feel like I should be shopping, not Old Navy, not the Gap, more Banana Republic, Tristan, Club Monaco. But, I still look for a sale. And, I try to buy good shoes.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Only if they're really obvious. I've got a friend that is a total hippie, vegetarian, and you can tell because she wears the flowered skirts and you know...you could really tell. I think that for me because I had to wear a uniform to school...
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-Ya. I like to try to keep a basic, black, white, blue, beige.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**

- 30. When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-It has to look good on me. It has to be at a decent price, I have to be able to say—ya, ok, that's alright. And, I have to be able to fit it into my wardrobe, but that's not always necessarily the truth. Sometimes, there's something that I just have to own. Like I have this skirt that I don't have a single thing to wear with, I don't know when or if I'm going to find something, but the skirt's cool.
- 31. Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-I'd like to think not. I think it did. An example of that, is when the cropped pants came out at the Gap, I got a pair of beige ones, beige embroidered ones, red ones, yellow ones, and jeans. I do wear them to death, but if they hadn't been there, I wouldn't have bought them. I will look into magazines and say—I like that—but, I won't go out and look for it. I'll say—I like that style, I'll look for something similar. I'll buy what's in the stores.
- 32. What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
-Cost. Ease of cleaning. And it has to look good.
- 33. Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-Not one way or the other. My opinion is that I like to buy classic clothes. Emily is a good example of that she buys good white shirts, good black suits. She buys things that will withstand time and wear. And they look amazing on her. So, I'm trying to take a cue from her and do the same sort of thing. She dresses really, really classically.
- 34. Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
- 35. Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**
-Comfort. Like, I won't wear nylons; I can't wear them. So, I don't wear skirts in the winter.

Interview Eleven

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-Not very important. I need to be comfortable.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Yes. Definitely. There's a few outfits in my closet that have been there forever and I've never even worn them.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-No. Not really.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-No. Maybe half of my spending money.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Yes. As much as I'd like to say there not...yes, they are.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Yes. But I think that they're redeemable too.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-No. I think I'm pretty firm on that.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-My clothing is pretty constant. But, if I'm trying to make an impression, like going to a job interview, then it's totally different. Not, totally different, but different enough.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Yes.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-No.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Really casual, street clothes.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-No, not really. It's more how you interact with people.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-It all starts with my shoes. If I know I'm going to be walking a lot I'll wear my running shoes, if not, I'll wear my boots, and then I'll dress accordingly. It all depends on what I'm doing that day.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Yes.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-I think they say something. Comfortable, and that I have a hip-hop influence, so that represents my interests, what I enjoy.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-It just kind of happens. I pick up stuff that appeals to me, and that stuff represents me.

20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-It's more about the crowd that I'm hanging out with. The way that I dress in Vancouver is different from the way that I dress here in Toronto.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Yes. I'm reluctant to say yes, but ya. It's kind of like one of those things that you don't want to admit.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-Yes. I never dress extraordinarily different. Sometimes a little dressier; sometimes a little more casual.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-Stuff that looks different. I don't like to buy the stuff that everyone has. That's the most important thing. And if it fits well, that's huge.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-No.
32. **What are the most important factors in you decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
33. **Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-I go with it, but not directly. I'll see what I like in the store, but I don't pay any attention to what's trendy in the media.
34. **Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
35. **Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**
-My friends and how I'm feeling that day. Events, if I have to go to an event, I'll shop for something in particular.

