

Third Age Men's Experience of Fashion and Clothing: An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis¹

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between fashion and aging has recently become topical, especially within the context of current socio-demographic changes, such as the development of aging populations and the maturing of the so-called “baby boomer” generation. As Gilleard and Higgs note, the current generation entering the third age is the one that has created a consumer culture built on youth and sexuality (*Contexts* 1), which has often been articulated through active engagement with fashion and clothing, “so that their attainment of the Third Age status marks a new stage in the cultural constitution of age” (Twigg, *Critical Review* 300). These typically Western phenomena result in a stronger link between fashion and aging than ever before. In this article, we present a phenomenological analysis of a sample of Third Age men's experience influenced by this relationship, adopting both generational (Gilleard and Higgs, *Third Age* 20-24) and phenomenological perspectives (Powell and Gilbert 5).

LITERATURE REVIEW

PHENOMENOLOGY AND AGING

Twigg describes the relationship between fashion and aging as “sit[ting] uncomfortably together” (*Fashion and Age* 1). Yet in recent years this relationship has been studied from various perspectives, including sociology (e.g., Twigg; Hurd Clarke, Griffin, and Maliha), psychology (e.g., Paulson and Willig; Tiggemann and Lacey), marketing (e.g., Peters, Shelton, and Thomas; Holmund, Hagman, and Polska), and design studies (e.g., Iltanen and Topo; McCann). No matter what discipline we

operate within, however, this relationship seems to be analyzed mainly from the angle of bodily deterioration, thus distorting and dimming the complexity of the embodied lived experience (H. Biggs 167-69). Post-modern approaches to aging, especially phenomenology, redefine these constrained perceptions of growing old by placing the emphasis on individualities and encouraging alternative ways of exploring what it is to age (Powell and Gilbert 7-9).

As Arxer, Murphy, and Belgrave note, “[p]ersons remake themselves over time, and thus their identities change” (46), and so human biographies have the potential to be translated into the relationships between personal and structural factors, on the one hand, and individual and collective experiences, on the other, with fashion and clothing acting as the communicators and mediators between self and society (Entwistle 137-42; Craik 10-16). As Twigg argues, “[clothes] offer a useful lens through which to explore the possibly changing ways in which older identities are constituted in modern culture” (*Embodiment* 93). Thus the potential exists for fashion and clothing to become an analytical focal point in our interpretation and understanding of aging identities.

Such an approach relates strongly to postmodern social and cultural identity discourses and understandings of the ways in which fashion and clothes can visibly differentiate individuals within society (Beward 304). Current social narratives seem to undermine the existence of age ordering through clothing; however, as Julia Twigg notices, it is still present (*Embodiment* 96). Moreover, building on Lurie (52-59), she describes a twofold way in which clothes can still differentiate, and potentially stigmatize, older individuals. On the one hand it can force them, especially women, to consider excessive coverage of their bodies and to choose unrevealing, misshapen, and often dark-colored clothes; on the other hand, it can also be associated with wearing bright colors and infantile garments. These representations have significant implications for culturally mediated constructions of aging and identity, especially in relation to gender. Moreover, these are also central to how aging individuals negotiate themselves in relation to others.

While critical gerontology, by questioning its own practices, actively addresses the construction of those representations, including the ways they articulate issues of power (S. Biggs, *Critical Narrativity* 314; S. Biggs, *Masquerades* 45-46), we are currently witnessing the field's turn to the humanities, which encourages grounding empirical investigations in the life course perspective and embodied experience, and acknowledging their qualitative values (Leontowitsch 1-2). These perspectives, and especially their rejection of natural science as the only suitable way of acquiring our knowledge on aging (Baars 220), provide the foundations for this study. It is in this vein that the phenomenological approach, with its emphasis on practice and experience, enables us to “[unlock] an understanding of what it means to be a human person situated within and across the life course” (Powell and Gilbert 5), which ties closely with the aspirations of critical gerontology and its shift in focus from an objective to a subjective stance. When it comes to fashion and clothing, and the conjunction of clothing with the body, phenomenology, especially, makes it possible to “uncover the multiple and culturally constructed meanings that a whole range of events and experiences can have for us” (Weber and Mitchell 4), and to establish the interrelation between the stories of individuals, the cultural and temporal life worlds they inhabit, and the subjects and objects that fill those worlds.

(OLDER) MEN AND FASHION AND CLOTHING

The term “fashion” represents an elusive concept of many, often interconnected and overlapping meanings. Despite the vastness of the classical fashion theories, such as those of Veblen, Simmel, and Blumer, and building on modern research, such as studies by Craik, Crane, and Entwistle (*Fashioned Body*), the concept still retains a certain level of ambiguity, both for academics and for the general public. This can be attributed, in part, to the lack of clear delineations among fashion as a social process, as an industrial system, or indeed as a material product. In this paper we distinguish between the terms “fashion” and “clothing,” subscribing to Simmel's understanding of fashion as specific patterns in the process of sociocultural distribution, with clothes being one of the

possible material forms of this dissemination (296). However we also recognize, following Kawamura, the existence of a commonly accepted simplification in which “fashion” often functions as “clothing fashion, that is, the most trendy, up-to-date clothing that the majority of the people in society adopts and follows” (9). This will be an especially important consideration when we present our interpretation of our respondents’ accounts later in this paper.

Twigg points out that while older people are often excluded from consideration in fashion studies, they remain active clothing wearers and consumers, so she proposes focusing on clothes rather than fashion, in aging studies (*Embodiment* 93). A similar approach, however, cannot be justified in this study, as it samples from a generation of older men who, in general, contributed extensively to the development of fashion as a system and a social phenomenon. Moreover, our focus on both fashion and clothing is supported by the fact that for some members of this generation, including the sample in this study, fashionable clothes became signifiers of their social status as “so not old” (Gilleard and Higgs, *Corporality* 127).

It can be argued that viewing aging through the lens of (fashionable) clothing has now become a well-established approach within an ongoing academic debate and changing social discourse on aging. While this statement is supported by the vast literature available, especially from the sociologist Julia Twigg, similar transitions are also visible within contemporary media, including TV, radio, and popular Internet weblogs, which often adopt the trendy approach of exploring “the beauty” hidden within old age.² The emergence of these media venues has been accompanied by academic events such as the “Mirror Mirror: Representations and Reflections on Age and Ageing” conference held at the London College of Fashion (29-30 October 2013), suggesting that the relation between fashion and aging is no longer a taboo subject.³ However, what is common in most of these initiatives is that the main focus has been on women. This results in a concurrent neglect of the topic of older men, particularly with regard to their experience of growing older and how

this is reflected in their engagement (or otherwise) with fashion.

