

FASHION AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY:
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CLOTHING, MOOD, SELF-CONCEPT, AND WELL-BEING

by

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April 2018

ABSTRACT

Fashion and Positive Psychology: Interactions Between Clothing, Self-Concept, and Well-Being

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This qualitative positive psychology study investigated how women experience clothing and how those experiences interact with their emotions, mood, self-concept, and self-esteem, to understand how clothing can influence well-being. Seven women (ages 21-39) participated in a personal account questionnaire, daily clothing diary, and wardrobe interview. This research demonstrates how clothing can uplift mood, reinforce and validate self-concept, boost self-esteem, and enhance well-being. This research contributes to the converging fields of positive psychology and fashion, expands the knowledge on the psychology of clothing behaviour, and highlights the potential of clothing for well-being, providing insight for psychologists, brand strategists, and marketers.

Keywords: clothing, positive psychology, mood, self-concept, self-esteem, well-being.

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**CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION**

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The majority of psychology research in the past has focused on psychoanalysis and behaviourism in studying mental illness, maladaptive behaviours, and therapeutic treatments for these issues, while in contrast, the humanistic approach seeks a holistic view on individuals that focuses on self-awareness and mindfulness to motivate an individual's inherent drive for self-actualization, or the realization or fulfillment of one's full potential. The aim of positive psychology is *flourishing*, feelings of authentic happiness, fulfillment, and functioning effectively at a high level of mental well-being and it focuses on building and nurturing the most positive qualities of an individual (Huppert, 2009a, b; Keyes, 2002; Ryff & Singer 1998; Seligman, 2011). The clothing we wear and the experiences we have wearing our clothing implicitly interacts with our moods, emotions, thoughts, attitudes, behaviours, and self-concept. There is only one empirical study conducted in the U.K. that has explicitly examined the connection between fashion and positive psychology (Masuch & Hefferon, 2014) and the relation of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being to how women experience fashion. Through their grounded theory analysis, researchers identified clothing strategies women use to negotiate selfhood, accept their body, cope with mood, with all of these factors working together to manage their everyday well-being. Hedonic well-being, based on the notion of subjective well-being, can briefly be described as the immediate

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moments of happiness and avoidance of pain, with high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high levels of life satisfaction (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonic well-being can briefly be described the factors that contribute to personal growth and development, such as self-actualization, the concept of becoming a fully functioning person (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Another study that has built on these ideas is an master's thesis also from the UK that researched the relationships between clothing choices and well-being to determine how fashion, mediated by identity, positively impacts the happiness of the wearer (Smith, 2017b).

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

I am interested in how clothing can be used to elevate and reinforce an individual's understanding of self-concept, boost self-esteem, and enhance their hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. I am proposing that individuals who have an understanding of self-concept, know who they are and the person they strive to be, have relatively high self-esteem, and are self-aware and reflective about the clothing they wear, can realize how wearing certain clothing can have a positive impact on their well-being. Clothing can enhance the way they think, see, and feel about themselves; give them the confidence and drive to realize their full potential; influence a positive well-being; and help them flourish in all aspects of life. The intention for my Major Research Project is to explore the interactions and influences between psychology and fashion from a positive psychology perspective. I used qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to gain a deeper understanding of how women choose the clothing they wear every day and how they experience wearing their clothing. The nature of this research required participants to be self-aware and reflective about their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes in order to understand how they experience clothing and in turn, how their experiences interact with the perception of self-concept

and evaluation of self-esteem. The findings of this research will illuminate how clothing and an individual's intrapsychic and interpersonal experiences impact their thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, with the intention of understanding how clothing can be a means to promote positive views of self-concept and well-being.

1.3 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

My research objectives are to determine how women experience the wearing of clothing, how they select the clothing they wear every day, and how these experiences are influenced by the cognitive and emotional appraisals of how they want to present themselves. By utilizing an in-depth qualitative research approach and a small sample of women who are interested in fashion, I intend to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between these relationships to confer the findings of Masuch and Hefferon (2014); clothing practices to negotiate selfhood, befriend the body, and manage mood, overall to manage well-being; and Smith (2017b); intentionally manage identity through dress and the active role dress played in their well-being. By exploring this under researched area, I intend to contribute new findings to the field of positive psychology and fashion. The results of this study will launch future research that can shed light on the positive potential of fashion for well-being and also identify significant areas of study for fashion brands and consumer analysts. Fashion psychology can propel innovative market research, novel design, and enhanced brand experiences to maximize their influence on target markets. Throughout my research, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. How do women experience the selection of clothing and wearing of clothing in their everyday lives?

2. How does one's self-concept, self-esteem, and mood interact with their experiences wearing clothing?
3. How can clothing be used as a styling tool to reinforce the self-concept, enhance self-esteem, boost mood, and in turn promote well-being?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

With hot topics in the media such as self-enhancement, wellness, well-being, and mindfulness, there is a huge opportunity to empirically investigate fashion through the lens of positive psychology. Although anecdotally we accept that fashion can make us feel good and uplift our mood, there is only one empirical positive psychology study that aims to understand the everyday experiences women have with their clothing and how clothing can be a positive influence on our well-being. Our psychology and the experiences we have wearing clothing everyday are so intimately connected to our body and mind; individuals may not even realize why they select the clothing they wear and how that clothing affects their well-being and ability to function optimally and effectively in their day-to-day tasks. In psychology, there are many studies that seek to understand the factors and influences that can negatively impact our brain, health, relationships, and mental health. However, positive psychology is relatively recent area of research (Seligman, 1999) and through a literature review it was found that research on how clothing can be a positive influence on the self and well-being is under researched and outdated. I argue that this area of study is important to consider since clothing provides a physical and emotional experience that can influence the body and mind. This type of in-depth psychological inquiry can provide insight into women's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviours that will allow for the exploration of applying positive psychology to nurture positive views of oneself and promote well-being through clothing, design, and branding. As other fields such as anthropology, cultural studies, and art

history expand their inquiry into studying fashion, filling the gap and making the connection between psychology and fashion from a positive perspective would be an interesting endeavor that would generate new and insightful scholarship.

1.5 BRIEF OUTLINE OF METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), an approach developed within the field of psychology with an idiographic focus to understand and deliver insights into the personal lived experiences, instead of being influenced prior by psychological theories or the researcher's own bias (Smith, 1996; Smith, 2017a). This research project is an active interpretive process as I interpret the research and produce the knowledge that seeks to understand how these women experience their clothing (Smith & Osborn, 2015: 26). This study recruited seven women in Toronto and Guelph, Ontario within the age range of 21-39 and employed the following methods similar to the techniques employed by Guy and Banim (2000); a personal account, a two week long clothing diary, and a wardrobe interview. The present study utilized an online personal account questionnaire asking questions regarding the participant's interests and relationship with fashion and clothing, followed by a daily clothing diary for four weeks where they recorded their experiences and responses from a guideline as well as photographs of their daily outfits, and lastly an in-depth semi-structured wardrobe interview.

1.6 PRESENTATION AND STRUCTURE OF RESEARCH

The first chapter has given a brief overview of the research study. The introduction of this paper will be followed by a literature review, and sections on the methodology, analysis, discussion, and conclusion, limitations, and future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Fashion and clothing enthusiasts are too often regarded as frivolous, superficial, paying too much attention to the opinions of others and obsessing about how fashionable they look (González & Bovone, 2012, p. 167). The topic of fashion from a positive psychology perspective has been under-researched and has the potential to be an enriching field of academic study. In contemporary psychology, the study of fashion has been presented negatively, as argued by Brydon and Niesson, some psychologists have deemed fashion as a pathology (1998, p. 10) and research that explores psychology and fashion mostly focuses on body image, social psychology, more specifically person perception (Lee & Choo, 2015; Frith & Gleeson, 2004), or clothing behaviour in the context of psychological ill-being. Psychology research on body image and clothing behaviour depict clothing practices as one of the signifiers that predicts body-image disturbances and furthermore, evidence suggests that clothing practices can be used as a behavioural avoidance strategy to detract attention from body image and eating disorders (Trautmann et. al., 2007) or to conceal certain aspects of the body (Harden, Butler & Scheetz, 1998). The psychology literature has also linked fashion to narcissism (Larrain & Arrieta, 2007), eating disorders (Trautmann, Worthy & Lokken, 2007), over-dependence on others' approval (Freeburg & Workman, 2016), and loss of autonomy (Hardy, Merckelbach, Nijman & Zwets, 2007). Studies have also found evidence to argue that unkept or eccentric clothing behaviour is associated with depression (Dubler & Gurel, 1984), linked to cognitive disorganization and a predisposition to develop psychotic symptoms (Campo,

Nijman & Merckelbach, 2004), and redundant clothing has been observable in patients with schizophrenia (Andreasen, 1982; Arnold et al., 1993).

Despite the negative outlook of fashion in psychology, early psychological writings by Hall (2003 [1898]) and Lotze (2003 [1887]) concur that fashion can evoke positivity through the daily rituals of choosing clothing and dressing up. They argue that these rituals arouse positive feelings of sensual and psychological comfort, and satisfaction that can contribute to enhancing one's self concept. Horn (1968) extends these ideas by theorizing the associations between clothing and positive emotions to argue that clothing practices culminate in more positive perceptions of the self and higher levels of individual self-worth. In 1890, William James (Watson, 2004) argued that clothing was linked to well-being and presumed that clothing was an extension of the self-concept that could bring about psychological happiness. Clothing is regarded as a physical extension of the body and the clothing that one wears influences the perception that an individual has of themselves and their appearance; perception of one's appearance is an essential aspect in developing and maintaining the self-concept (Stone, 1962). Conversely, one's understanding of self-concept can affect their clothing behaviour and influence their clothing selection and how they decide to project and display their appearance to the world (Dubler & Gurel, 1984; Atkins, 1976; Ryan, 1952). Clothing communicates our identities, influences the opinions of others, affects how we perceive ourselves, and shapes our attitudes and behaviours (Fredrickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Zimbardo, 1969). Raunio's (1982) research is also in line with the former in observing that individuals select clothing to help them cope with daily social interactions and their own feelings, suggesting the regulative purposes of clothing to be used to control one's environment and emotions. Goffman (2002) contends that the daily routines of dressing involve the organization and meticulous selection of clothing in order to deal with the dynamic and unstable circumstances

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that one encounters every day, a notion that can be supported by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Bandura's social cognitive theory argues that human functioning involves cognitive, vicarious, self-regulatory, and self-reflective processes in which individuals are self-organizing and proactive as opposed to being heavily influenced by their environment. There is a triadic reciprocity loop that encompasses personal factors, behaviour, and the environment. All three factors interact and influence how people observe and interpret situations and inform their decisions and subsequent behaviours. Individuals intentionally manage their identity through clothing by tuning in and actively considering their internal and external experiences and influences, such as their own emotions and the opinions of others. Through self-reflection and self-regulation, they respond to the triadic feedback loop and alter their behaviour or adjust their clothing to meet their internal and external needs, while self-curating their identity (Bandura, 1986; Hall, 1996).

Although there is a small body of research claiming that the wearing of clothing can evoke feelings of happiness, these practices have largely been neglected by the field of positive psychology until very recently and there is only one published paper by Masuch and Hefferon (2014). These researchers from the UK conducted a pilot study to understand the links between positive psychology and fashion and, through a grounded theory analysis, identified clothing practices used by individuals to negotiate selfhood, befriend the body, and manage mood. A masters research study also conducted in the U.K. analyzed the subjective experience of wearing an 'outfit that makes you happy' and through interviews with men and women of various ages they learned how dress was used intentionally to manage identity and the active role dress played in the participants' well-being (Smith, 2017b). Both of these studies provide the groundwork for how women experience clothing and inform the potential for using clothing to promote a positive self-

concept, mood, and hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. My research study builds on these ideas to gain a deeper understanding of how women interested in fashion experience clothing and how those experiences can positively interact and influence mood, self-concept, self-esteem, and well-being. With there being so few studies investigating these relationships from a positive psychology perspective, inquiry in this area is imperative and certainly justified.