Interview Twelve

1. **How important is fashion in your day-to-day life?**
-Not really that important.
2. **Do you get attached to clothes?**
-Only very occasionally do I get attached to things. Like, once every couple of years I might find that special item.
3. **Do you put a lot of time into clothes—ie. shopping, getting dressed?**
-No.
4. **Do you spend a lot of money on clothes?**
-No.
5. **Do you think looks are important?**
-Depending on the context, sure. At a job interview, yes, I believe your appearance is important.
6. **Do you think first impressions are important?**
-Again, same thing, if you're at a job interview, yes, day-to-day, no.
7. **Does your sense of 'self' change from one situation to another?**
-Yes.
8. **What role do clothes play in presenting yourself in various situations?**
-Not a very important one. I really only make an effort if I go 'out.' In my day-to-day life, I don't really make an effort.
9. **Do you think an image can be created through clothes?**
-Sure.
10. **Do you ever use clothes to 'perform' an identity, or 'play a part'?**
-Yes, occasionally, if I want to convey a certain image. If I'm applying for a loan at the bank, I certainly don't show up in my track pants.
11. **How would you describe the clothes you are wearing?**
-Pretty much what I wear everyday of my life—track pants and some sort of sweatshirt or sweater.
12. **How do they work as an 'ensemble'?**
-I don't think that appearance wise they're very attractive, but functionally they serve their purpose. Comfortable.
13. **How important is fashion in communicating a sense of your 'self' to others?**
-Not very important.
14. **How did you decide to wear those clothes today?**
-I looked at all my other clothes, decided I didn't fit into all my other clothes, and so I pretty much went with these one pair of pants. It wasn't much of a choice.
15. **What was the most important factor in your decision-making today?**
-Comfort. Only clothes I had left.
16. **Do you feel that it is the same decision everyday?**
-Yes.
17. **Did your plans for the day play a part in your decision-making?**
-Ya, sure. If I'm going out that night, or if I'm going to a nice restaurant for dinner, I'll certainly put more effort into my appearance for that day.

18. **What do these clothes say about your 'self'?**
-They say that I spent about 10 minutes this morning getting ready, and that my focus isn't on my appearance, but something more important, like school.
19. **Do you feel that you make conscious efforts to make sure that your clothes 'represent' you?**
-No.
20. **What part does your ethnicity play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
21. **What part does your sexual orientation play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
22. **What part does your social-economic class play in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
23. **What role does your occupation have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-None.
24. **What role does your education have in the decisions you make about what clothes to wear?**
-I can't wear nice things on the days that I have biochem labs because they'll get ruined.
25. **Do you think that you can 'read' people's identity through their clothes?**
-Only in certain cases.
26. **What do you feel best reveals a person's identity?**
-I don't know, when they talk.
27. **Regardless of your daily plans, do you try to keep a stable style?**
-Ya. I'm not going to wear anything where anyone's going to say, 'wo, what happened to you?' I'm certainly not going to go out and wear dreads tomorrow.
28. **When and how do you dress to be aggressive? Seductive? Etc. Do you use your clothes to express a particular 'image'?**
-Ya, sometimes I do. For instance, that day I had to give a presentation in front of 150 students, I didn't walk in dressed like this, because who am I at that point. So, I obviously dressed a little more mature, a little more 'dressed-up,' and took some care into my appearance that morning. I know that a lot of people take image upon first glance, so before I open my mouth, I want to gain some sort of respect.
29. **How did today's interview have an effect on your decision-making process?**
30. **When shopping for clothes, how do you decide what to buy?**
-#1 factor is price. #2 factor, do I like it? #3 factor, how fat do I look in it? #4 is it something that I can get a lot of use out of it for the price.
31. **Do you feel that the fashion industry has an influence on what you choose to buy?**
-Like just because I see dancing people on a Gap commercial that makes me want to buy Gap? No.

32. **What are the most important factors in your decision-making when you are buying clothes?**
33. **Do you consciously try to resist or adhere to the norm set by the mainstream fashion industry?**
-Well, I guess it will depend on what it is. Did I like that thing a little while ago with the skirts over the pants? No. Would I buy that? No. Do I like the long sweater jackets right now? No, it's just not for me. Do I say to myself, I'm enraged with the fashion industry for coming up with sweater jackets, so I'm going to go to the trouble of wearing the exact opposite everyday? No. It's more I like some stuff that they have out some seasons, and other seasons I can't believe that they actually thought some people would wear it.
34. **Do you think that your taste in clothes is related to what is presented to you in the media?**
-No. I go more function than style, and I don't think that they present function as much in the media as they present style.
35. **Besides the mainstream fashion industry, what other factors influence your taste in clothes?**
-#1 do I look fat in it. #2 functionality.