Although some recent studies (e.g., Krekula; Russell) have started to explore the relationship between gender and aging, the topic of older men and their relationship with fashion and clothing is still a relatively unexplored field of inquiry. Twigg observes that, “[m]en have traditionally been excluded from the territory of fashion” (*Fashion and Age* 19). This exclusion can be understood as reflecting a rather complicated social understanding of masculinity, which stereotypes men as not caring about their appearance. Craik relates this assumption to the historical equation of masculinity with sober and modest clothing and a puritanical appearance, which largely explains the marginal academic interest in men’s fashion and clothing compared to parallel women-oriented studies (176). Drawing on this interpretation, sociologist Tim Edwards attributes the lack of academic studies in men’s fashion to three historical factors: the supremacy of studies in haute couture over street fashion, the development of women’s movements that prioritized the role of women’s dress, and what he describes as “the gendered development of fashion itself” (42).

In a similar vein, Kaiser suggests the expression “clothes maketh the man” should be understood as much in terms of what it does not say as in what it says: it precisely does not say “*fashion* maketh the man.” While in Western societies, men are “allowed” to engage with clothes, which often become a symbol of their masculinity and social power, they are not entitled to do so with fashion, which implies feminine characteristics of frivolity and superficiality (Kaiser 125). Barbara Schreier, in a rather essentialist manner, identifies fashion as a highly gendered concept: “[i]n fashion, out of fashion, fashionable, and fashion-conscious are concepts commonly linked to women; men must be content with the description of old-fashioned” (2). It is worth noting that both authors refer to a sexual majority of heterosexual men; their comments do not apply to the cultural position of homosexual men in relation to fashion, for whom an active interest in clothing seems to be more socially accepted than for straight males (Edwards 43). This paper investigates the ways in which

heterosexual third age male individuals use fashion and clothing to communicate their mature masculinity.

SITUATING THE CURRENT PAPER

In 2003, Arber, Davidson, and Ginn pointed out that there was a need to rebalance the contemporary framework in social research, which tended to focus more on the somewhat disadvantaged position of older women, concurrently overlooking the nuances of the aging “new masculinity” (2). Since then some authors have explored this topic (e.g., Slevin and Linneman; Kampf, Marshall, and Petersen; Tarrant). However, despite these attempts, Julia Twigg notes that “it remains the case that older men are largely disengaged from fashion as a cultural field” (*Fashion and Age* 19). In the spirit of addressing this gap, this paper discusses the findings of an interpretative phenomenological exploration of third age older men’s lived experience of fashion and clothing.

As Eileen Fairhurst has shown, external appearance is no longer the exclusive concern of females, and mature men, as much as mature women, can continue to engage in various fashion practices as they grow older (272). This, however, depends on their personal biographies. Bennett, in his recent study on older music fans, explores similar notions in relation to the followers of music genres, such as punk or rock, typically perceived as youth-related. He concludes that for particular men and women, their interest in music can become something that is carefully persevered and developed together with their personal growth and does not simply terminate as they reach a certain biological age (180-81). In a similar vein to Bennett’s work, this study aims at uncovering the experience of fashion and clothing for a sample of third age men for whom their biological aging does not determine a loss of interest in fashion and clothing.

The exploration of contemporary older men’s relationship with fashion and clothing is interesting not only from the psychological and sociological perspectives, but also due to its historical context. Men entering mid- and later life in the UK in the early years of the twenty-first century have had very different fashion life courses compared with older

or younger generations. The period of the 1950s onwards has been especially exuberant in terms of menswear and men's fashion, including the development of a variety of youth subcultures, such as "Mods" and "Rockers,"⁴ and the production of cheaper, mass-available fashion goods. Additionally, modern feminist movements have influenced fresh social perceptions of men and masculinities (Hearn ix). As this study reveals, some contemporary men can have a very distinctive consciousness about and attitude to their appearance, especially with regard to clothing. And while we are currently witnessing ever-changing perceptions of masculinity (e.g., the emergence of "metrosexual" man), it is important to capture those transformations through various different research approaches

Taking the above points into consideration, this paper addresses a gap in the literature by exploring the relationship with, and experience of, fashion and clothing for the minority of this generation of men who identify themselves as "fashion-conscious." This is a significant group in terms of their past and current, often pioneering, fashion practices, linking together the economic and social potential required in active fashion consumption. Moreover, echoing Gilleard and Higgs's distinction between third- and fourth-agers and its dialectic in terms of the cultures of aging (*Abjection* 135), researching this group allows us to "focus on the issue of ageing rather than upon the aged" (Gilleard and Higgs, *Cultures* 199).

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

In order to achieve the in-depth insight into the participants' experiences, we took a qualitative, idiographic approach using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, *Beyond* 261-71). IPA is theoretically and philosophically underpinned by phenomenology, by virtue of its focus on lived experience, and by hermeneutics, because of its recognition of the active, interpretive role of the investigator in the research process. As noted by Dickson, Knussen, and Flowers, IPA "seeks to explore the links between what people say within interviews, and the way they think about their own experiences" (461). Moreover, IPA studies

acknowledge their participants as being experts in their own lives and experiences, and recognize the importance of understanding the context in order to uncover the meanings of those experiences. In this paper, our aim is to analyze third age older male participants' accounts of their experience of aging through the lens of fashion and clothing and to present it in relation to the concepts of time, space, and "others" (Kaiser 172).

INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a qualitative approach to research concerned with participants' personal lived experience that was developed by Jonathan Smith as an alternative to descriptive psychology (*Beyond* 261-71). IPA acknowledges individuals as being the "meaning makers" of their experiences, but also recognizes the role of the researcher(s) in the process of knowledge co-construction (Smith and Osborn 53; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 35-36). Finlay identifies three "touchstones" of IPA: a reflective focus on subjective accounts of personal experience, the commitment to a hermeneutic approach, and an idiographic sensibility focusing on particular experiences of particular individuals (140).

IPA's commitment to idiography, as Smith, Flowers, and Larkin note, can be somewhat problematic, especially when compared to nomothetic approaches that allow generalizing claims to a group or population (29). However, Harre (cited in Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 29) argues that this focus does not make generalizations impossible, but rather imposes them differently, and by locating them in particularities is critical in establishing the potential depth of a phenomenon.