2.2 POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY AND WELL-BEING THEORY

There is a gap in the research on clothing and well-being with only two studies previously mentioned that have investigated these areas together (Smith, 2017b; Masuch & Hefferon, 2014), and although it has received little attention, clothing is something we wear close to our bodies that can influence the way we think, feel, and behave, and it has the potential to contribute to our positive well-being. Martin Seligman, former president of the American Psychological Association, recognized that psychology had consumed its research efforts towards understanding and finding cures for mental illness and he argued for a new positive psychology approach as one of his initiatives with the goal ‘to utilize quality scientific research and scholarship to reorient [psychological] science and practice toward human strength’ (1999, p. 561). Since World War II, psychology has focused on researching pathologies such as depression and learning how to repair the damage in the context of the disease model of human functioning; however, positive psychology uses a preventative approach that aims to enhance the strengths of individuals and communities rather than repair their weaknesses (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Psychology has prevailed in helping people live with and overcome mental illness; however, the field of positive psychology can illuminate an understanding of how humans thrive and build positive qualities (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Gable & Haidt, 2005). Seligman argues that the negative aspect of psychology should be complemented by positive research emphasizing

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“the most positive qualities of an individual: optimism, courage, work ethic, future-mindedness, interpersonal skill... growth, mastery, drive, and character building” and focus on “what makes life most worth living” (1999, pp. 560-562). Positive psychology is about positive subjective experience and research in this field would determine “what actions lead to well-being, positive individuals, to flourishing communities” and “make life better for all people-not just the mentally ill” (1999, pp. 560-562). Positive psychology is defined as ‘the scientific study of optimal human functioning. It aims to discover and promote the factors that allow individuals and communities to thrive’ (Sheldon, Frederickson, Rathunde, Csikszentmihalyi, & Haidt, 2000, Section 1). Martin Seligman originally proposed three essential components of well-being or ‘authentic happiness’: pleasure, engagement, and meaning (2002), later he added two more components - relationships and accomplishments (Forgeard et al. 2011; Seligman, 2011). Seligman’s theory of well-being is now comprised of five elements which form the mnemonic PERMA: Positive emotion, Engagement, positive Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishments (Seligman, 2011). The goal of positive psychology is *flourishing*, a combination of feeling good and functioning effectively with a high level of mental well-being (Huppert, 2009a, b; Keyes, 2002; Ryff & Singer 1998). Positive psychology on the individual level focuses on building and enhancing the most positive qualities and traits such as capacity for love and vocation, optimism, courage, work-ethic, future-mindedness, interpersonal skills, aesthetic sensibility, originality, capacity for pleasure and insight, high talent, and perseverance (Seligman, 2011). I hypothesize that an individual’s mood and the cognitive and emotional appraisals of self-concept, interact with their clothing choices, how they experience wearing clothing, and can influence their self-esteem and well-being. Therefore, in this study I explored these relationships and interactions between clothing, mood, self-concept, self-esteem, and well-being using a sample of women interested in fashion. Due to the qualitative and

exploratory nature of this research I will be using the general theories of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being and along with my discussion I will explain how my results relate to PERMA. The construct of well-being is described as optimal psychological functioning and experience and the construct is differentiated between the overlapping paradigms of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2001). Hedonic well-being also referred to as subjective well-being, involves the immediate and momentary experiences of happiness or pleasure and avoidance of pain that exists across affective and cognitive dimensions. Affect is the experience of feeling or emotion and can be divided into positive affect (PA) and negative affect (NA). The concept of hedonic well-being is focused on the individual's own evaluations of their lives and describes experiences yielding high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, and high levels of life satisfaction, or in general terms happiness (Bradburn, 1969; Watson et al., 1988; Diener & Lucas, 1999). Eudaimonic well-being is distinct from happiness and momentary pleasure, it consists of more factors that contribute to personal growth and development, such as self-actualization, the realization or fulfillment of one's talents or potential (Ryff & Singer, 2008), and also includes meaning making processes (King et al., 2006), living by one's daimon or true self with experiences of authenticity (Waterman, 2011), and self-expressiveness (Waterman, 1993). Under the paradigms of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, this research project investigates the experiences women have with their clothing and how those experiences interact with their self-concept and well-being.

2.3 SELF-CONCEPT AND SELF-ESTEEM

There are many different definitions of self-concept depending on the research perspective. Carl Rogers' humanistic personality theory comprises the notion of self or self-concept, which he believed is formed by three components: self-image or real-self, self-esteem or self-worth, and

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ideal-self (1959). Self-image is how we perceive ourselves, including our body image, it has an influential role on our psychological well-being, and a direct impact on how an individual thinks, feels, and behaves (Rogers, 1959). Self-esteem or self-worth is the extent to which we accept or approve ourselves, and how much value an individual places on themselves (Rogers, 1959). When Rogers talks about the ideal, he suggests there is a gap between the real self and the ideal-self (Boeree, 2006) and the ideal-self represents our dynamic ambitions and goals that we strive for (Rogers, 1961). Altogether, the ideal-self is all those things that we think we should be and that we feel others think we should be (Rogers, 1961). Rogers also believes that humans have “one basic tendency and striving to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism” (1951) to fulfill one’s potential and become a fully functioning person (1961). The notion of the ideal-self suggests a connection to eudaimonic well-being and the concept of flourishing in positive psychology. George Herbert Mead points out that the term “self” is reflexive in its nature as it is used to describe oneself when the individual is standing on the outside looking in and describing, evaluating, or reflecting on oneself as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 6). Morris Rosenberg, author of *Conceiving the Self* and frequently cited in marketing and consumer behaviour research, describes the outside perspective of the self: “the self-concept is not the ‘real self’ but, rather, the *picture* of the self” (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). Rosenberg defines the self-concept as “the totality of the individual’s thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object” (1979, p. 9). More recent psychology literature on the self-concept refers to the self as being multidimensional with different possible selves that “represent individuals’ ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming, and thus provide a conceptual link between cognition and motivation” (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 1). Possible selves are derived from past, present, and future experiences, and they are influenced by the sociocultural and

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historical context the individual lives in and from the models, images, and symbols they encounter in their immediate social experiences and representations in the media (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Although possible selves are created and constructed by the individual, they are still socially determined and constrained (Elder, 1980; Meyer, 1985; Stryker, 1984).

Presently, most theorists describe the self-concept as a complex dynamic phenomenon composed of different cognitive and emotional elements: 1. actual-self (defined as how people see themselves); 2. ideal-self (defined as how people would like to see themselves); 3. actual-social self (defined as how people believe they are seen by others); 4. ideal-social self (defined as how people would like to be seen by others) (Swann Jr., Chang-Schneider, & McLarty, 2007; Sirgy, 1997; Sirgy, 2000). When people describe self-concept, they tend to view the self as a social exterior or psychological interior, the former being the overt or visible public persona such as the physical characteristics, social identity elements, behaviour, or the latter being the more concealed self that includes the individual's private emotions, attitudes, and ambitions (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 22). Self-esteem is an attitude that is both a cognitive and emotional judgement an individual has towards himself that can be global or specific. These concepts are not identical or interchangeable, and they depend on whether the individual is looking at themselves as an object as a whole, or looking at the specific "facets" of themselves as an object (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 20; Swann Jr., Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007; Marsh, 1990). For example, a woman may have a generally positive attitude about herself as a whole but may have a different attitude towards certain parts of her body. Attitudes encompass both cognitive and affective components: the cognitive element refers to the object and the attitude represents the thought or idea about that particular object; the latter affective element refers to the fact that attitudes can be positive or negative and range in the intensity level of the attitude (Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, and Rosenberg, 1995). A person

with high self-esteem is not characterized as thinking they are superior over others or arrogant, rather it means the person has respect for themselves, recognizes their merits, realizes and acknowledges their faults, and considers themselves as a person of value and worth (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 54). A person with low self-esteem lacks self-respect, does not recognize their worth as a person, and considers themselves as inadequate or deficient as a person (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 54). The self-esteem motive is a powerful and fundamental motive in human striving that influences individuals to act and present themselves in a certain way to the world in order to protect, satisfy, or enhance their self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 57). The self-consistency motive goes hand-in-hand with the one of self-esteem as this motive describes how a person acts accordingly with their self-concept to maintain the image they have of their self (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 57). Self-esteem and self-concept encompass the cognitive thoughts and affective feelings we have about ourselves and these form by observing and reading the reactions other people have towards us (Cooley, 1902; Mead, 1934), our own behaviour (Bem, 1972), and how others perform relative to us (Festinger, 1954). Altogether, the views that we have of ourselves shape our experiences, give them meaning, and allow us to understand and form a reaction to such experiences (Swann Jr., Chang-Schneider, & McClarty, 2007). We all seek to present ourselves in a certain way and theorists argue we do this to satisfy the self-esteem and self-consistency motives, to fulfill ends, goals or values, social approval and conformity to norms (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 47). The way we present ourselves to the world in our clothing has a major influence on our implicit or explicit impression management (Goffman, 1956). Erving Goffman's work on clothing and appearance is mostly derived from his famous book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) where he introduces his notion of self-presentation as a metaphor for the person being an actor in the theatre in his everyday life. When the individual enters a social setting, they are trying to portray a favourable image of

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themselves to influence the situation by performing aspects of the self by using visual and material elements such as body language and clothing (Tseëlon, 2016). Goffman considers clothing to be an element involved in the personal front that impacts our presentation of the self and our social interactions (Goffman, 1959). Our moods and emotions interact with internal and external factors in the environment to influence our conception of self and inform the clothing we choose to wear.

Tseëlon's work explores the paradoxes of a woman's appearance in society and her methods rely on Goffman and symbolic interaction to argue that clothing is a crucial part of how women present themselves as it gives them agency to create and perform their single or multiple identities to the world and their appearance contributes to their self-actualization (1995). The author also questions the lack of empirical evidence exploring women's relationships with clothing (1995) and my research will explore how women experience the wearing of clothing and how it interacts with their self-concept and self-esteem. I believe that clothing is a crucial element involved in how we perform and represent our self-concept in front of others and behind closed doors, manage and enhance our self-esteem, and unify our ideas and beliefs about our own and others' self-concept. An individual's appearance including grooming, makeup, and clothing, play an important role in how they express themselves as a person, it impacts their identity, their self-esteem, their perception of their self-concept, their social interactions, and the way they are feeling in the moment and over time. This study will look at the 'lived experiences' of women to understand their thoughts and feelings about how they see themselves and feel about themselves in their experience of choosing and wearing clothing in their daily life and will focus on the multiple dimensions of self-concept and self-esteem. I will be focusing on the components of the actual-self, ideal-self, actual-social self, and ideal-social self as well as the attitude of self-esteem. An individual's perception of their self-concept and self-esteem will also interact with their

emotions and moods and this is another area that is expected to impact the individual's behaviour and clothing practices. Body-image as a specific component of one's self concept is also predicted to be a theme that influences women's clothing practices in this study.

2.4 DISTINCTION OF EMOTION AND MOOD

Emotion and mood are important elements that are expected to influence the clothing choices and experiences of women. The terms emotion and mood are frequently used interchangeably in the literature, however the two represent distinct but similarly related phenomena. Mood refers to a maintained emotional state that can occur by no apparent cause (Brehm, 1999), lasts longer than emotions, and as Davidson (1994) and others have argued, mood biases our cognitive and perceptual processes, more than it biases our behaviour (Clore, 1994; Ruckmick, 1936; Whybrow, 1998). Emotions bias our behaviour (Davidson, 1994), and tend to last for a shorter period of time compared to mood. Oatley and Jenkins (1992) argue that emotions can disrupt our priorities of goals and interfere with the flow of action, however moods maintain a ready state that persists even when disrupted. Whereas emotions are understood as highly 'object-focused', Russell and Feldman-Barrett posit that mood refers to "free-floating affect... subject to many causes from specific events, such as the weather to diurnal cycles, some of which are beyond the human capacity to detect" (1999, p. 806). Emotion generally refers to a psychological state that occurs as the result of an external stimulus or a specific event and results in physiological arousal, subjective feelings, whose intensity, duration, and experience are dependent on the perception of the individual (e.g. perception of happiness or sadness etc.) and the overt expression of emotion (e.g. verbal, body language, facial expressions) (Ekman, 1994). Emotion has been difficult to define, however Scherer (1984) has found there is a growing consensus among emotion theorists that agree to describe emotion as a psychological construct consisting of several components: a)

cognitive appraisal or evaluation of stimuli and situations, b) physiological activation or arousal, c) motor expression (e.g. facial expression), d) motivation for readiness of behaviour and intention of behaviour, e) subjective feeling state response (an individual's perception to the situation and the subjective feelings they can describe) (Averill, 1980; Izard, 1977; Lazarus, Averill, & Opton, 1970; Leventhal, 1979; Plutchik, 1980). With the understanding that our mood can alter our thought processes and the way we perceive the world, and emotions can bias our actions and behaviours, I argue that different emotions and moods can influence what we decide to wear and how we experience that clothing. The ways in which emotion and mood influence our clothing choices and experiences with fashion and how clothing practices are used for emotional regulation have been highlighted as a topic in need of further qualitative inquiry.

2.5 RESEARCH ON THE RELATIONSHIP OF CLOTHING AND THE SELF

Clothing can be a means to express positive emotions, used as a coping mechanism to deal with negative self-concepts (Humphrey, Klaasen, & Creekmore, 1971; Worrell, 1977), to enhance one's appearance (Rudd & Lennon, 1994), and in turn lead to higher self-satisfaction in wearing that clothing (Markee, Carey, & Pederson, 1990) and a higher self-esteem. Raunio (1982) observes that expressive features of clothing help to create a bond of togetherness with other people, make them stand out from the crowd, create an impression and control the feelings, perceptions, and impressions of other people. Other studies find that women who have a close relationship with fashion consider clothing as a means to express their creativity, personality, beliefs, enhance their attractiveness, and satisfy their social and emotional needs (Sontag and Lee, 2004). Clothing can be viewed as part of the self-concept and reflects the extent to which 'clothing was viewed as one with the self' (Sontag & Schlater, 1982, p. 5) and observes that individuals who regard clothing to be a crucial part of their self-construct strive to use dress in a way that is consistent with their self-

image (Sontag & Lee, 2004), an argument which is supported by Rosenberg's (1979) self-consistency motive. Clothing in relation to self-construct may also reflect 'self-evaluative appearance investment' or in other words the value an individual places on their perception of how important their appearance is to their self-worth (Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). It has been observed that as women get older, their sense of self-worth becomes more independent from their appearance (Tiggemann and Lacey, 2009). This may be due to other facets of their lives that become more important in defining their self-worth (e.g. occupational identity, motherhood) (Tiggemann & Stevens, 1999) or contrarily, women develop strategies that help them cognitively to accept the process of ageing and their changing bodies (Webster & Tiggemann, 2003). Guy and Banim conducted a grounded theory qualitative study to understand the relationships women have with their clothing and found strong connections that affect three coexisting views of the self: *'The woman I want to be'*, *'The woman I fear I could be'* and *'The woman I am most of the time'* (2000). This study revealed the ways in which women attempt to create satisfying images through their clothing by managing their identity (Guy & Banim, 2000). The observations of Guy and Banim (2000) are in line with the work of Markus and Nurius and their notion of "possible selves" which represents individuals' ideals of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (1986, p. 954). The representations of the self in the past that remain in the mind and continue to exist within the self-concept, along with representations of the self in the future, which consist of an individual's hopes, fears, and fantasies, both form "possible selves" (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Most theorists describe the self-concept as a complex dynamic phenomenon because the self-knowledge and set of self-conceptions that are present in the individual's thoughts and memory are constantly shifting with different experiences, affective internal states, and social interactions (Cantor & Kihlstrom, 1983; Epstein, 1973; Gergen, 1967;

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Greenwald, 1980; Kelly, 1955; McGuire, 1984; Mead, 1934; Rosenberg, 1979; Tesser & Campbell, 1984; Turner, 1968). Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that emotional affect, positive or negative, is produced by discrepancies or conflicts within the self-concept and this view is in line with earlier self-theorists (Cooley, 1902; Freud, 1925; James, 1890; Sullivan, 1953). There are clearly interactions between an individual's emotions, moods, and self-concept, and because it has been argued that clothing is used as an impression management tool to alter mood, control a woman's appearance, body-image, and identity, it is worth exploring how mood and ideas of the self interact with clothing practices.

Clothing worn and experienced on the body can influence a change in one's mood (Moody, Kinderman & Sinha, 2010; Tiggermann & Lacey, 2009) and body image to make women feel good about themselves (Cash, 1990). The change in mood can be attributed to wearing a fashionable garment, one that conceals figure flaws, expresses one's personality or identity, provides comfort, or boosts one's confidence (Kang et al., 2012). Individuals that have an intimate relationship with clothing may use it to change their mood, for example by wearing a favourite garment to make themselves feel better when they wake up in a bad mood. Kwon and Parham (1994) explored the clothing practices of women when they 'feel fat' or 'feel thin' and noticed fluctuations in their body image, confidence, and self-consciousness. When these women 'feel fat' they tend to use clothing for comfort and camouflage and when they 'feel thin' they are more confident to use clothing to express their individual style and dress fashionably (Kwon & Parham, 1994). However, this study did not probe further to ask women how they used clothing to manage and cope with their emotional feelings or thoughts about their self-concept. Body-image is intimately linked to the self-image and self-esteem aspects of the self-concept and Kaiser (1990) argues that one's perception of their body-image can evoke positive or negative emotions that will

in turn influence the clothing they decide to wear, as demonstrated by the women in the previous study when they used clothing to camouflage certain undesirable aspects of their body. Frith and Gleeson (2008) carried out a qualitative study that exposed the behavioural strategies women implement to manage body image anxiety, in addition to the strategies used to ‘show off’ aspects of their body they are proud of; being skilled at managing their appearance and knowing what ‘look’ complements their body can allow for pride and a sense of mastery and autonomy over the body (McKinley, 2002; Skeggs, 1997). Social appearance anxiety, ‘anxiety about being negatively evaluated by others because of one’s overall appearance’ (Hart et al., 2008, p. 48) is another individual trait that can influence an individual to use their clothing as a means to alter their mood. Individuals that experience bad moods as a reaction to negative evaluations by others may use clothing to camouflage, conceal, provide comfort, or blend in to deal with or avoid these negative experiences (Kang, Johnson, & Kim, 2012). For my research I chose a sample of participants with an interest in fashion with the contention that these individuals would be more sensitive and self-reflective on the subject and experience of dress, with clothing having a greater influence on their personal appearance and self-concept. My research connects the ideas from these previous studies and delves deeper from the perspective of positive psychology to provide a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between clothing, mood, self-concept, and their influence on behaviour and potential for positive well-being.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between clothing, emotions and mood, self-concept, self-esteem and how the experience of dress impacts an individual's behaviour and well-being, I have utilized a qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach for my research project. IPA, developed within psychology, has an idiographic focus that will offer insights into the personal lived experiences women have with clothing and lends itself well to provide in-depth examinations of positive psychological phenomena (Smith, 1996; Smith, 2017a). This research was an active interpretative endeavor on my behalf as a researcher as I interpreted and produced the knowledge that sought to understand how the participants try to 'make sense of their world' (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 26). This qualitative research project required a reflexive rendering of my role as a researcher role within the analytical and research process (Hunter et al., 2011). I acknowledge the reflexivity entailed in the IPA approach to prevent my interests and any bias that would skew the results of my research. The first part of the study involved an online socio-demographic information survey and a personal account questionnaire to gather primary data regarding the participants' thoughts and attitudes towards fashion and clothing. After completing the two surveys, participants then took part in a daily clothing diary where they were asked to record the clothing they wore, and the thoughts and feelings they had in the selection of that outfit and the experience wearing it. Participants were also asked to take photographs of their daily outfits to correspond with their diary responses, so they could be used in conversation for the subsequent wardrobe interview. After completing the daily diaries, the women took part in an in-depth semi-structured wardrobe interview.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.2.1 Participants

Seven participants that identify as women between the ages of 21 to 39 years old living in the cities of Toronto and Guelph were recruited through social media, email, posters, and in person (see Table 1). The study invited women to participate that have an interest and engagement in fashion, clothing, and what they wear. Before participants signed up for this study they were asked to consider if they have the time, willingness, and commitment to participate in all aspects of this study, since the methods were extensive. One participant dropped out of the study after only completing the surveys, so the data collected from that participant was not be used in the analysis. It was very difficult to recruit participants and because of this, six out of seven women were friends or acquaintances of the researcher, so this may have produced some ethical issues. Brewis (2014) offers insights and important issues to consider about the ethics of researching friends for qualitative researchers. Similar to the experiences of Brewis (2014) and McConnell-Henry *et al.* (2009-2010, p. 3), the frankness and in-depth responses from friends were a product of the existing friendships and this actually produced very rich data. The participants felt comfortable talking openly about their experiences with friend-researchers, perhaps more so than with stranger-researchers (Brewis, 2014). Similar to Haynes (2006, p. 6), one of my participants said the interview was like a ‘therapy session’ and that talking about her clothing practices gave her a different perspective and understanding of herself. In my analysis I ensured that I did not use any extant data from our friendships to enhance my research and I focused on the ‘actual data’ that I gathered throughout this project. There is also a balancing act when presenting research about your friends to honour the ‘relational responsibilities’ to them and present these respondents’ ‘lives in a complex and truthful way for readers’ (2009, p. 678, citing Ellis, 2007 in part; also see Tillmann-Healy, 2003, p. 741). In addition, due to the small sample size and the diverse array of individual

subjective experiences, this study faces limitations in that the results and conclusions of the research may not be generalized beyond the sample.

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Profession
P1	F	39	Mexican	Textile Designer/Graduate Student
P2	F	27	Caucasian	Tailor/Graduate Student
P3	F	37	Caucasian	Style Editor/Graduate Student
P4	F	30	Caucasian	Artist/Graduate Student
P5	F	21	Chinese	Undergraduate Student/Sewing Instructor
P6	F	37	Caucasian	CEO/Entrepreneur
P7	F	23	Caucasian	Retail Sales Associate/Server

Table 1: Participant Socio-demographic Table.

3.2.2 Data Collection

In addition to collecting contact and socio-demographic information in an online survey, participants were asked to complete a personal account questionnaire with six open-ended questions asking about their relationship with clothing and their thoughts, attitudes, and feelings towards fashion and clothing (see Appendix A). The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect primary data to assess the relationships each participant has with clothing and to get to know some of their experiences with fashion. Next, the women were asked to complete a daily clothing diary over four weeks with the parameters to record digitally written responses for 3-4 outfits per week (total of 12-16 entries over 4 weeks). Guy and Banim (2000) conducted their daily diary over two weeks; however, I chose to extend the duration to four weeks to allow more time for recording and reflection. The daily diary also asked them to collect photographs of their daily outfits they chose

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to wear to provide insight into their clothing style and connect their experiences, feelings, and thoughts about their self and behaviour, with the actual outfit they wore. All participants provided consent to use the photographs they took, and it was optional to include their faces in the photos. They were given options to block out their faces from the photos, crop them out, or the photos could have been taken of the clothing laid out on the floor or on a hanger. For the diary responses, the women were given a guideline of questions to be aware of and think about when they were reflecting on their experiences in those outfits. However, this was simply a guideline and participants were not forced to answer every single question on the list (see Appendix C). The women were also asked to note any situations that occurred throughout their day that may have changed the way they felt about themselves in the clothing they were wearing. For example, they may have felt confident wearing the outfit they chose when they first put it on, but those feelings may have changed when a co-worker made a comment at work. It was very important for the women to have self-awareness in order to reflect, realize and note any significant fluctuations in their self-concept or self-esteem throughout the day to aid in the understanding of their experiences, feelings, and reactions with their clothing. Although the time period to complete the diaries and the number of entries recorded varied among participants, the responses they provided were sufficient for this research study and provided very valuable and insightful information. The purpose of the daily clothing diary was to initiate the women to start thinking more deeply about their experiences with clothing and reflect on how those experiences interact with their thoughts, feelings, behaviour and ideas about their self-concept. After participants completed and submitted their diary entries, I conducted wardrobe interviews at their home and recorded and transcribed them verbatim. One of the participants moved to Ottawa, so the interview was conducted via FaceTime. The in-depth semi-structured wardrobe interviews took 20 to 40 minutes depending on

the participant and I drew my questions from a list that I had made prior and other questions flowed freely depending on the participant's responses (see Appendix D). The interview began by asking questions about their personal relationship with fashion and clothing, followed by questions asking them to reflect on how their mood, self-concept, self-esteem, confidence, and behaviour interacted with their experiences in the clothes they wore throughout the diary process.

3.2.3 Data Analysis

The socio-demographic survey and personal account questionnaire responses were organized in an Excel spreadsheet and participants' names were coded to ensure confidentiality. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed line-by-line to develop codes through a content analysis following the steps of decontextualization, recontextualization, categorization, and compilation (Bengtsson, 2016). Decontextualization involves identifying meaning units and labelling them with a code (Bengtsson, 2016). Recontextualization is the comparison of the original text with the meaning units to identify important information that relates to the aim of the study and excluding cross sentences (Bengtsson, 2016). Categorization involves condensing the meaning units by reducing the words without compromising the content of the unit and in this process categories and themes are identified (Bengtsson, 2016). The compilation step involves the analysis and write up the identified categories and themes and comparing the findings to the literature. In this phenomenological-based approach, the analysis focuses on how the participants make sense of their experiences with clothing and transforms those experiences into consciousness (Bengtsson, 2016). The interview content and questionnaire were analyzed and content coded to identify themes and patterns among participants and organized further to isolate the main themes. The daily diaries were also analyzed to identify emerging themes regarding women's experience with clothing. These analyses were then followed by a comparative analysis of the interviews and

daily diary categories and themes to identify patterns in both contexts and summarize the main findings.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

The content analysis of the interviews and daily diaries and subsequent comparative analysis led to the development of the overarching main category ‘Selection and Experience of Clothing to Manage Everyday Well-being’. This core category of clothing to manage everyday well-being was attained by identification and synergy of the three following themes: ‘Manage Mood’, ‘Clothing Strategies for Appearance Management’, and ‘Reinforce and Validate Self-concept’ (see figure 1).



Figure 1: Map of Themes and Sub-themes.

4.1 SELECTION AND EXPERIENCE OF CLOTHING TO MANAGE EVERYDAY WELL-BEING

4.1.1 *Relationship with Fashion*

Most of the women have a close and positive relationship with fashion and are interested in staying informed about what is in fashion and learning about new trends. Most of the women follow fashion on social media such as Instagram, Pinterest, magazines, online fashion sites, or in stores to feed their curiosity and inspiration for dressing. However, the women do not necessarily follow or buy into all of the trends because it is not economical to buy a new wardrobe every season and they find some trends weird. While reflecting on their diary entries, many of these women realized that they wear a lot of the same clothes and that they go through phases of repeatedly wearing the same garments and once they are done, they switch to something new. This realization justified the reasons to downsize their wardrobe and buy less. Some of the women enjoy experimenting with fashion to explore their identity, but some of the other women who are older do not experiment as much did when they were younger:

I have a close relationship with fashion... When I'm doing nothing, I'm on my phone looking at pictures of fashion, always all the time. I'm always trying to find new trends. (P1)

Basically when I was a kid I really liked really weird styles, anything that I would see, not just in a magazine, but in music videos and more experimental stuff... Magazines were probably my favourite area to follow, but then I also really loved just going to Value Village, I think I look up to a lot of rock stars and musicians and music videos and I think that was my biggest thing. (P2)

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I've always had a very strong relationship, so there never was a point in my life where I didn't know what the current trends were and things like that. So, I do follow trends, but I don't necessarily buy what's trendy I guess... And oh yeah, I definitely experiment but at 37, I feel like I've experimented so much that there's no more experimenting left... (P3)

As far as my relationship to what I wear, I find it's very comfort based, like I have to feel comfortable, it has to go with my mood for sure... So as far as experimenting goes, that's very important to me because I like the freshness, I like the idea of wearing a new outfit that I've never worn before. (P4)

So firstly, I would describe my relationship as a lengthy one and an ever changing one. As for following trends I definitely keep up to date with them, but do I follow them? No. I'm definitely more on the experimental side of exploring my personal identity which doesn't necessarily click with what is happening in the mainstream. (P5)

I think as I've gotten older I am less willing to experiment and I'm less willing to follow trends. I only want to wear what I like and also being a slave to fashion has not gotten me to where I want to be. (P6)

Interested to a certain degree, I have a Pinterest board where I follow stuff and same with Instagram... I don't necessarily follow the trends, because like I really didn't when people were wearing corsets, I was like this is weird. So sometimes no, but I like to at least look at them. (P7)

One woman (P6), after studying fashion at graduate level and starting a new business venture, says she has a difficult relationship with fashion and dressing up is no longer a priority for her:

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Lately, I'm only wearing jeans, sneakers, sweaters and sweatshirts. And that's bad because I've been going on dates like that and that's bad, because I have a whole wardrobe of clothes that I've been ignoring. So lately I've just been dressing like I don't give a f***. So, it's not good...It feels like the least important thing to do on my list right now...It's not a priority. (P6)

Two of the women (P4 & P6) in their thirties had more negative viewpoints about fashion trends and are opposed to being “slaves to fashion”. Instead of following trends and dressing like everyone else, they want to wear clothes that they like, feel comfortable in, and look flattering on them, without exposing themselves too much:

I'm not that interested in following trends at all, I do think there are certain trends that look good, but I find it almost embarrassing to be super trendy or look like you're wearing the latest trend. It makes you look like a slave to fashion kind of... (P4)

I only want to wear what I like and also being a slave to fashion has not gotten me to where I want to be. The residual effects of the master's program is that I resent dressing for the male gaze and spending my lion share income on makeup, and clothes and my appearance... It makes me feel a bit sad that I was such an unwitting participant in this patriarchal system of oppression (P6).