Consequently, our concern in this study lies in understanding the meanings of fashion and clothing (particular phenomena) in the processes of aging (particular context) for each individual third age man with an interest in fashion and clothing taking part in this study (particular case), rather than attempting to establish universal and causal laws. As pointed out by Kvale, reality should only be related to the individual's perception of it (41-46), while Warnock suggests that "delving deeper

into the particular also takes us closer to the universal . . . [and to] a shared humanity” (cited in Smith, *Reflecting* 42-43). Since the aim of this study is to contribute to the developing field of cultural gerontology by initiating the discussion of the social position of aging men and their mature masculinity in relation to fashion and clothing, the idiographic commitment to the particular allows us to identify the convergences and divergences within the sample and to draw cautious generalizations about the potential richness of the male aging phenomenon, rather than measure its quantitative characteristics.

STUDY DESIGN

The data for this paper were drawn from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five third age British men aged between fifty-four and sixty-three. Each interview lasted between 80 and 120 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with the consent of each participant. The six open-ended topics for discussion included: the participant’s personal definition of the term “fashion,” his past and current relationship with fashion and how it has changed over time, his perfect fashion item, and fashion artifacts with personal meaning for him. Prompts and probes were used to encourage participants to elaborate further when unexpected, but potentially interesting, areas arose and to clarify ambiguities and avoid misunderstandings.

SAMPLING

Since our goal is to explore the potential richness hidden within those third age men’s experiences in relation to appearance and especially fashion and clothing, great care was taken to obtain a closely defined group of individuals for whom the research questions were significant and meaningful. A homogenous and purposive sample (see table 1) was recruited through word-of-mouth and snowball recruitment methods.⁵ All participants described themselves as white, British, heterosexual, middle-class men with a significant interest in their appearance, and especially in fashion and clothing. Additionally, they all shared a similar fashion past, including being members of British youth subcultures

distinctive from the 1950s onwards, such as Mods, Hippies,⁶ and Punks.⁷

The introduction to the interview explained that the interview would have the characteristics of a conversation and that the study aimed to explore the participant’s past and present experiences of fashion and clothing. Three participants were interviewed at Nottingham Trent University (UK) and two participants were interviewed in their own homes in Nottinghamshire (UK). Ethical approval for the research was obtained from the Joint Inter-College Ethics Committee at Nottingham Trent University.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

NAME*	Age	Occupation
Eric	60	Artist
Grahame	61	Social care worker
Henry	54	Academic
Ian	58	Company director
Kevin	63	Lecturer

*Pseudonyms were used to protect the participants’ anonymity

STUDY LIMITATIONS

It can be argued that the potential limitation of this study is the small sample size. However, as we pointed out in the Methodology section, this study does not aim to draw any quantitative generalizations, but rather to explore the potential richness and depth of the phenomena under study and in relation to this particular sample. This possibly problematic approach has been addressed by Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez who, following Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, recommend a sample size between three and six participants, stipulating, however, that this might decrease if participants are interviewed more than once (756-57). They describe the optimal IPA sample as consisting of enough cases to examine convergences and divergences within the group, but not causing the researcher to be overwhelmed with data. In this manner, they suggest that “fewer participants examined at a greater depth is always preferable

to a broader, shallow and simply descriptive analysis of many individuals” (756).

Another possible study limitation lies in the use of language, and particularly the ambiguous term fashion, with its imbued connotations and implications (e.g., fashion as a highly gendered concept, or multiple meanings of the terms in relation to social change or appearance and identity). While all participants in this study had a high level of appearance-consciousness, the majority of them did not possess professional or academic knowledge of the field of fashion or clothing. Therefore, we acknowledge that for many of them, fashion often was understood in a simplified way, as a concept synonymous with fashionable clothing (Kawamura 9).

ANALYSIS

Many sources offer guidelines on how to analyze data in IPA (e.g., Langdridge 110-12; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin 79-107; Willig 54-59; Finlay 141-42). Yet, since IPA’s main concern is with personal lived experience, particularly the meaning of it and how participants make sense of it, those outlines are often flexible and not prescriptive. Here, the analysis followed the “typical” IPA analysis guidelines as provided in Smith, Flowers, and Larkin: reading and re-reading of the transcript, initial noting (including descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments), developing emergent themes, searching for connections across emergent themes, moving to the next case, and looking for patterns across cases (82-101). The initial coding generated a set of themes, which then were grouped and arranged into three superordinate themes with three subordinate themes each (see table 2).

TABLE 2. SUPERORDINATE AND SUBORDINATE THEMES IN THE STUDY

SUPERORDINATE THEMES		
Learning Fashion	Defining the Fashion-Self	Fashion-Self-Performance
SUBORDINATE THEMES		
Mirroring	Pioneering	Presenting
Dis-Comforting	Non-Conforming	(Un-)Fashioning
Peacocking	Distancing	Re-Materializing

The first superordinate theme, “Learning Fashion,” is concerned with the various past practices through which respondents developed their fashion sensibilities, allowing them to engage actively with fashion. The three subordinate themes of “Learning Fashion” are “Mirroring,” which describes participants’ past practices of copying others’ appearance, especially in relation to youth idols and other members of youth subcultures; “Dis-Comforting,” outlining the active sacrifice of physical comfort in order to create the desired look; and “Peacocking,” a term used to highlight the pleasure derived from being recognized, praised, and admired for the way our participants presented themselves.

The “Defining the Fashion-Self” superordinate theme is concerned with the ways in which participants have constructed and defined their fashion identities, especially in relation to continuity and transition. It comprises the subordinate themes of “Pioneering,” which is concerned with participants’ sense of being part of important social and cultural revolutions, including the creation and development of mass- and youth-oriented fashion; “Non-Conforming,” which describes respondents’ often rebellious approach to fashion trends and certain social limitations; and “Distancing,” which is concerned with the importance, as expressed by the respondents, of not being associated with certain fashion looks and/or behaviors.

The final superordinate theme, the “Fashion-Age(ing) Performance,”

focuses on the participants’ social performance relating to aging through the medium of fashionable clothing, with the main locus in the present. It includes three subordinate themes: “Presenting,” which relates to participants’ changing physicality and its influence on their social performance in relation to fashion; “(Un-)Fashioning,” which describes respondents’ cautious navigation between various fashion styles, trends, and so-called “timeless solutions,” and “Re-Materializing,” which focuses on the participants’ reminiscing about unique fashion artifacts from the past and their desire to reconnect with them, consequently influencing the creation of a certain prism through which they currently experience fashion and clothing.

This paper focuses on the second superordinate theme, “Defining the Fashion-Self,” and its three subordinate themes: “Pioneering,” “Non-Conforming,” and “Distancing” (see table 3). These were selected due to the novel character of the material, its qualitative richness, and its potential as a catalyst for discussion on the social position of older men and their mature masculinity in relation to fashion and clothing. Moreover, this set of themes, above others, explores the particular relation between participants’ past and present, offering a unique insight into their understanding of the cultural, social, and physical aging processes to which they are subjected. The extracts presented were selected for their relevance to the contexts of time, space, and “others” discussed in this paper.