4.1.2 Selection of Clothing

Most of the women agreed that the most important factors influencing what they decide to wear on a daily basis are where they are going, what they are doing, and the weather. Many of these women will be out of the house most of the day, so they have to plan their outfit accordingly

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by wearing versatile pieces that can transition from day to night. Another factor is function, especially the footwear for women that have to commute or will be on their feet most of the day. The practicality of their clothing was also important for the activity because to carry out physical activities or exercise for example, they need to wear more comfortable, breathable clothing, and the appropriate footwear:

I think that's a thing that I learned when I'm living in downtown Toronto is that generally when you leave your house for the day you're going to a bunch of different places and you're not going home until really late. So, you have to plan your outfit to go to multiple places. (P2)

What I wear is something that can get me through the day without looking too fancy but can also bring me to the night and still look good or fancy if I end up going out, because that's been happening a lot where I just kind of go out and the day just turns to night and I don't have time to go home and change. (P4)

So, in Toronto, number one is the weather and my winter wardrobe is seriously limited, and I don't feel like investing in expensive winter pieces right now. So, I sort of start with what I have to wear to keep warm and then try and make it as unrepugnant as I possibly can from there. (P6)

Some days obviously when I'm not feeling that good I don't want to wear a crop top, like usually based on how I'm feeling comfort wise, because I think that sometimes an outfit looks really good, but I don't feel comfortable or I don't know, some days I'm not feeling it. Yeah usually comfort and where you're going because a lot of the stuff I like to wear are not necessarily appropriate for every setting. (P7)

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Other factors mentioned were the social setting they were in and the type of people they would be interacting with. When they go to work or school, there are social expectations of what clothing is appropriate and that also influences their clothing selections. Depending on the social situation, some women said they will cater their outfits to who they would be socializing with while still trying to dress to please themselves. For example, some women said they would wear more interesting or unique pieces with people that would understand what they were wearing and why they are wearing it. Oppositely, in other situations they may dress more neutral or conform to the style of the majority for people that are more conservative, do not have the same interest in fashion, or would not appreciate the outfit:

Depends on the social situation I guess. If I'm out with a fashion savvy person, then I'll definitely try to wear something that they would like. I think everyone does that. If I'm out with a friend that doesn't care about fashion I definitely would choose something else. I'd probably choose something more neutral I guess. And same thing with my parents I'll choose something more neutral, I don't really wear crazy stuff around them because they probably won't appreciate it, it's kind of a waste of an outfit. (P3)

Mood, positive or negative, and comfort were also deemed influential on style and clothing choice and these women describe some of the ways mood influences what they wear:

...one is mood, it just depends if I'm in a foul mood. Yesterday for example I'll just grab an oversized sweater and jeans, that's like my foul mood outfit... Versus a day to day working from home, I don't put that much thought into my everyday outfit I guess, and it very much depends on mood, like even between sweatpants and jeans, that's like a mood scale. (P3).

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Because I had a bad week actually, I was really sad. I tried to make myself look good, not too good, because I could see the sadness, but I tried a little harder. Whereas if I'm really happy, I don't necessarily try as hard and I think your beauty just shines through. When I'm sad I want to be comfortable, but I also want to look good. (P4)

Another factor influencing their experience with clothing is the struggles women encounter when they are on their period and the limitations it imposes on their clothing choices because of bloating and mood swings:

And I always have trouble dressing during my period because I'm one of those women that gains ten pounds of bloat and I definitely do not look forward to that. And recording those days, that was really tough because I feel like I can't fit into anything, like everything is muffin top. (P3)

The women's life stage also played a role in their clothing selection with the time and effort they have to invest in their looks and the types of clothing they feel comfortable wearing. As they get older they want to dress more modestly and they don't have as much time to experiment with their clothing:

Before I used to experiment a lot. Since I have kids not anymore, because I don't have the time. But yeah before I used to spend the whole morning just trying out things just to see how they look. But now I don't have the time to do that, as much as I'd like to. (P1)

I don't really want to be projecting an image where I've got my boobs out and heels on where I feel like I'm deliberately trying to lure or get attention from men. (P6)

Altogether, the most important factors influencing what the women choose to wear on a daily basis are where they are going, what they are doing, and the weather. Secondary influences are the social situations they will encounter, comfort, mood, and style.

4.1.3 Hedonic Well-being

Hedonic well-being also referred to as subjective well-being is defined as yielding high levels of positive affect, low levels of negative affect, high levels of life satisfaction, and happiness. Clothing in this sample provided most of the women with feelings of positive affect and the happiness they felt in their outfits was enhanced by compliments from others. Some women get dressed up for the day just to please themselves, even if they do not leave the house because it makes them feel good; one woman said that wearing heeled boots at home cheers her up and makes her feel more important, even though she is not going out to see anybody. Wearing a fresh new outfit, a favourite garment, colour, print, or a full character look also provided the women with feelings of happiness and change in mood, especially on a dreary day:

After being just in pajamas I went out and got a little bit dressed up... it really felt good! Like life was back! Especially that I was wearing this sparkling parka that I think is very cool. (P1)

I have pants that take off 10 pounds, they're by Proenza Schouler and they're the most perfect cut pants and if I was rich I would buy all of their pants and look skinny everyday. And they're also bright blue and fun so I wear these a lot to events with heels, they fall really nicely and make the leg really long. (P3)

On crappy days, in particular with makeup too, same with fashion, I would think well, because I feel crappy today for whatever reason I'm just going to over compensate and

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look amazing. Like I always say, “feeling shitty looking pretty” ... Now because people can register that I’m trying to present my best self, it’s starting to translate, so I’m kind of feeding off their energy from their perception of how I look. (P5)

I have some black velvet jeans that I’m really loving at the moment. I have some black PVC pants that are super old, but I love them, and I always feel really good in them. (P6)

The women also reported that they do not like wearing ratty or over worn clothes because it makes them feel tired and does not enhance their hedonic well-being. They said that by wearing clothing they like or clothes that have more structure, it can make them feel better and more motivated to complete their day to day tasks. In the morning before they got dressed, they started off feeling sloppy and after they put on their clothes for the day, they feel put together, fresh, and motivated to start their day:

I don’t like wearing things that are too ratty or I don’t like wearing things that are old or tired and I think that really drags me down if I feel like I’m stuck wearing that sort of thing. (P6)

I think it [clothing] has a huge influence in everything I do. Because even at home, I can’t do work in pajamas, I can’t take myself seriously. I need at least sweatpants to function as a human being day to day. When I’m well put together I’m just more confident in what I do... what is it, change your look change your life? It’s kind of a cliché and psychiatrists would probably disagree but if your well put together and if you look good you’ll feel better during the day doing menial tasks. I think it’s a huge part of everyday dressing. (P3)

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Like definitely mental well-being in the sense that sometimes you're not feeling good and you get dressed in the morning and you're like wow I look great... I'll be having a bad day and then I go to the washroom and I'm like wow I look really good, and you feel better. That seems silly, but I really do think that it makes you feel better or happier for me... I think clothing enhances your well-being, like feel good, look good, I think that's an actual thing. (P7)

Although clothing could make them feel better, the women also reported feelings of low positive affect in their diaries when they were not feeling good or comfortable in their clothes because they did not fit properly, they did not like their clothes, the outfit didn't look right, or suit the way they were feeling, what they were doing, or where they were going. During this study, one woman in particular was overworked, stressed, and tired and her interview and diary entries reflected those feelings and the fact that clothing was not a priority but simply being used to cover the body:

Another terrible, tired-ass outfit. The long black cardigan was my grandmother's and I've been wearing it for years. I'm sick of it but it's warm! I don't think it goes well with blue jeans or the white tee shirt... Does it even matter what I look like at this point? I'm so over worked and have so little time I don't even really care what I've got on or what my hair and makeup is. (P6)

A lot of my mental well-being translates to how stressed I am and therefore if I'm more stressed I have less mental energy to put into thinking about what I'm wearing. That lack of effort in my outfit is definitely apparent in my emotional and mental well-being. (P5)

(See figure 2 in Appendix E)

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Knowing what pieces of clothing you love and feel good in can increase positive affect, lead to positive changes in self-perception, feelings of satisfaction, and confidence that will be projected to the social spheres that one enters.

I think that fashion has the power to greatly enhance it [well-being], your everything, whoever you are. It can elevate it because it is an extension [of yourself] and I think fashion can say things to other people that you have a hard time articulating yourself with words. In particular, how you feel. So, I think it's a very important communicator so therefore if you can communicate well with fashion, it enhances your well-being. And then otherwise it can detract from your well-being if you don't really know yourself, your style enough to express those parts of yourself. So not that it's lowering it directly, but it's not enhancing it either, it's just sending these mixed messages of who you are or how you feel. But if you can hone in on that language of clothing, then it will definitely be beneficial so that you can be read as what you want to be read as by other people. (P5)

4.1.4 Eudaimonic Well-being

Eudaimonic well-being encompasses factors that contribute to personal growth and development, self-actualization, meaning-making processes, experiences of authenticity, and self-expressiveness. The eudaimonic dimension was reflected in the women's clothing that symbolizes personal histories and achievements:

I wore this to every internship job interview and I got every single one when I wore this dress. I have honestly rocked every single function I went to in this dress, so this is now my new go to and I can't let the original one go because it's my good luck charm, the

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original dress that has shaped who I am in my career... These dresses really enhance my self-esteem because they remind me of my career success. (P5)

Many of the women also shared their nostalgic relationships to certain pieces of clothing that remind them of their family, childhood, passions, past experiences, and relationships. When they wear these sentimental pieces, not only does it make them feel good, it also communicates and strengthens aspects of their self-concept such as their identity, values, political attitudes, and interests:

My half-blind grandmother picked these pants out for me, and I love her taste so much, I always feel amazing wearing things associated to her. I feel really good in this outfit. (P4)
(See figure 3 in Appendix E)

I really like this look. I am wearing a “POWERBOMB” shirt. The band and the tee are inspired by their love for wrestling. I think I really like them because I really loved WWE growing up and loved female pro wrestlers, so it comes full circle when you’re kind of a punk girl rocking out to a wrestling inspired power violence band in the back room of a record shop as an adult on a Saturday night. (P2) (See figure 4 in Appendix E)

I like this black jacket with Mexican embroidery a lot and I also like it because my mom has the same one. We bought it together... It was just a plain black jacket before and I sewed these Mexican textiles onto the back and when I went to Mexico in December she saw it and was like, “Oh my god I love it!”. So now she’s doing the same thing. (P1) (See figure 5 in Appendix E)

These women treasure and hold onto sentimental pieces of clothing that have subjectively perceived meanings or memories that remind them of their past experiences, relationships, and past selves, which also provides positive feelings that act to strengthen their self-concept.

4.2 MANAGE MOOD

4.2.1 Clothing Increases Positive Affect

All of the women agreed that clothing can uplift their mood, whether that is through buying a new dress, wearing a favourite garment, or getting all dressed up to go out. Clothing can make them feel empowered, creative, confident, and authentic as it is an extension of themselves and their body. Most of the women try to use clothing as a positive means to influence and uplift their mood, make themselves feel better emotionally, and feel more confident. They choose to wear clothing they like and know will make them feel good and boost their mood. The clothing diaries inspired them to enjoy getting dressed up, have fun with clothes, and be creative:

Altogether, as a look, that's my happiness. When I have the wig, the shoes, the nails, the accessories and the clothing, and it all comes together to look like one whole character ... it makes me feel a lot better. There's this emotional happiness to it. But generally, I think that clothing makes me happy and it's always had this magical aspect to it. It's fun to wear, it transforms my whole appearance, and I can basically be anyone I want to be when I put on clothing... I think that clothing just becomes this playground where I can be who I want to be. (P2) (See figure 6 in Appendix E)

I feel good, and excited to be alive... I love this outfit... I feel like it suits my mood perfectly and it looks awesome. The colours make me feel really good, like a mermaid or something and I feel like it's a new look for me, so I'm really stoked about it... I feel more

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inspired about dressing and thinking about who I am, what I want to be, and what I aspire to. I like that question, what would be your ideal self... I never thought about it. (P4)

Furthermore, through these self-reflective diaries the women were able to recognize the interactions between their different emotions and moods and their clothing choices. One woman says she uses her clothing and accessories as a coping strategy to experiment and deal with the different emotions she is feeling and the issues she is facing right now in her life:

...I was wearing my ex boyfriend's rings who I have very mixed feelings for with my grandmother's jacket who I love so much. I was just thinking about combining all these emotions, like a combination of emotions on your body and working through them with what I'm wearing. (P4)

These women also found value in becoming more self-aware and attentive to their feelings in their clothing. They became more in tune with how they felt before getting dressed, realized why they chose the clothes they wore, and how wearing those clothes impacted the way they felt:

I think I really liked that I became more in tune with what I was doing when I was wearing it. I realized that I really do look dressed up when I go out dressed up. And I guess I kind of wondered why that was but then I kind of realized it takes a lot of effort to put a lot of those looks together... It would take a lot more decision making and time to pick a wig, put on all this makeup, put on the shoes... (P2)

But I find doing this helped me get back into doing it more and have more fun and think more about my outfit and be more creative. Whereas before I would just put anything on. I

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wasn't really dressing for this, but I was thinking oh that would look cool or interesting to photograph. So, it's helped me actually enjoy dressing up. (P4)

I was reading over the entries and I saw different trends of this is how I felt today and then I saw the connection from how I went to bed feeling to what I wore the next day when I woke up. (P5)

My relationship with fashion is so close and so personal so I always feel like if I wear something that's so uncomfortable, it ruins my day. And I'm always very self-critical of what something looks like on me. When I was taking photos in the mirror I was like I don't look too fat, like it's okay. But it's something that I think about everyday whether I'm recording it or not. (P2)

Emotions can also have a negative effect on how much effort they put into dressing and in turn affect how these women feel in their clothing:

So, my emotions impact my choice in clothing in terms of literally how much effort I'm going to put in. If I'm feeling tired or stressed or whatever clothes become the last thing I'm going to care about. And equally if I feel like I've got something wrong, even if my outfit is very simple and boring, if I feel like my sneakers don't match, my t-shirt or my jacket, that'll make me feel really off and awful all-day long. (P6)

By keeping a daily clothing diary, the women realized the positive effect clothing can have on their emotions and mood, they found value in becoming more cognizant about their clothing practices and became aware of how what they wear interacts with their positive and negative emotions.

4.2.2 Cold Weather Increases Negative Affect

This study was conducted over the winter months and the diaries frequently revealed mentions of the cold and its influence on their mood, clothing choice, and well-being. These women described a negative change in their mood from the summer to winter months. They reported foul moods and low positive affect during these colder months due to the lack of daytime sunlight, the cold, and the struggle they experienced dressing for the cold weather outside. They were limited with the clothing they could wear, and some women reported feeling sad and more depressed during the colder months, suggesting the negative effect it has on their mental health. More negative emotions were said to hold the women back from dressing up and they noticed that when they did dress up to please themselves they felt a lot better, felt like leaving the house, and felt more like socializing. They felt that there was an emotional difference between not dressing up and dressing up. When they were cold, tired, moody, or sick, looking fabulous was not always a priority and clothing was simply used to cover the body and provide comfort:

I'm so stressed out these days, this is about the extent of the creativity I can muster with my wardrobe. I just got this sweater, but I don't love it! I'm so tired, my hair looks like crap, clothes today are just a way for me to cover my body before I leave the house! (P6)

(See figure 7 in Appendix E)

Keeping a daily clothing diary was a valuable experience for these women as they became more aware about their feelings in their clothing and how their mood and the weather influences what they decide to wear. They began to realize why they wore the clothing they did wear and how they felt wearing it. It was also interesting to hear how one of the women felt much better when she went on vacation to a warmer climate in the middle of winter:

Well, the last third of the pictures I took in Thailand, I'm visibly happier, tangibly happier the less I'm wearing. When I don't have to think about 14 different elements to put together a look, I'm much happier. (P6) (See figure 8 in Appendix E)

4.3 CLOTHING STRATEGIES FOR APPEARANCE MANAGEMENT

The interviews and diaries also revealed clothing strategies that the women employed to manage their appearances. When the women complained of feeling fat, bloated, or not looking their best, they use oversized clothing to camouflage and conceal their body, most commonly they tried to hide their stomach, butt, and hair. Some of the women also said they like to dress modestly to avoid being sexually objectified by the male gaze. It was interesting to learn that the women actually like wearing oversized clothing or accessories that conceal parts of their body:

I got my period earlier in the day and was in a crazy amount of pain, and I had considerable period bloat. I felt fat, so I had to wear something concealing. In general, I love oversized clothing. I love when the body is concealed and the way fabric drapes, so it's a good excuse to wear that silhouette. Overall, I loved this outfit. (P3)

I love oversized clothes because they hide my body, I find the clothes become more about the clothes, and less about the body, and I kind of like that. (P4)

I was actually having really bad hair day, spent about 25 minutes trying to fix my hair, before realizing that this hat worked with my sporty look and actually looked pretty cute. (P7) (See figure 9 in Appendix E)

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The women also used clothing as a behavioural strategy to show off their best features and parts of their body they felt proud of. Wearing clothing that accentuated these features made themselves feel good, gave them feelings of pride, and boosted their confidence:

I had a really bad week, but I'm starting to feel a little better... I wanted to dress up a bit and it was a warm choice... I love it because I feel good in it and it shows off my slim waist... A few people actually told me how stylish and beautiful I was. (P4) (See figure 10 in Appendix E)

Well if I get it [outfit] right, it makes me feel good. I think for me the most important thing when I get dressed is how does my body look because that's one of my best assets. (P6)

I chose a cropped sweater because I had a really good workout yesterday and was definitely feeling my stomach today. I like wearing cropped tops when I'm feeling especially good about myself because it gives me an extra boost and I feel proud and happy that I'm not insecure baring my midriff. (P7) (See figure 9 in Appendix E)

It was also found that one of the women (P3) who works in the fashion industry, places great importance in managing her appearance and presenting herself in a certain way as a fashionable person on social media and in person when she goes out to fashion events. Posting well thought out photos of her fashionable outfits on social media outlets like Instagram reinforces her self-concept about who she is as an individual and professional and the comments and messages she receives complimenting her looks validates her clothing choices. She uses clothing to manage her appearance and the impressions of others by investing time, money, effort, and thought into putting together outfits for occasions where her appearance matters:

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I was invited to an Hermes holiday cocktail party... It's an important fashion networking event so I definitely had to look nice. I opted for a foulard print silk pyjama suit which was definitely going to stand out in a sea of black dresses so common at holiday events. I put on a blazer to make the outfit a bit more formal. The CEO complimented my suit and told me she had the same one. The event photographer took a couple of pics (again, always a good sign!). I posted a casual snap on my Instagram stories and several people messaged that they liked the outfit. I felt it was a good, smart choice for the event and I felt very confident and comfortable. (P3) (See figure 11 in Appendix E)

What one wears also impacts their social interactions because clothing can influence one's mood and confidence to initiate and sustain social interactions. Therefore, the clothing one wears can determine how other people will perceive and react to them. One of the women describes how she uses clothing as a strategy to mediate her social interactions:

If I go out in a t-shirt and jeans and don't put on my makeup or a wig on or anything, no one talks to me and it's great. That's the whole plan. Then when I go out with wigs and makeup and outfits I'm almost excited for people to talk to me. And that generally happens a lot too when someone points out a wig or a hat so I think I'm more social when I'm dressed up and less social when I'm dressed down. And that's kind of how I mediate people talking to me. (P2)

When I visit my family, like go home for the holidays, like most recently this past Christmas, I have to dress down my appearance, not make it less casual but make it less edgy, like less city I guess you could say... I don't always want to be typecast as the "weird Asian girl" in the family, which I already have been. But, for my own sake I don't want to

have that conversation every time because of what I'm wearing. So, I feel I police myself very heavily when I dress around my family. (P5)

Using clothing to conceal the body or on the contrary to show off features of the body they are proud of, are strategies that these women use every day to feel better about themselves and help them manage their appearances and social interactions out in the world.

4.4 REINFORCE AND VALIDATE SELF-CONCEPT

4.4.1 Actual-self, Ideal-self and Social-Self

These women use clothing as a means to project satisfying images of themselves, portray their ideal-selves to the different social spheres they occupy, and to explore different possible selves. The clothing they wore differed depending on whether they were dressing for their actual-self versus their ideal-self and what activity or who they were dressing for. For example, if they were in a private place like their home, or running errands on the weekend, or in a comfortable social space, they would not go to great efforts to create an outfit, but instead would wear something easy and casual, representing their actual-selves.

... if I'm just here working which that happens 2-3 times a week, honestly, I just grab jeans and a sweater if it's cold, now that it's winter. If it's cold, I just grab something warm and that's it. (P1)

I think probably part of the reason I was so dressed down when I was doing the study was because I didn't have anything going on where it was particularly important for people to see me in a different way. But I know if I wanted to start projecting a more professional image at my start up, then yeah, it's probably time. (P6)

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In these instances, they did not really care about how people perceived them in their clothing because they were dressing for comfort and their actual-self, the way they see their true self, and not looking to impress anyone. In other social spaces, such as school, work, or an event, six out of the seven women were influenced by their ideal-self and ideal-social self. Therefore, they were more likely to dress their best depending on the situation and wear clothing with the intention of portraying a desirable image of themselves. They would consider where they were going, what they would be doing, the people they would be interacting with, and how they wanted to be perceived by those people:

...Whenever I go shopping, if I really want to enjoy myself shopping, I have to wear something nice, because if I'm not, I don't even feel like trying anything on. You're not feeling good about yourself, so how are you going to buy something if you aren't feeling pretty or whatever. (P1)

Well I was always shoot for the ideal self because you try and project that and that's what other people see I guess. Like dress for the job you want or the job you have. I don't really think about how I actually look like. (P3)

Let's say I have a 100% day that feels amazing, I feel happy and confident... I have my favourite playlist on, I'm walking so passionately to school and I have an image from third person of what I look like and think they must be like, "Damn, that girl looks awesome". So that's what I think about a lot is how people, just passerby's might perceive me.... Like how do strangers see me and how they picture my personality, or what my life would be like. Because if they can create a somewhat accurate picture or exaggeration of who I am, then I feel I've done myself justice. (P5) (See figure 12 in Appendix E)

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These women, if they were not already hyper-aware of what they looked like in their clothing, became more cognizant about their appearances over the duration of the study, how they would be perceived by others in their clothing, and were motivated to present their ideal-self to the world. In their mind they have an ideal image of how they want to see themselves from the outside perspective and how they want other people to perceive them. These women use clothing to maintain and present their ideal image in public spaces so that others perceive them the way they want them to be perceived and as a result they receive feedback and compliments to reinforce their self-concept:

Now because people can register that I'm trying to present my best self, it's starting to translate, so I'm kind of feeding off their energy from their perception of how I look. (P5)

Some women said that they dress for themselves, but others were more direct to admit that they dress for others and there seems to be an underlying unconscious bias to wear clothing to present their ideal-self and ideal-social self to the world:

Yeah, I guess of course the things I choose to wear depend on how I want people to see me I guess. I'm going to be wearing whatever depending on where I'm going or who I'm going to see. Like in a couple of my entries I wrote about when go out with my husband and his colleagues. I'm always very self-aware because they're super straight and sometimes if I wear something different, they always have comments sometimes good, sometimes they're bad. Yeah, they always look you up and down and look at you weird. And sometimes they don't need to say anything it's just the way they look at you...(P1) (See figure 13 in Appendix E)

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Yeah, I definitely dress for other people. Like I think about what people expect me to look like and I try and not disappoint them, which is probably the wrong way to look at it, because you people are like I dress for me. But who really does that? (P3)

One of the woman (P3) frequently mentioned that her image is especially important for her career in fashion because what she wears to events can help her with networking and future job opportunities, therefore the clothing she selects to wear for different events is a meticulous creative process because not only does she have to ensure that she projects an ideal-image for the job that she wants, but she also has to dress to please her future employers and stand out against the crowd:

I have been struggling with what to wear for this epic party for days. I wanted something that pops in the crowd, so a lot of my black dresses were out of the question. I didn't want to wear anything overtly trendy (like body con or nightgown style dress). I loved the look on my skin tone, paired with a bright red lipstick. I wanted to add some height since the dress silhouette is quite voluminous, so I reached for my highest 5" heels by Alaia. The designer had passed away recently, so I thought it would be a nice tribute as well... All the official event photographers asked me to pose for pictures - which is good for press coverage. (P3)

Clothing was also used to express different possible versions of the self, including the women they are most of the time, the women they want to be, and the woman they fear of becoming. Some of the women wear different clothing depending on which version of the self they want to present that day:

I think this is another hat I wear, which is nerdy academic, school loving person. I think people who know me, know me for the different characters I play, that people at school

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know me as an academic student, and kind of queer and weird, while at bars in my punk looks, I blend in with a crowd of fans, and while I kind of go back and forth between professional and punk I try really hard to take from both sides to inspire my fashion and looks. (P2)

This same woman also discussed the conflicts she experiences in selecting her clothing, hair and makeup. She may want to pursue a career in academia, but her self-concept struggles with what she should wear in professional settings, such as an interview or the classroom, because she worries how people will judge her individual clothing style, makeup, and wigs and how it would be perceived as lacking professionalism. She resolves these discrepancies within her self-concept by compartmentalizing her clothing choices to her different possible selves, while still trying to stay true to her actual-self in some way, in order to manage the impressions of others.

Another woman that is working hard on starting her own business has made clothing practices less of a priority and her negative and less than optimistic interview and clothing diary presented some thought provoking opinions. She was visibly tired, stressed, and overworked and her thoughts about her clothing choices reflected those feelings and the dissatisfaction that she felt with her clothing choices. Unlike some of the other women, she is not dressing to project her ideal-self, even though she used to really care about fashion and used to want to be fashionable. She grew up very passionate about fashion and there appears to be unresolved issues with herself and a disconnect between not prioritizing her dress to reflect the person she wants to become for her new entrepreneurial venture:

Well I find Toronto hard because it's not the most fashionable city, whatever people say, it's not, compared to London or New York. I don't walk around and see a lot of fashionable

people, therefore I don't feel like I have to keep up. Like in London for example, even though it's kind of a dressed down city, people put a lot more effort into their clothes. I don't feel like there's any reason to put any effort in... Maybe the fact that I was just wearing t-shirts and jeans, maybe that was what made me feel run down and haggard. Maybe if I put more effort into what I was wearing, then maybe that would change my self-concept... Ideal self is definitely the more fashion forward stuff that just, I don't know, I just don't feel comfortable in right now. (P6)

Most of these women sought to present their ideal-self to the people they interacted with, they used clothing to maintain that ideal image of themselves, whether they dressed for themselves or others, and they used their clothing to present different aspects of their possible selves to manage their image and perceptions of others. There are clearly bi-directional influences between clothing, feelings about the self-concept, and attitudes, which in turn impact clothing choices and behaviour.