TABLE 3. PRESENCE OF SUBORDINATE THEMES WITHIN THE SAMPLE (MEASURE OF PREVALENCE OF THEMES^a)

PARTICIPANTS	Defining the Fashion-Self		
	Pioneering	Non-Conforming	Distancing
Grahame	X	X	X
Henry	X	X	
Kevin	X	X	
Ian		X	X
Eric	X	X	X

FINDINGS

DEFINING THE FASHION-SELF

The analysis outlined a number of recurrent themes revealing the ways in which participants construct and define their fashion identities. All of the participants perceived themselves as authoritative entities with pioneering pasts within the field of fashion, yet also as individuals who conform neither to social norms nor to fashion trends, and for whom the practice of “distancing” was key to how they saw themselves in relation to certain types of others or undesired images. Central to these accounts was the experience of fashion through the lenses of fashion-aware individuals. In the subordinate themes below we discuss the ways in which our participants create, project, and negotiate their male identities and how this influences their experience of fashion and clothing. All three subordinate themes—“Pioneering,” “Non-Conforming,” and “Distancing”—can be described as having their origins in the participants’ histories, and yet can also be seen as concurrent central influences in their present-day social identification. Therefore, we suggest the important influence of the past in the creation of the present, and exercise the concept of identity as a process of personal and social becoming (Goffman 28-82) rather than a fixed state of being. We also recognize that the subordinate themes presented below, despite being independent entities, are often intertwined, creating a complex of mutual dependencies illustrating the intricacy of the phenomena that we discuss throughout the present account.

PIONEERING

The notion of pioneering—the idea of being the first who developed a certain set of fashion practices—was in some way inscribed across our sample of individuals who grew up in Great Britain in the 1950s and onwards. “Pioneering” emerged as one of the strongest themes within the analysis, and it often functions as a first-person account of witnessing and participating in the sociocultural transformations of the period. As an example of this, in the following extract, Kevin talks about his recollection of the development of fashion trends for men:

[In the 1960s] there were long debates between men for the first time about what was “in” and what wasn’t. Men started to talk about clothes it was . . . quite a phenomena I think er . . . and old people I think probably found that really quite weird. Because you, you know you just wore sports jacket and trousers, sensible shoes, and shirt and tie. What’s to discuss? [...] So um . . . again, [...] I think that was all quite new that sort of dandy . . . thing for blokes. Um . . . hadn’t been . . . hadn’t been seen for a very long time um . . . particularly after the years of austerity after, after the war. (Kevin, aged sixty-three, 53-72)

Kevin’s account could be seen as a direct reflection of changes in social discourse on men and masculinity. He explains how these “phenomena” were the result of a young, modern men’s innovative approach, highlighting that it was this approach that differentiated them from older generations. The key to the interpretation of Kevin’s account seems to be what it says about the group identity of the new, modern type of men, who were no longer restricted by social norms or cultural limitations, and who felt free to express and expose their shared interest in fashion and to become the “new [...] sort of dandy . . . thing for blokes.” In the light of those changes, masculinity gained new meanings of openness, progressiveness, and fashionability. This observation creates an interesting overlap with the themes discussed in the following sections, “Non-Conforming” and “Distancing.” In this sense it can be argued that, for Kevin, the rejection of the decaying social expectations of how a man should look laid the foundations for pioneers like him to look and act differently.

But Kevin’s recollection needs also to be understood in a temporal context between those incidents and the given account. What Kevin remembers is the very vivid backdrop of the important social changes that characterize that period: rebellion against old norms and fragmentation between youngsters and “old people.” Now, nearly fifty years later, Kevin’s account seems to be quite empathetic towards the older generation, who “probably found that really quite weird” and for whom “it must have been quite strange [...] to see these sort of um . . . er . . . new colors and new kinds of tailoring [...]” (74-76). This suggests the shift in Kevin’s self-identification from young to old and furthermore can also

be interpreted as his increasing self-awareness of growing old.

Interestingly, while Kevin frames his past experiences within the historical context and relates it to World War II, another participant, Henry, refers to the development of the “Teddy Boy” subculture.⁹ These references to the past are significant when it comes to understanding how both participants still negotiate their identities as fashion pioneers. In Kevin’s case, the key seems to be in the use of the past perfect progressive tense: “[it] hadn’t been . . . hadn’t been seen for a very long time um . . . particularly after the years of austerity after, after the war,” which indicates that in fact Kevin considers his generation as re-pioneering the idea of men’s fashion that had already been prominent before. Continuity with an earlier trend can also be found in the use of the term “dandy,” which historically was associated with the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and which was reinvented by the youth generation in the 1950s and beyond, as Henry notes here:

Uhm, generally, uhm . . . having grown up in the 60’s and 70’s I have probably lived through some of, uhm, some of the most exciting changes and developments in male clothing. Uhm . . . certainly in the last century. Although I missed out on being a Teddy Boy or wearing a Zoot Suit which I’d rather like. (Henry, aged fifty-four, 3-9)

Henry historically references the “Teddy Boy” subculture, which for him symbolized and embodied the pioneering spirit of the youth culture and trendy male clothing of that time. In this sense Henry sees his own pioneering contribution as building on the achievements and inheritance of the “Teddy Boys.” But there is also a regret present in Henry’s account, as someone who “missed out on being a ‘Teddy Boy’” and consequently on the true pioneering of their youth ideals, such as rebellion, often visualized through an unconventional look.

From a different perspective, the importance of social changes in the fashion system in the middle of the last century was also discussed by Grahame. For him, pioneering was not only about the development of men’s fashion, but also about the creation of a so-called “mass fashion”:

Maybe, because I was a teenager in the 60’s. [...] [I]t was the first period when working class people had got money, you know, spare money. Uhm,

to indulge themselves. Uhm, with the clothes really. And also [...] I can remember Nottingham's first boutique. [...] We used to shop in there. All of their stuff would come up either from London or . . . [...] And [clothes from that shop] would have a waist and things like that. And up until that time, if you wanted a suit making, there would be all of these old-fashioned sort of places that sold suits but they were for men, you know sort of in their 40's and 50's. (Grahame, aged sixty-one, 466-83)

It is in the context of improved earnings for the working class and cheaper and more widely available fashion goods that Grahame's account gains significance. In the light of those transformations, he reveals his insights into clothes as indulgent commodities, designed, distributed, and consumed with the aim of giving pleasure and satisfaction up until then reserved only for the wealthy. Thus, pioneering for Grahame means being part of the first generation of working class men who had a chance to exercise actively the emerging consumer and material culture, not only to enjoy fashionable clothing and its availability to them, but also to reject the old-fashioned shops distributing outdated goods. This highlights the intersection of the "Pioneering" and "Non-Conforming" themes.