4.4.2 Confidence and Self-Esteem

Throughout the process of reflecting and recording their daily outfits in their diaries, these women realized the positive influence clothing had on their confidence and self-esteem. They learned that taking time to reflect on the clothing they were wearing, seeing themselves in the mirror, and taking a picture of their outfit gave them an ego boost. These reflections made them feel more confident on days they were already satisfied with their outfit, but also on days when they were feeling unsure about themselves or how they looked:

That was one of the things about writing what I was wearing, it was kind of like an ego boost before I went to school or work. I'd be like "Oh I actually look really good, I like

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this, this fits me really well. So I think that has to do with self-esteem but also there are days when I don't look good and that's fine. (P7)

Receiving compliments on their outfits contributed to this ego boost as it gave them feelings of pride, validation and a sense of mastery about their clothing choice, and it enhanced their confidence and self-esteem. Not being able to accept compliments also says something about how they feel about themselves and their clothing:

To me, it can make or break a day if someone gives you random little compliments, even if it's small. It will boost how I feel and validate how I feel about, going out, and how I feel about dressing up. It confirms that I did something right, that I made a good decision with wearing these clothes and doing this makeup. (P2)

... if you give someone a compliment and they shoot it down, it kind of shows that they're not happy about what they're wearing and then their compliment is getting rejected and then they're put off by you rejecting their compliment when they're trying to be nice. I think once I became more confident about how things look and what I was wearing, then the world just became a better place. I was nicer towards other people, I have learned to accept compliments which is great, and I feel more confident in what I'm wearing and that in turn has made me more confident about everything. (P2)

All of the women agreed that wearing certain clothing can make them feel really good about themselves and enhance their confidence. During the study, the women became very attentive to how they were feeling physically and emotionally in their clothing and they all agreed that they felt their best and their most confident when they liked what they are wearing, the clothes fit properly on their body's, and they liked the fit. They also agreed that wearing clothing that

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made them feel put together enhanced their confidence and self-esteem, as opposed to wearing clothes that were sloppy, ratty, or made them feel self-conscious:

Sometimes when something is new and you're just wearing it and it doesn't feel good you're self-conscious or trying to hide something. So normally if I have something and I want to feel confident in myself I will wear an outfit that I have worn before, so I already know how it feels and exactly how it looks... I know what's going to happen when I move, I know how it's going to look when I sit down so I feel completely confident about it. (P1)

Accepting themselves and their body also plays a role in how they feel in their clothes. Depending on how they perceive themselves and how comfortable they are in their own body can have a positive or negative impact on the way they experience clothing:

I think that finally I've come to terms with what size I am. So, becoming happy about that has made me happy about all the clothing I wear because if it fits and is comfortable it makes me more confident about wearing it and then in turn I feel really good about myself because I feel comfortable and I feel confident and I also feel like I look like I'm wearing clothing that fits. I think that two, becoming more okay with the fact that I'm not anyone else, and not comparing myself to other people was a big step. (P2)

The women agreed that the look good feel good phenomenon is true and that the opposite is true as well because when they did not like what they were wearing or did not look their best in their opinion, they did not feel as comfortable or confident in their clothes:

Yeah that's why I want to look good is because of my self-esteem. I want to feel good about myself, I want to feel like I look good, and I like my outfit. That's why I do it, it's for my self-esteem... I think it [clothing] has such an ability to build confidence and have

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you be confident and comfortable and I think that's a major part of your well-being. And happiness is just feeling good about yourself and looking good. (P4)

Yeah when you're wearing something that you like or feel that looks good or is comfortable, I feel like you feel so much better. (P7) (See figure 14 in Appendix E)

Their confidence levels were very tangible to them and it partly depended on how they felt in their clothing and in turn these feelings affected the way they were able to present themselves and feel in control of the situation. If the women felt off in their outfit it had negative effects on their confidence and ability to present themselves or their ideas to other people.

Definitely the better I feel about my outfit; my confidence levels are really tangible to me of how I feel I'm able to present myself. If I'm feeling off with my outfit and I have important stuff to do, it's a disaster, it really affects me. It just affects my ability to sell myself, or present my ideas confidently, or just feel like I'm in control of the meeting. (P6)

Furthermore, many women emphasized the importance of dressing uniquely and using their clothing to stand out in the crowd, avoid stereotyping, and present their true self. For the woman that works in the fashion industry, having a unique style and standing out in the crowd of fashionistas is imperative for career opportunities and advancements:

I always gain more confidence when I stand out from the crowd, versus blending in, I hate blending in. It just makes me like everyone else, like what is unique about me? Nothing. (P3)

Another thing is that I don't like associating myself to stereotypes, so I try to dress somewhat uniquely. I prefer that my true self, and personality shine through. (P4)

Having an individual clothing style and dressing to represent their unique selves is a crucial part of the self-concept and well-being for these women and clothing can positively influence their confidence, self-esteem, and their ability to achieve their goals.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate how clothing can be used to elevate and reinforce an individual's understanding of their self-concept, boost their self-esteem, and enhance their hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. I explored the interactions and influences between psychology and fashion from a positive psychology perspective using a qualitative research approach. The questions that I investigated were as follows: (1) How do women experience the selection and wearing of clothing in their everyday lives? (2) How does one's self-concept, self-esteem, and mood interact with their experiences wearing clothing? (3) How can clothing be used as a styling tool to reinforce the self-concept, enhance the self-esteem of women, and in turn promote well-being? The main category that developed from the content analysis of the interviews and daily diaries was 'Selection and Experience of Clothing to Manage Everyday Well-being', and the themes that arose were 'Manage Mood', 'Clothing Strategies for Appearance Management', and 'Reinforce and Validate Self-concept'. My discussion will be organized to explain the results of each sequential theme, beginning with the main category 'Selection and Experience of Clothing to Manage Everyday Well-being' and at the end discussing the implications for well-being.

Firstly, it was expected that most of these women would have a close and intimate relationship with fashion and their clothing because six out of the seven women have studied or are currently studying fashion at the undergraduate or graduate level. It is unexpected and

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interesting to learn however that two of the more mature women have negative viewpoints on fashion, as one of the women who has worked in the fashion industry and studied fashion, now resents investing so much time and money into her appearance and dressing for the male gaze. The other woman agrees with the former that she does not want to be a slave to fashion, dressed head to toe in the latest trends, or be an “unwitting participant in this patriarchal system of oppression.” Their negative perspectives on fashion have in part developed from working closely in the industry and studying fashion from a critical perspective to learn and understand the theories about how the fashion industry works and the implications of participating in this system. Five out of the seven women have studied or are currently studying fashion at the graduate level; therefore, they may have a different perspective on fashion, clothing, and the industry that is more informed and critical, compared to others without this knowledge of fashion. I must also address that six out of the seven women are also friends or acquaintances; thus, they may have been more open and comfortable about discussing their clothing practices with a friend-researcher as opposed to a stranger-researcher. This study then reveals how these women select their clothing, the main factors influencing their choices being where they are going, what they are doing, and the weather. Secondary factors are the social expectations for the setting they will be in and who they will be interacting with, followed by mood, comfort, and style of the clothing. The life stage of the women also plays a role in how they select their clothing because the older women dress more modestly and the one that has children has less time to spend on her appearance. Clothing is still an important aspect of their self-concept, but in line with previous observations, as women age, their appearance becomes a less defining feature of their sense of self-worth as other facets of their life, such as motherhood, become more important (Tiggemann & Lacey; 2009; Tiggemann & Stevens, 1999). I would argue that for younger women, appearance and clothing are more influential on their self-

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worth because they are still learning about who they are, and clothing allows them to explore their identity and how they want to express themselves as an individual. As women get older, gain an array of new life experiences and achieve their goals, they may no longer need to spend as much time on their appearance and clothing to validate their self-worth because they have a better understanding of their self-concept and higher self-esteem compared to their younger counterparts. Previous studies have examined the motivations behind consumer purchasing behaviours, but there have been no studies directed at understanding what motivates people to select the clothing they wear on a daily basis. This data provides the psychological motives and insight into the daily lived experiences women have with their clothing and this knowledge can play a role in how we design, market, and brand clothing in the future. Determining and understanding the issues women face while dressing, for example choosing what clothes to wear while they are on their period when they are bloated and self-conscious, can identify special niche markets waiting to be established. To create a viable and sustainable fashion business in the economic and political climate we live in today, it is crucial to understand the psychology of your consumer target market and understand what clothing means to them and how they experience it in their day to day lives. This can initiate changes in design and branding to create the best products that go beyond satisfying their needs and actually make their lives better. It would be to the advantage of psychologists, designers, brand strategists, and marketers to investigate the struggles all people face while selecting and wearing clothing whether they are able bodied, or disabled, trans-gendered, short or tall, thin or big, young or old, so that we can identify and understand these problems and work on innovating new products with the consumers' well-being at the forefront.

Secondly, this study reveals the significant role clothing choices play as a coping strategy in managing mood. The clothing practices of these women in effect primarily enhance positive

affect, hedonic well-being, and counteract negative affect, supporting the earlier more positive psychological theorizing. This boost in positivity supports Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory of well-being with positive emotion being one of the main elements. Clothing evokes different positive and negative feelings and these women use clothing and accessories to cope with the different emotions they are feeling. This study contributes to findings emphasizing the important relationship between clothing, mood, and emotions (Moody, Kinderman, & Sinha, 2010; Tiggemann & Lacey, 2009). During the cold winter months, the women experience a negative change in mood, feelings of sadness, and anti-social behaviour. With limited clothing options for the cold weather, they also feel an emotional difference between dressing up and not dressing up. These observations appear to suggest a connection between clothing and seasonal affective disorder and future research should explore the connections between clothing practices and mood across different seasons. Furthermore, clothing is strategically used to cope with emotions, enhance positive affect, and improve low moods, adding to Raunio's (1982) claim that individuals select clothing to cope with their own feelings. This study can also be supported by Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, which involves the consideration of internal emotions and external experiences, self-reflection, and self-regulation through altering behaviour (i.e. clothing choices) to satisfy their internal and external needs. Goffman's (2002) argument suggests that daily dress routines are organized, and clothing is meticulously selected to manage everyday dynamic and unpredictable events and Masuch and Hefferon's (2014) and Smith's (2017b) findings indicate that clothing can be used to manage mood. This previous research, in addition to my current findings, suggests clothing is connected to emotional regulation, one of the four categories of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996; Salovey, 2001). The four categories of emotional intelligence include: emotional perception and expression; the use of emotion; comprehending

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emotions; and emotional regulation (Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso, 2002). The ability to perceive emotional information is key to all other categories of emotional intelligence and works together with the fourth category of emotional regulation. This category is described as the ability to effectively respond to and manage emotional experiences by redirecting and controlling one's emotions through techniques such as exercise, meditation, or listening to music (Salovey, Mayer, and Caruso, 2002). In the present study, the women find great value in becoming more self-aware about the connection between their feelings and clothing practices because they now realize how they have been using clothing as a response to manage their emotions. The results of this study add to the findings of Masuch and Hefferon (2014) and their argument linking clothing practices to emotional perception and emotional regulation. These women can identify when they are feeling low and use clothing as a coping strategy to regulate their mood and emotions, counteracting negative affect and in turn enhancing positive affect and uplifting mood. Emotional regulation skills are critical to manage one's emotions and reduce psychological and cardiovascular stress. I concur with the arguments of Salovey (2001) and Masuch and Hefferon (2014) that adaptive forms of emotional self-regulation can have positive implications on psychological and physiological well-being. The technique of employing clothing practices as a coping strategy for managing mood and emotions appears to be a neglected tool of affective self-regulation that has potential benefits and implications for emotional intelligence. My research deepens our understanding of the connections between clothing, mood, and emotion and emphasizes the significance of future research to investigate the applications of clothing practices to manage mood.

Thirdly, this study highlights the clothing strategies women employ to manage their appearance and make themselves feel better, adding to Masuch and Hefferon's (2014) theme of using clothing to befriend the body. In addition to fashion, the human body is a topic frequently

neglected in the entire field of psychology (Finlay, 2006) and positive psychology (Hefferon & Mutrie, 2012; Hefferon, 2013). Clothing is a physical extension of the body that influences the cognitive and affective appraisals of the body, which leads to the perception of body-image and the development and maintenance of the self-concept (Stone, 1962). One of the ways in which these women cope with their body image anxieties is by employing clothing strategies to augment their levels of body satisfaction and overall well-being. The outcomes of this research stress the complex nexus between the intrapsychic experience and the physical corporeal experience of wearing clothing, an important relationship between the mind and body which challenges outmoded Cartesian theories of mind and body dualism. When these women 'feel fat' they use clothing to conceal or camouflage their body, provide comfort, and avoid negative experiences, which extends the work of Kwon and Parham (1994), Kaiser (1990), and Kang, Johnson, and Kim (2012). Adding to the work of Kwon and Parham (1994) Frith and Gleeson (2008), this study reveals that when women feel confident, they have clothing strategies to show off their best features and parts of their body they feel proud of. Expanding the observations of Skeggs (1997) and McKinley (2002), possessing appearance management skills of knowing what clothing looks and feels good on your body, can foster pride, confidence, and a sense of mastery and autonomy over the body. Dittmar (2009) contends that body image is an essential aspect of well-being, therefore I would argue that knowing your body and having the skills to strategically use clothing to improve the way you look and feel can enhance positive affect and hedonic well-being. This study also shows that appearance management with clothing serves to regulate the external environment by managing the impressions of others and mediating social interactions, supporting the work of (Raunio, 1982; Sontag & Lee, 2004). Clothing can give women autonomy over their body and the self-image they want to project to the world and this makes them feel good and more

confident in themselves. Women use clothing to self-curate their identity (Hall, 1996) in real life and online with social media in order to project their ideal image to the world. Social media has also been linked to narcissism and self-esteem because it allows users to have complete power over how they present their self-image to the world; they stage a desirable public display of their “possible selves” by uploading attractive and self-promoting photos (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The way women represent themselves online with clothing and how that interacts with their self-concept, self-esteem, and mood, would be another interesting avenue of research. Kang, Johnson, and Kim (2012) have observed that negative evaluations by others may lead individuals to strategically use their clothing to blend in or avoid negative experiences, an observation seen in this study as the women use clothing to mediate their social interactions. Clothing can create a feeling of social belonging to facilitate social interactions, but one can also experience negative consequences as a result of what they are wearing. In accordance to Raunio’s (1982) research, in order to cope with social anxieties, the women develop clothing strategies that can mediate how outgoing and social they want to be and who they want to interact with. Sustaining solid affirmative relationships contribute to our happiness and is another fundamental factor in the PERMA theory of well-being (Guay et al., 2013; Seligman, 2011). The evidence clearly indicates that fashion can serve as a vehicle to manage their body image and appearance to evoke and maintain elevated levels of body satisfaction, suggesting the implications of clothing for body-image and well-being research in positive psychology.

Fourthly, these women use clothing to reinforce and validate their self-concept by projecting satisfying images of themselves, portraying their ideal-selves in social situations, and exploring different possible selves with their clothing. For these women, clothing is an important aspect of their self-concept (Sontag & Schlater, 1982; 5) and supported by Rosenberg’s self-

consistency motive (1979), their experiences demonstrate that they use clothing in a way that is consistent with their self-image (Sontag & Lee, 2004). The discrepancies these women experience within their self-concept, which produces negative affect (Markus & Nurius, 1986), were shown to be resolved by using different clothing strategies as previously mentioned. This study explains how these women use clothing to express different possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986: 954), similar to the research by Guy and Banim (2000) and their interpretation of three coexisting views of the self: *'The woman I want to be'*, *'The woman I fear I could be'* and *'The woman I am most of the time'*. This first view of the self implicates the inclusion of the ideal-self and ideal-social self, and these were highly influential on the women's selection of clothing when they were attempting to create and portray desirable images of themselves to the public sphere. The present findings illustrate the meticulous selection of clothing to maintain and portray favourable images of themselves for impression management and to influence their social interactions, supporting Goffman's (2002) notion of the presentation of the self and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Although some women say they dress for themselves, there still appears to be an underlying unconscious bias to dress for social approval and conformity, supported by the fundamental human drive of needing to belong (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). The need to fit in aids in satisfying the self-esteem and self-consistency motives and to fulfill ends, goals, or values (Rosenberg, 1979: 47). The notion of the ideal-self represents the self that we strive to become and by using clothing to create an image to self-actualize and achieve our potential, this suggests the power of clothing to promote eudaimonic well-being. Using clothing as a styling tool to create and present an image that is consistent with your goals and the person you want to become serves to reinforce and validate your self-concept. Furthermore, by reflecting on their clothing and their experiences wearing clothing, these women realized the positive influence clothing had on their confidence

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and self-esteem, supporting earlier theorizing by Horn (1968). Wearing clothing that makes them feel like their ideal-self and reflecting on the experiences wearing those clothes gives them an ego boost, supporting the phenomenon of looking good and feeling good. Knowing yourself and understanding your self-concept allows you to create a self-image with clothing that is consistent with your thoughts and emotions about your ideal-self. The process of reflecting in a diary about your thoughts and feelings wearing clothing proposes the value it has on growing healthy self-esteem, confidence, positive emotions, and well-being. Altogether, the perception of the ideal-self, self-esteem, and confidence, emerge as imperative components that contribute to well-being and flourishing with fashion. The evidence gained in this study establishes the crucial roles clothing plays in relation to our psychology and well-being, an area of research that is frequently overlooked. These findings have many implications for the field of fashion and positive psychology and future research should continue to explore how the perceptions of the ideal-self interact with clothing practices to positively influence confidence, self-esteem, and well-being.

Lastly, all of the categories that evolved from this study demonstrate the complex mechanisms women employ to manage their everyday well-being through clothing. The observations showing how clothing can enhance positive emotionality, thus validate the connection between clothing and hedonic well-being, a relationship that consistently emerged throughout the analysis. The value of positive emotions should not be underestimated because they can endure long past the moment. Positive emotions play an important role in Frederickson's (2009) broaden-and-build theory to compose the social and psychological resources that expand one's awareness and encourage curious exploration in thoughts and behaviour. Positive emotions in turn encourage sociability, receptivity, and resourcefulness (Frederickson & Branigan, 2005), inspire motivation and stamina (González-Romá & Gamero, 2012), lower the harmful

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consequences of negative affect (Frederickson, 2009), and are also an important factor in the PERMA theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011). The positive change in emotions and motivation these women experience when getting dressed, emphasizes the importance of clothing for hedonic well-being and positive psychology. In the case of eudaimonic well-being, the other side of the overlapping paradigm of well-being, clothing enhances eudaimonic well-being through individual self-actualization and meaning making processes (Hefferon & Boniwell, 2011; King et. al, 2006; Ryff & Singer, 2008) that foster personal growth and development (Seligman, 2011), authenticity (Waterman, 2011), and self-expressiveness (Waterman, 1993). Some of the clothing these women hold onto have great sentimental value that symbolizes personal histories and achievements, nostalgia about their family, childhood, past experiences, and relationships. Reinforcing this connection between clothing and eudaimonic well-being, nostalgia is described by Sedikides, Wildschut, and Baden (2004, p. 208) as ‘an existential exercise in search for identity and meaning’ and ‘a positive emotional and experiential reservoir’ (p. 211). Clothing supports the self-concept of these women, helps shape their identity, and is kept and treasured because it carries nostalgic value that arouses positive affect and meaningful memories, hence strengthening their self-narratives as it relates to their past relationships, times, and selves (Guy and Banim, 2000; Masuch and Hefferon, 2014). The link between clothing and well-being also accords to Seligman’s (2011) PERMA theory with meaningful relationships being another important factor of well-being. Therefore, it is argued that when worn on the body, clothing that bears nostalgia reactivates meaningful memories, reinforces the self-concept, and social bonds, altogether to promote eudaimonic well-being. This evidence supports the power of clothing to manage everyday well-being and promote flourishing. Future scholarly research in the field of positive psychology should continue to try and understand how individuals create meaning with their clothing, how it

contributes to the development and maintenance of their self-concept, and how it serves as a source of hedonic and eudaimonic well-being.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The aim of this study was to explore the topic of women's clothing practices from a positive psychology perspective. Through qualitative research and analysis, this study determined how a group of women interested in fashion select and experience clothing to manage their everyday well-being. Clothing is employed as a styling tool to manage their mood, different clothing strategies are in place to manage their appearance, social interactions, and feelings about themselves, and the clothing they wear reinforces and validates their self-concept. The findings of this study indicate a strong connection between clothing, emotion, mood, self-concept, and self-esteem. This study provides evidence to confirm and extend earlier theoretical writings in positive psychology arguing that the daily rituals of selecting our clothing and dressing up evokes positive emotions, satisfaction, enhances our self-concept, and is linked to our well-being. It also supports more recent work by Masuch and Hefferon (2014) and Smith (2017b) and emphasizes the importance of further inquiry to study the implications clothing practices in positive psychology.

However, it is still important to consider the limitations when interpreting the results of this research. Firstly, this study was conducted from the perspective of positive psychology and it may be argued that this introduced bias in the methods and analysis. The interview questions and guideline for the daily diary were carefully worded to not impose positive answers, but instead allow for open conversation and encourage free writing. This study explored positive and negative experiences with clothing and both accounts were equally considered in the process of analysis

and presentation of the results. The researcher also met frequently with the supervising faculty member to discuss the results of the study and to maintain rigour and ensure every effort was made to minimize bias. The data collected in this study could have been analyzed in many different ways and from different perspectives, therefore my interpretation of this data is specific to a certain time frame and mind frame (Shaw, 2010). Secondly, the small sample size used in any IPA study is a possible limitation. Nonetheless, according to Hefferon and Gill-Rodriquez (2011) a sample size of three to six participants is sufficient to produce themes while preserving the integrity of individual narratives and not having an overwhelming amount of data for the researcher to analyze. The women from this sample are also highly engaged with fashion in their work or academic studies and they are friends of the researcher. Thus, it would be interesting and useful to study this topic among different groups of people unknown to the researcher and more diverse samples of men and women to observe the commonalities or differences in their experiences to further understand how clothing practices are linked to well-being.

This study, inspired by the work of Masuch and Hefferon (2014), has expanded the framework for which we study fashion and has opened up new avenues for future scholarly inquiry. Future research should continue to employ daily clothing diaries to encourage people to reflect on their feelings in their clothing. We could consider whether settling for an “okay” outfit negatively impacts feelings of the self-concept or hinders confidence or performance to achieve goals. Subsequently, a styling component could be added to future studies by offering professional styling advice and a makeover to determine how feelings about the self-concept, self-esteem, emotion, and performance differ from before and after the makeover. Research to study the phenomenon of looking good and feeling good in clothing should explore how intentional dressing makes people feel and how it influences different social, emotional, and performance aspects of

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their life. We should also consider studying the application of clothing for emotional intelligence and positive self-image to determine whether dressing differently can help someone who is stressed and emotional feel less stressed, better about themselves, and happier. Another aspect to consider is designing clothes with more balance between comfort and style to highlight more of an importance on how clothing can make us feel, rather than just how it looks. Changing the design process to focus more attention on well-being and how people feel in clothing would be a novel approach to design that could add more meaning to clothing, make clothing more accessible, and satisfying to the customer. In addition, well-being through clothing could also be harnessed as part of a branding strategy for fashion businesses, especially since the wellness sector is so popular right now with yoga, meditation, and mindful thinking being all the rage. Lastly, if we know ourselves, have a good relationship with our clothing, and know what clothes make us feel good, do we need to keep buying so much? Future research should consider how individual flourishing with fashion can lead to a change in our mindset about how we consume clothing so that we buy less and banish the disposable reputation of clothing. And perhaps this could propel a change in how the fashion system functions; to produce less poor quality disposable clothing and instead produce higher quality items that people will actually love, treasure, and find useful for a long time.

In conclusion, this study contributes to filling the gap between the fields of positive psychology and fashion by making novel contributions demonstrating the powerful potential of clothing to evoke positive emotions, manage mood and appearance, enhance self-esteem, self-concept, and well-being. This study suggests that fashion and clothing practices are an intriguing yet neglected area of study for positive psychology. This study has unearthed a rich source of information about individual clothing practices and the accompanying thoughts, feelings, attitudes,

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and behaviours. It highlights a few of the multitude of complex psychological mechanisms involved in influencing clothing behaviour. This study expands our knowledge and understanding about the psychology motivating clothing behaviour, the positive and negative experiences women have wearing clothing, and it highlights the potential of employing clothing to promote well-being, providing insight for psychologists, brand strategists, marketers, and designers. Therefore, this study makes a modest, yet important contribution to help establish fashion as a legitimate and worthy area of study for further psychological inquiry. Clothing is so much more than something we wear on the body for protection and warmth, and in the words of the famous fashion photographer Bill Cunningham, “The wider world perceives fashion as frivolity, that should be done away with. The point is that fashion is the armour to survive the reality of everyday life. I don't think you can do away with it, it would be like doing away with civilisation” (Whitworth, 2011). Clothing is an important part of everyday dressing that can be a source to energize our bodies and minds and allow us to live happy and fulfilling lives.

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Appendix A

Letter of Approval from Research Ethics Board



To: Juliana Scott

Fashion

Re: REB 2017-277: Fashion and Positive Psychology: Intersections between clothing, self-concept, and well-being

Date: October 12, 2017

Dear Juliana Scott,

The review of your protocol REB File REB 2017-277 is now complete. The project has been approved for a one year period. Please note that before proceeding with your project, compliance with other required University approvals/certifications, institutional requirements, or governmental authorizations may be required.

This approval may be extended after one year upon request. Please be advised that if the project is not renewed, approval will expire and no more research involving humans may take place. If this is a funded project, access to research funds may also be affected.

Please note that REB approval policies require that you adhere strictly to the protocol as last reviewed by the REB and that any modifications must be approved by the Board before they can be implemented. Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication from the Principal Investigator as to how, in the view of the Principal Investigator, these events affect the continuation of the protocol.

Finally, if research subjects are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research.

Please quote your REB file number (REB 2017-277) on future correspondence. Congratulations and best of luck in conducting your research.

Dr. Patrizia Albanese, PhD Chair, Ryerson University Research Ethics Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrizia Albanese". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "P".

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The Following protocol attachments have been reviewed and approved.

- Version 2_ Daily Diary Checklist Questions.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ Guideline for Interview Questions - Version 3.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ References for Brief Literature Review.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ Demographic Survey and Personal Account Questionnaire.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017) Version 2_ Social Media (Facebook) Ad to recruit participants.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ Consent Form for Research Study - Fashion and Positive Psychology_ Intersections between clothing, self-concept, and well-being.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Letter of approval to send emails for study recruitment.pdf (submitted on: 11 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ Flyer for Research study_ Fashion and Positive Psychology_ Intersections between clothing, emotionality, self-concept, and well-being.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)
- Version 2_ In-person Script to recruit participants for research study.pdf (submitted on: 04 Oct 2017)

If any changes are made to the attached document throughout the course of the research, an amendment **MUST** be submitted to, and subsequently approved by the REB.