However, Grahame's account allows us also to explore deeper levels of interpretation when it comes to the theme of pioneering. Firstly, one could ask what does indulging in fashion mean? Should it be associated only with the possibility of buying clothes? And if so, what was the promise hidden within the purchase? We suggest that, for Grahame, indulging in fashion becomes synonymous with social performance as clothes allow him to project his desired social image. Secondly, in Grahame's account, his personal expression of pioneering is tightly intertwined with the group or generational sense of the concept. Grahame begins the extract with a first person account of the first boutique in Nottingham, which he frequented, exposing the importance in his current self-identification of this very private reminiscence about the concrete place and situations connected with it. Yet nearly immediately, Grahame slips into the plural form, "[w]e all used to shop in there," which highlights the equal importance of sharing this experience with other young men who participated in those activities. These two interwoven and inseparable

identities of Grahame as an individual and Grahame as a part of the group can be understood as the result of a certain level of social intimacy shared among members of the youth cultures, and they can be found in the accounts of nearly all of the participants in this study.

Finally, the particular experience Grahame talks about has a specific geographic location in the first boutique in Nottingham. Interestingly, for Grahame, the character and standard of this place can only be defined by relating it to London, a city famous for its fashion trendiness and forwardness. London therefore functions in Grahame's account as a geographical reference point allowing him to define his own fashion identity at that time. This shows the strong connection between fashion experience and the context of place.

Pioneering was an especially significant theme in Grahame's narrative as a whole. In his interview he expressed several times how important for him as an individual it is to try and adopt new tendencies and new fashions in his everyday life. For Grahame, pioneering was not only something connected with the past and the sociocultural changes he witnessed in the 1960s, but also the practice that he has adopted as his general life style. Keeping up with trends and personal progress, in Grahame's case, is deeply embedded as a routine and common practice, and it also provides him with a rationale for acquiring new goods with which to indulge himself.

As can be seen in the accounts presented above, "pioneering" functions as the practice that has the strongest connection to our participants' pasts. Nearly all of the participants considered themselves pioneers of the various sociocultural changes initiated in the second half of the twentieth century. These involved transitions in the contemporary fashion system, with key changes, such as the development of mass fashion, of youth-oriented culture, and of fashion trends for men, often intertwining with the "Non-Conforming" and "Distancing" themes. For some participants, however, pioneering is also a present practice, a method they have assimilated as part of their everyday reality that allows them to continue to develop it further as their life progresses. What is

common across all the cases is the importance of the pioneering practices,¹⁰ whether they belonged to the past or still function in the present, in ways that have allowed active renegotiation of the participants' evolving fashion identities.

NON-CONFORMING

The theme of “Non-Conforming” focuses on the practice of rejecting certain social expectations or limitations, or simply avoiding fashion trends, which was seen by the participants as a way to display the high level of their fashion expertise. Interestingly, non-conforming is especially visible in the context of offsetting participants' fashion sense. In the following extract, Eric illustrates how the rejection of trends has been an important part of his fashion identity:

I've never been a big fan for . . . going with trends, if you like. Where some designer will tell you this year you're going to be wearing your jeans half way up your leg and I'm saying: “No, I'm not” (laughs) “No, I'm not because I'd look ridiculous!” (Eric, aged sixty, 85-88)

In this sense, non-conformity for Eric equals demonstrating the high level of fashion “know-how,” skills that allow him to maneuver consciously between current fashion trends and his own fashion style. Central to this account is Eric's confidence and his clear rejection of unsuitable trends artificially dictated by others, which, in his opinion would make him “look ridiculous.” In a similar manner, in the subsequent extract, Eric explains how his reluctance to cease his interest in fashion and clothing as he ages influences the way in which he now critically assimilates fashion trends:

[N]ow we find ourselves nearly drawing pensions and thinking: “What? What now? Put a cardigan on and grey shoes? No. What do you wear?” I think [...] you can still remain if not bang on fashion at least you can still stay a little bit stylish if you like and wear certain things out of the current crop of fashion, whatever's going on at the minute. But I think you got to be careful basically. You don't want to be looking a bit, you know, too young in your clothing and er . . . [...] I have no problem going out in tight jeans because I'm, I'm slim. I don't feel like I'm pretending to be 19. (Eric, aged sixty, 109-19)

Central to Eric's account is the constant negotiation between the old

and the young images of himself. On the one hand Eric objects to “pretending to be nineteen,” but on the other hand he also refuses to “[p]ut a cardigan on and grey shoes.” Eric’s bodily features are significant in the process of this negotiation, especially his lack of weight gain, which is often associated with biological aging. Eric claims that the reason for him being able to avoid wearing “some old man kit” (123), perceived by him as akin to losing his own fashion identity, is because he is still “slim,” so there is no clash between his body and the clothes that this body is wearing. This poses an immediate question about the future, and how this standpoint will change if Eric’s body deteriorates and he fails to carry off stylish clothing. On the other hand, equally important for Eric is distancing from certain practices, such as wearing clothes that mismatch one’s biological age. Significantly, Eric presents this as a prescriptive action for all older men who find themselves at this problematic point of life, highlighting once more the importance of the possible shared social identity among this generation of men.

Probably the purest form of non-conforming was represented by Henry, who clearly refuses to be subservient to the social norms limiting colors that men should or should not wear. In the following extract, he discusses his practice of wearing pink, a color that is traditionally associated with femininity:

[In the past] I wore colors that boys wouldn’t wear. [...] I mean hippies would wear the colors I wore. But no ordinary schoolboys in the North East of England would wear pink. [...] I wear a lot of pink. And a lot of men still have difficulty with that. And still mention it. And they come to me and say: “I wish I dared to wear it.” And I think: “Well, why daren’t you?” Yeah it is a lovely color. And there is nothing wrong with it. [...] Army uniforms used pink in the Napoleonic period uhm . . . [...]. So it is not something associated with femininity. It is directly oppositely associated with the manliness and the warrior status of men. (Henry, aged fifty-four, 322-37)

Firstly, what is striking in this account is Henry’s own recognition of the continuation of the non-conforming, and also to some extent pioneering, approach throughout his life: he did wear pink when he was a young

boy (when it was not acceptable and only certain subcultures did so), and he does so now (when it is acceptable, but still not a common practice).