Appendix B

Consent Form



**Ryerson University
Consent Agreement**

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

Fashion and Positive Psychology: Intersections between clothing, self-concept, and well-being

INVESTIGATORS: This research study is being conducted by a graduate student Juliana Scott under the supervision of Osmud Rahman, from the School of Fashion at Ryerson University.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Juliana Scott via email at j11scott@ryerson.ca.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY: The purpose of this research study is to understand your experience of wearing clothing and how that experience interacts with and impacts your self-concept, the way you see and think about yourself. This study will explore how fashion interacts with your self-concept (self-image, ideal-self, social-self) and self-esteem by questioning what you choose to wear, what strategies you use to decide what to wear, and how the wearing of that clothing makes you feel about yourself. This study will recruit ten participants that identify as female between the ages of 20 to 40 years old in the cities of Toronto or Guelph with an interest in fashion or clothing and what they wear. You must have the time, willingness, and commitment to participate in this in-depth study. You must also have the capacity to consent to this study on your own behalf. The results of study will contribute to a major research project for completion of a Masters of Fashion degree.

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

- Complete an online **demographic information questionnaire** (3 mins): name, age, gender, ethnicity, job/career, email address, phone number, and home address. Contact information will be used to contact you during the study.
- Complete a **short online personal account questionnaire** (10-25 mins) by answering questions regarding your interest in fashion, your personal clothing style, and what clothing means to you.

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- You will then be asked to participate in a four week long **“daily” diary** (minimum 3-4 entries per week) that will ask you to describe the clothing you selected to wear, take note of things such as how you feel about yourself that day, what you chose to wear, why you chose it, and how the clothing makes you feel (10-25 mins per daily entry, time will vary depending on the person). You will be asked to take photos of your daily outfit, your face does not have to be in it. Taking photos of your outfits is optional. The photos will provide insight into your clothing style and connect your experiences and feelings with the actual outfit you wore. Photos will be revisited during the wardrobe interview to provide recollection of the outfits you wore and initiate further reflection upon your experience in those specific outfits. Photos of your garments or outfits may be published in the research upon your permission. It will be important to note any situations that occur throughout your day that may have changed your mood, emotions, or feelings about yourself and have impacted the way you feel in your clothes. For example, you may have felt happy and confident wearing the outfit you chose to put on, but those feelings may have changed when a co-worker made a comment directed to you at work. If a change in mood or the way you feel or think about yourself in your clothing made you change your outfit, also note those feelings and changes in clothing. It will be important to have self-awareness to realize and note the daily fluctuations in your mood, emotions, and the way you feel about yourself (self-concept) to gain insight into your everyday experiences, feelings, and reactions aroused through the experience of choosing and wearing clothing and the impact it has on you.
- Lastly, upon completion of the daily diary you will be asked to participate in a **wardrobe interview** (30-60 mins maximum) in your home to explore your personal wardrobe collection to understand your clothing style and ask you to reflect on your specific experiences with the daily diary. You will be asked to discuss what you have learned about your experiences with clothing and how clothing interacts with your mood, emotions, and self-concept. This interview will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Photos of outfits or pieces in your wardrobe may be taken upon your consent. Some of the research questions may include:
 - What outfits or pieces of clothing enhanced aspects of your self-concept (self-esteem, self-image, self-worth)?
 - How did your daily experiences impact the way you felt in your clothing?
 - How did your self awareness about your clothing practices change throughout the study?

The results of this research study will be made available to you upon completion of the final paper.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS: You as a participant may benefit from the study by understanding yourself better through the cognitive process of self-reflection and examination and realize the impact clothing has on you. This research may also be considered to be a small contribution reintroducing the study of fashion into the realm of positive psychological research. The outcomes of this study may provide some exciting information for psychologists interested in clothing behaviour and positive psychologists interested in understanding how clothing is linked to our self-concept and well-being. I intend to build on the theories of previous research that

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argue clothing contributes to our well-being and that we can actively use fashion and styling of clothing to make ourselves happier, more positive, confident, and more efficient in all aspects of life.

I cannot guarantee, however, that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL RISKS TO YOU AS A PARTICIPANT: The potential risks of this study are very low, however due to the personal nature of the study that requires increased self-awareness about your emotions, feelings, and reflections about your daily experiences with clothing, it may arouse feelings of anxiety or discomfort. These feelings will also depend on your vulnerabilities and how you cope with stress. Should you feel discomfort upon being asked a question or reflecting on your experience with clothing, you can skip the question or stop participating in the study, either temporarily or permanently.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The participant's personal information (names, contact information, etc.) will remain confidential. Participant information will be coded and names will be changed to maintain confidentiality. Real names will not be used in the publication of this research. Identifying information will be encrypted, stored, and password protected using a private Google Drive. Data will be retained until the research project is complete and identifying personal information, data, and audio recordings, will be deleted and destroyed after publications and presentations of the research after approximately 3 years.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you can skip that question. If you choose to stop participating, you may also choose to not have your data included in the study up until March 1st, 2018. Participants may choose to stop participating at any time and withdrawal from the study will not influence future relations with the researchers [Juliana Scott and Osmud Rahman] or Ryerson University.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact the researcher Juliana Scott via email at j11scott@ryerson.ca or supervisor of the research Osmud Rahman via email at orahman@ryerson.ca.

This study has been reviewed by the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board. If you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in this study please contact:

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



**Fashion and Positive Psychology: Intersections between clothing,
emotionality, self-concept, and well-being**

CONFIRMATION OF AGREEMENT:

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this agreement and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to participate in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this agreement. You have been told that by signing this consent agreement you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature of Participant

Date

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

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix C

Online Personal Account Questionnaire

1. What does fashion mean to you and how does it make you feel?
2. How would you describe your clothing style?
3. How does clothing make you feel about yourself?
4. Where do you like to go shopping?
5. How do you think clothing impacts your well-being?

Appendix D

Daily Clothing Diary Guideline

- Picture of outfit
- How do you feel about yourself today?
- How would you describe your mood or emotions today?
- What did you choose to wear today?
- How many times did you change your outfit today?
- How does your outfit make you feel?
- Why did you choose this outfit?
- Do you like your outfit? Why or why not?
- What about this outfit makes you feel good or bad about yourself?
- Did you choose a particular piece of clothing or outfit to make you feel better about yourself or happier?
- Are you dressing to enhance or hide aspects of yourself? Why or why not?
- How do you see yourself in this outfit? (self-image)
- How does your outfit impact your self-esteem? (emotional appraisal of yourself)
- How do you think others perceive you in this outfit and how does that make you feel? (social-self)
- Do you feel self-conscious in the clothes you are wearing today?
- Did your perception of yourself change throughout the day? How and why?
- Did anything happen today that changed the way you feel about yourself or see yourself wearing your clothes?
- Did people compliment your outfit today? How did that make you feel about yourself?

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- Did people make rude or mean comments or make you feel uncomfortable in the clothes you were wearing?

Appendix E

Guideline of Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

I. Wardrobe

- A. How would you describe your relationship with fashion and clothing? Are you interested in following fashion, learning about new trends, and experimenting with your outfits? How does this make you feel?
- B. How do you select the clothing you decide to wear? What factors impact your choices?
- C. What kind of clothing do you wear on a daily basis? Could you show me an outfit you would wear for work or school, night out, and weekend?
- D. How often do you change your outfit in the morning? Why do you change parts of your outfit?
- E. What are some garments or outfits that make you feel happy, evoke positive emotions, good mood, feel confident and good about yourself?
- F. How would you describe your clothing style? Do you like your clothes? What kind of clothing do you wish you had?
- G. What kind of clothing are you drawn to when you're shopping? Where do you like to shop? Do you make or personalize your own clothing?
- H. Could you show me some of your favourite pieces of clothing and tell me why you love them?

II. Behavioural

- A. Did you encounter situations where the clothing you were wearing influenced you to behave or perform differently? If so, what behavioural changes did you notice?
- B. Throughout your daily experiences, was there anything you noticed that stood out to you when you were recording in your diary?
- C. How did your self awareness about how you felt in your clothing change throughout the study?
- D. Did you notice that you wore clothing to make yourself feel a certain emotion or portray a certain identity?
- E. How did you find the clothing diary experience? What did you learn about yourself?
How did you feel after writing about your experiences with clothing?

III. Self-concept

- A. How would you describe your overall global self-esteem? Low to high? Why do you think this is so?
- B. How does your clothing make you feel about yourself?
- C. How do you think your emotions and mood interact with your experience with clothing?
- D. Do you feel that your clothing enhances your self-esteem and self-confidence? How or why do you think this happens?
- E. Did you ever encounter situations where your self-concept was hurt and you no longer felt comfortable in the clothing you were wearing, maybe so much so that you wanted to change your outfit?

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- F. How did the wearing of different outfits in your day to day experiences change or impact your self-concept? Do you feel that you wear clothing to enhance your self-esteem, perception of your actual self or ideal self?
- G. How is your experience with clothing impacted by your social self (actual-social self (the way you think other people see you) or ideal-social self (the way you want other people to see you)?
- H. What pieces of clothing or outfits and enhance aspects of your self-concept (self-esteem, actual self, ideal self)?
- I. Did you notice clothing strategies that you employ to enhance the way you feel about yourself in your clothing?
- J. How do you think your clothing impacts your well-being? Can clothing be used to enhance your well-being? In general terms happiness and self-actualization, the realization or fulfillment of one's talents or potential.
- K. What about your mental and emotional well-being?

Appendix F

Photographs of Outfits



Figure 2: Feels tired, moody, and emotionally drained, changed into sweatpants to stay warm (P5; p. 36).



Figure 3: Pants that her grandmother chose for her, she loves her taste and loves this outfit (P4; p. 37).



Figure 4: She wears a “POWERBOMB” shirt for a punk/hardcore band inspired by their love for wrestling. She really likes this band and the shirt because she grew up loving WWE and female pro wrestlers (P3; p. 37).



Figure 5: Jacket that she customized with Mexican embroidery. Her mom is doing the same thing with her jacket (P1; p. 37).



Figure 6: Going out look for her birthday channeling her inner Kim Chi from Ru Paul's Drag Race season 9. She wanted to look witchy and seductive, with the dark vampire look in full drag makeup (P2; p. 38).



Figure 7: She feels very tired and stressed and her clothes are just to cover her body. Dressing up is not a priority right now (P6; p. 41).

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Figure 8: Dressed up for the first time in a while on vacation in Thailand and feels confident and happy in this dress. Feels much happier and confident wearing her favourite shorts and singlet (P6; p. 42).



Figure 9: Having a bad hair day but this hat really works with her sporty look. Feels good wearing a crop top because she feels proud and happy about her body (P7; p. 42, 43).



Figure 10: Dresses up after having a bad week. She feels confident, stylish and classy in this skirt that shows off her slim waist (P4; p. 43).

FASHION AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CLOTHING, MOOD, SELF-CONCEPT, AND WELL-BEING

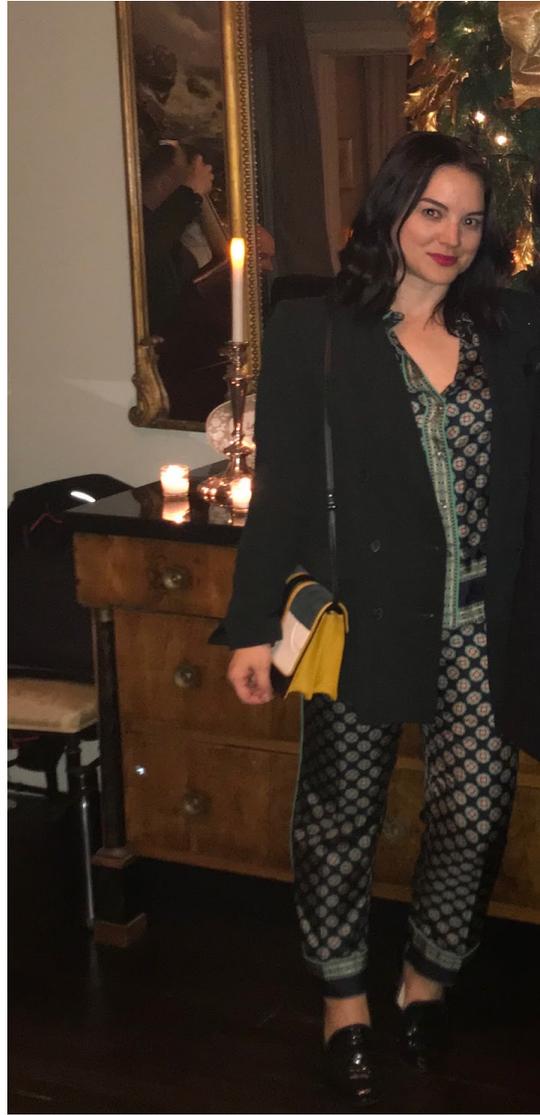


Figure 11: Outfit for Hermes cocktail party. She gets her picture taken by the event photographer, receives many compliments on her outfit, and feels very comfortable and confident in her pajama suit (P3; p. 44).



Figure 12: Wears one of her own fashion designs and feels very fashionable and proud of her outfit (P5; p. 46).

FASHION AND POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY: INTERACTIONS BETWEEN CLOTHING, MOOD, SELF-CONCEPT, AND WELL-BEING



Figure 13: Hesitates to wear this metallic jacket to go out with her husband and his work colleagues because they are more conservative, but she wears it anyways and still feels good (P1; p. 47).



Figure 14: Dressed up for her last exam, feels better wearing this outfit than the oversized hoodie and leggings she wore the day before. She feels that dressing nice helps her feel more confident before her exams. “Look good feel good is definitely a real feeling” (P7; p. 53).