Secondly, it is in the context of being noticed and admired by other men that Henry's account of his own uniqueness can be fully recognized, especially with regard to the very specific geographic location of the "North East of England" in the time of Henry's youth. Therefore, the historical background that Henry provides later in his account of the use of pink in military uniforms is quite unexpected and seems to function as a direct rationale for Henry's "right" to wear pink. Central to this account is the discrepancy between genders and the importance of the role that clothes can have to either highlight or suppress it. On the one hand, Henry expresses his rebellious approach, but on the other, he feels that it is essential to explain (to the interviewer and to possible readers of his account) his strong connections with the male gender.

The non-conformist approach seems to be the key tool that nearly all of the participants use to conceptualize their aging identities. In this sense it is strongly connected with past experiences and especially with their pioneering, youthful ideals. This approach functions expressively when it came to our participants' negotiation of their place in the current youth-oriented fashion system. In this context, participants' non-conformism allows them to rebel against social expectations that they should "tone down" as they age. For some, non-conformity functions also in other spheres of fashion, such as extravagant choices of colors, or not subscribing to the general trends of fast fashion. In general, non-conforming should be understood as central to the way respondents experience their current relationship with fashion and therefore as significant to their self-identification.

DISTANCING

The final theme, "Distancing," focuses on the need common to most of the participants in this study to declare that they are not connected with or supportive of certain fashion practices or behaviors, and it functions in relation to "others" who represent characteristics not desired by the participants. Furthermore, this type of critique was often utilized as

a way to express participants' individuality or ambitions and is especially evident in the context of distancing from "others" who do not display the "right" level of involvement with contemporary fashion trends. In the following extract, Grahame discusses the practice of not following the most current fashion trends; for him this practice symbolizes not only backwardness, but also bad taste in general. Central to his account is his own identification as a person who is capable of progressing with (fashion) modes:

[W]hen I was growing up in the 60's, sort of, Elvis was really popular. And there would be lots of men in their 50's that, even though Elvis was like maybe gone out of fashion sort of 10 years [...], they were teenagers when Elvis was at his height. So they wanted to look like Elvis. And 20 years later they still wanted to look like Elvis! [...] I work with a few men my age, who say they will never listen to hip-hop [...] they're stuck in the period [...] I have never had to purposely change. It's just always been, just like breathing, it's just natural. [...] You, yourself are organic. You just change and develop into something new. (Grahame, aged sixty-one, 193-215)

Popular music is one of the most influential factors in the process of fashion-trends formation. The relationship between various music genres and fashionable clothing can be a direct one in which a performer's, such as Elvis Presley's, appearance is copied by his fans. But this relationship can also take the more subtle form of the various youth subcultures articulating themselves through their clothing choices, such as associations between rock music and Punk style.

Interestingly, it is the music and the stylish appearance connected with it that Grahame refers to in the above extract, commenting widely on men who are "stuck in the period," and who "will never listen to hip hop," who in fact became stagnant in once-pioneering practices. Consequently, music here becomes a metaphor for progress and not fossilizing in terms of style. However, the reference to "hip hop" culture, well known for its associations with physical activities, suggests Grahame's need to be identified not only as modern and keeping up with trends, but also as a still-youthful man.

Another interesting aspect of Grahame's account is the metaphor of breathing, representing his own personal development as something "natural" and "organic." This analogy is especially expressive when the actual process of biological breathing is imagined as the exchange of oxygen from the air between the organism and the environment through the lungs. While Grahame assimilates new types of music, he also filters it through his own "body" of past experiences, allowing for the creation of a new, private experience.¹¹ In this, certain fashion awareness and responsiveness to aesthetics became for Grahame instinctive and automatic. But the interpretation offered here might also suggest a certain level of discrepancy between Grahame's intentional choices of clothing and his unconscious action of responding to fashion.

Similar to Grahame, Eric also distances himself from others, in this instance one of his friends, by criticizing his bad fashion taste and his tendency to blindly follow fashion trends without recognizing the possible age restrictions:

Yeah. Actually, oh . . . God it sounds terrible. I don't look . . . I don't . . . I want you to know I don't live my life looking at people going: "Errgh, ergh." I don't. But occasionally . . . you know, I have friends who I think slip into that category sometimes who, who are perhaps not the right shape to wear certain things but they will because they're fashionable. I have a friend who's well known for it the most. Not just me, all his friends think so. He just dresses inappropriate. (Eric, aged sixty, 407-14)

In the above extract, it is interesting to note how Eric tries to justify his critical judgment, or even looks for excuses to do so by saying "all his friends think so." Consequently the word "others," for Eric, represents not only the people he wants to distance himself from, but also those individuals with whom he shares opinions and beliefs. Eric realizes that "it sounds terrible" to criticize his friend's fashion choices even though they are "inappropriate," and therefore, by splitting the responsibility for doing it equally among himself and some of his friends, he tries to rectify it. Paradoxically, Eric's need to distance from "some others" places him even closer to the "other others," creating an interesting distinction between the "appropriately-dressing" individuals (who accept their

aging and dress accordingly) and “inappropriately-dressing” individuals (who reject it) around him. Here, Eric’s account can also be seen as an interesting extension of his previous utterances presented as part of the “Non-Conforming” theme, where he reflected on the way in which he balances out following fashion trends and his own sense of fashion as part of growing old.

A further account of distancing by trying to look younger than one really is comes from Ian, who clearly separates himself from the undesired practices of using clothes to create a fake image of youthfulness:

Obviously these days, I am 58, so you can’t . . . you’ve got to be careful about what you wear you won’t . . . uhm . . . always wear what you like. Because “mutton dressed up as lamb” as is the female version of it (laughs). But you know, I think uhm . . . you know, you’ve got to be careful that you are not trying to look too young. [...] [A]lthough I don’t think that has ever happened to me. (Ian, aged fifty-eight, 207-13)

Significant in this account is the use of the gendered phrase “mutton dressed up as lamb,” a phrase typically reserved for women, meaning a woman who dresses younger than her years. It is interesting to note that the use of this gendered phrase implies the lack of comparable vocabulary for men and somehow “forces” Ian to cross the boundaries of his own masculinity. His laughter suggests that this makes him feel rather uncomfortable. Furthermore, this triggers Ian’s nearly immediate response: “I don’t think that has ever happened to me.” By saying that, Ian draws a clear line between himself and the shameful practice, but also between himself and female characterization.

While in his previous account Ian distanced himself from a certain image, in the following one he separates himself from the brand that represents negative (in his eyes) characteristics. It appears that uniqueness determines the brand’s value for Ian:

So then . . . it was in the 90’s . . . that I started wearing G-Star then. [...] And started buying their stuff, which was absolutely brilliant at the time. Right up to about 2000 [...]. As soon as they opened up the Nottingham G-Star I knew that was the end of it. Uhm . . . and it was. [...] Everyone [...] on Jeremy Kyle wearing G-Star. You knew it was the end. But in the early 90’s, when really it was catching on in Amsterdam and a couple of

shops in London used to stock it. But nobody else did. But they got bigger and bigger. And that was the end of it. (Ian, aged fifty-eight, 114-25)

It is in the context of a popular TV program, “The Jeremy Kyle Show,”¹² that distancing for Ian comes to function distinctly. He says that he “knew that was the end of [the G-Star brand]”¹³ when it became widely available. But what Ian means is not the termination of the brand’s existence—it is still present on the market—but the end of his own personal relationship with it, the discontinuation of his interest in the brand. Furthermore, of great significance in this account is the concept of place, reproducing the sense of Nottingham being on the fashion periphery, as evident in Ian’s utterance. In this context, places such as Amsterdam or London mentioned in the account function as the definers and highlighters of the G-Star brand’s uniqueness and distinctiveness, which are personally meaningful and important for Ian.

In addition to the interpretation of Ian’s utterance presented above, there is also an interesting intersection of the “Distancing” and “Pioneering” themes present within this account. We argue that the reason for Ian to discontinue his interest in the G-Star brand lies precisely in the fact that wearing their clothes is no longer a pioneering practice; hence, the relation between those two themes can be described as cause-and-effect. This once more highlights the richness and the level of complexity of the embodied experience of aging displayed and described by the participants in this study.

Distancing plays a key role in our participants’ self-perception. It is through separating from others who represent undesired characteristics that participants negotiate their own identities. In this context, “others” are often associated with not being able to find the balance between fashion extremes: looking too young or too old, too fashionable or not fashionable enough. By distancing themselves from these practices (“fashion faux pas”), participants were able to explain their own position as sitting in the middle and not subscribing to any of them, which, consequently, could be understood as reaching a certain state of fashion equilibrium. Distancing, therefore, allows them to accommodate their fashion uniqueness through the medium of social comparison with others.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper has examined the lived experience of fashion and clothing of five men, currently entering their third age, who share a distinctive interest in fashion and clothing. The three themes discussed, namely, “Pioneering,” “Non-Conforming,” and “Distancing,” emerged through the tensions and contradictions reported by the participants in the process of the complicated negotiation of their aging male identities through the mediums of fashion and clothing. This complexity relates to the intersections of continuity and transitions in the ways those individuals negotiate their aging bodies. Our analysis also gives an account of how mature masculinities can be experienced through those mediums and through participants’ constant mediation between their social and individual identities. Accordingly, we set our final observations within the context of the classics of fashion theory, such as Blumer, who asserts that fashion “operates over wide areas of human endeavor, that it is not aberrant and craze-like, and that it is not peripheral and inconsequential” (277).

The interpretative phenomenological approach taken in this research recognizes the importance of understanding context in order to uncover the meaning of experience. As Susan Kaiser writes, “Intersecting, embodied subject positions are not just about *who* we are becoming; they are also about *when* and *where* we are becoming. Time and space are abstract and yet crucial concepts that shape how we style-fashion-dress our bodies, and what we know (and how we know it) about ourselves in relation to others” (172, emphasis in original). In this sense, our participants’ experiences can be better understood in the context of a particular time and place: concerning when and where they were young, where they continue to grow older, and social relations with significant “others.” Twigg argues for the possibility of exploring women’s narrations of dress through the interplay of three trajectories: aging, historical time, and an individual’s life (*Narration 1-2*). Through the findings presented in this paper, we can recognize the importance of similar trajectories in the narratives of the men who took part in the

study. Moreover, we acknowledge the specific pattern evident in which personal histories, especially the flamboyant and rebellious fashion past, underpin the ways in which our participants' fashion identities continue to unfold. Therefore, in the context of the findings from this research, we might add to Kaiser's quote above the importance of when and where we have "become" from. This is especially interesting when we highlight the fact that none of those contexts was directly addressed by the interviewer. Yet time, place, and "others" have emerged as the key contexts allowing the participants in this study to navigate through the processes of self-interpretation and self-identification.

In these interviews, the theme of pioneering was meaningful in terms of its impact on participants' self-perception and social identification. The shared experience of witnessing and initiating various socio-cultural changes was important for almost all the participants, reflecting its significance in framing their subsequent social identity and affiliation. Most of the participants perceived themselves as having an important role in the creation of the modern fashion system based on the development of a fashion-conscious man in a youth-oriented culture.

Dick Hebdige argues that "[t]he communication of a significant difference, then (and the parallel communication of a group identity) is the 'point' behind the style of all spectacular subcultures" (102). For our participants, the communicated difference lay precisely in the break with an old-fashioned, "production-oriented" type of masculinity represented by their fathers, and replacing it with new, "appearance-conscious" forms of masculinity. Being part of a specific group in a specific historical time and in a specific place was, for our participants, a way to emphasize their affiliation with those new constructions as they rose to the fore. Currently, those memories function for them not only as something in which to take pride, but also to justify their often-rebellious attitudes towards the current fashion system that actively discriminates against older people. Consequently, their long-held practices are taking on new meanings and significance as our participants enter their third age.

In terms of the perceived impact of those practices, there was a

shared experience of uniqueness along with generational integrity amongst all of the participants. Being part of the first generation that pioneered certain behaviors was often described as having a key impact on the participants' current attitudes and social expectations. The participants often adopted this self-perception and, indeed, applied the pioneering practices as a part of their general life style, not only when it comes to clothes but also in other domains, such as choice of music.

The presence of the “Non-Conforming” theme in all of our participants' interviews emphasizes the importance of the theme itself, as well as the significance of expressing it. In terms of the participants' fashion non-conformism, a key revealing aspect was the rejection of social expectations to “tone down” or moderate the way in which they present themselves or to terminate their interest in fashion. There was a shared experience of a lack of understanding within society, especially on the part of other, less fashion-conscious older men. The non-conforming approach, commonly associated with youth, was often the primary way in which participants negotiated their own aging. Accordingly, they shared the belief that it is not only the external look that decides the social construction of one's age, and they placed a great emphasis on their social practices, such as pioneering or non-conforming.

Our participants believed that it is their courage to be insubordinate and act against generally accepted social rules and their conscious rejection of common trends that allows them to (re-)negotiate their aging masculinities. While fashion, for the men in this study, provides a basis for resolving some of the tensions they face as they grow older, it is their non-conformism that became a practice in the social negotiation of their aging identities. However, this practice should not be mistaken for the negation or denial of growing old. Instead, it should be understood as a strategy allowing them to accommodate their own process of becoming and self-developing.

The final theme presented in this account, “Distancing,” focuses on the participants' need to express and highlight their individuality and fashion autonomy, reflecting the significance of the practice—especially

when it comes to their social identity. For most of the participants, distancing was important mainly on the level of their fashion differentiation from “others” who represented negative and undesirable characteristics, such as lack of body-awareness or following unsuitable fashion trends. The pivotal point was to avoid being associated with others who visibly deny their biological age by choosing “too young” clothing.

Distancing from others, we argue, continues to have a significant impact on our participants’ self-identities. As stated by Mikhail Bakhtin, “I achieve self-consciousness, I become myself only by revealing myself to another, through another and with another’s help . . .” (cited in Todorov 96). In the same manner, the men interviewed here define themselves through others. In the past, being part of a certain group allowed participants to define their fashion-selves by the shared experience of pioneering fashion behaviors. Now, when the bonds of group identity are dissolved, it is equally important for these men to separate themselves from others who choose not to continue their youthful practices, but instead limit or terminate their formerly active interest in fashion. Our participants also did not want to be identified as trying to look any younger than their biological age might suggest. Outwardly, this could be viewed as inconsistency or contradiction. But our interpretation is that these participants reached a certain state of fashion equilibrium—that is, balance between their fashion taste, knowledge, and a full assimilation and acceptance of their biological age. In this sense, continuity functions as the development of fashioning practices, rather than preservation of one particular style.

Our findings suggest that fashion and clothing for the five men in this study play a significant role in the way these individuals experience growing older. The study reveals that for the participants, the embodied processes of aging can best be understood at two levels: the individual and the socially shared experience. Moreover, the contexts of time, place, and “others” discussed in this paper allow us to acknowledge the specific pattern by which personal histories, especially the pioneering fashion past, underpin the ways in which our participants’ fashion identities

continue to develop. In this we also recognize that while all the presented themes function independently by shedding some light on the understudied phenomena of male aging, they also work as filters to each other, creating a coherent rather than fragmented complex of segments through which the participants define their fashion-selves. In the participants' narratives, then, non-conforming is often inscribed in pioneering practices such as rejection of old-fashioned clothing, which in turn initiate the creation of the new trends. In the same way, distancing is an act of rejecting un-pioneering practices.

Our recommendation for future studies is that further contexts in which these experiences can be understood should be examined, together with investigation into the contrasting experience of different groups of older men and retail communities with respect to fashion and clothing for older men. Furthermore, as this is an in-depth study of a very small sample of participants in their third age, openly interested in fashion and concentrated around one geographical location in the United Kingdom (Nottinghamshire), it would also be desirable to replicate the study in different settings, with men representing different generations and different attitudes towards fashion, as well as to extend it to a larger sample. Finally, we highly recommend and encourage different studies on older men and mature masculinities stimulated by the "somatic turn" and set within the field of critical gerontology. In this we stress the still-present imbalance between academic studies on older women and on older men, which should be addressed not only through various publications but also through the proliferation of relevant academic events, conferences, and workshops.

NOTES

¹The data for this paper were drawn from the first author's ongoing PhD research, funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council, UK. Parts of this article were presented during the 8th International Conference on Cultural Gerontology / 2nd Conference of the European Network in Aging Studies: "Meaning and Culture(s): Exploring the Life Course" (10-12 April 2014) in Galway, Ireland. The authors thank all the men who participated in the study, the journal editors and guest editor, and two anonymous reviewers of this article for their helpful feedback.

²See, for example: British TV documentary *Fabulous Fashionistas* (first broadcast 17 Sep-

tember 2013); BBC radio program *Woman's Hour* (e.g., 24 and 27 April 2013); British weblog *That's Not My Age* (Welsh); British weblog *Grey Fox* (Evans); British weblog *Fab After Fifty* (Wheeldon); American weblog *Advanced Style* (Cohen); or Canadian weblog *A femme d'un certain age* (Jett).

- ³Other recent academic events include “(a)Dressing the Ageing Demographic,” a symposium exploring the issues of designing for elders held at the Royal College of Art in London, UK (18 October 2013) and a panel on Fashion and Clothing (Ageing and Identity strand) at the 8th International Conference on Cultural Gerontology / 2nd Conference of the European Network in Aging Studies: “Meaning and Culture(s): Exploring the Life Course,” at the National University of Ireland in Galway, Ireland (10-12 April 2014).
- ⁴These two British youth subcultures of the early- to mid-1960s adopted distinctive clothing styles, including suits for Mods and black leather jackets and motorcycle shoes for Rockers; reminiscences of both subcultures were often present in participants’ narrations in this study.
- ⁵Two parallel samples, men and women, were recruited originally for this study. As part of the recruitment strategy for both samples the project was advertised through Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire Age UK regional newsletters. However, while this method proved to be fruitful in recruiting older women and generated in total twenty-four responses from potential participants, no male participants were successfully recruited this way, which induced the use of alternative recruitment methods such as word-of-mouth and snowballing.
- ⁶Members of an American ideological movement that arose in the mid-1960s and spread around the world, Hippies, by their appearance, often challenged gender differences through styles worn by both men and women, including long hair, bell-bottom trousers, sandals, and vests.
- ⁷Members of a subculture associated widely with music that emerged in the mid-1970s on both sides of the Atlantic, Punks developed distinctive clothing styles based on vivid colors and ripped fabrics held together by safety pins. Their clothes were often produced by the wearers rather than purchased.
- ⁸Smith, in his IPA quality evaluation guide, recommends that researchers measure the prevalence of themes in order to achieve credibility and transparency in the analytical process (“Evaluating” 17-18).
- ⁹This British youth subculture formed in London in the 1950s and subsequently spread across the UK. Their clothes were often inspired by the dandies of the Edwardian period and were often associated with the Savile Row tailors in London.
- ¹⁰The term “practices” can be somewhat problematic and misleading. For the purpose of this paper we follow Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2-3) who, building on Giddens’s structuration theory, explain “social practices” as a set of human activities influenced by the various social structures of principles and meanings that are simultaneously and continuously replicated in the flux of human behaviours, such as pioneering for the participants in this study.
- ¹¹This highly interpretive type of analysis is typical for IPA studies. However, some social scientists might classify this as Grahame’s unintended choice of words and therefore equate it to the researcher reading the interpretation into what the partici-

pant has said. We disagree with this critique and following Smith, who compares such instances to “gems,” we believe that they can “offer analytic leverage, they shine light on the phenomenon, on the transcript and on the corpus as a whole” (“Diving for Pearls” 7).

¹²A British tabloid talk show presented by Jeremy Kyle and broadcast by ITV on weekdays.

¹³The Dutch designer clothing brand (full name G-Star RAW) founded in Amsterdam in 1989 and specializing in denim urban clothing.

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Age, Culture, Humanities 2 (2015)

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