

**MOTHERS' EXPERIENCE OF SUSTAINABLE  
FASHION CONSUMPTION: AN  
EXISTENTIAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL  
EXPLORATION WITHIN EDINBURGH**

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## Abstract

The research described in this thesis is an interpretative approach to exploring fashion consumption behaviour through applying a sustainability lens, underpinned by tenets of value. The research adopts existential phenomenology to explore the lived experience of mothers who work in a professional occupation, whereby lifeworlds which encourage intentions to adopt sustainability are juxtaposed within a myriad of lifeworld restrictions. The theoretical underpinning of the research assumes that consumers seek value in their consumption, whereby underlying tensions result in value trade-offs. As the research focus is to determine perceptions of fashion with the inclusion of sustainability, the participants evaluate a number of value types such as aesthetics versus ethics, price, quality, accessibility, altruism and guilt. The research identifies that situational values are focal; the immediacy of those consumer values contradict their detachment to production implications. Due to the dearth of information that can be meaningfully evaluated, the participants attempted to incorporate heuristic propensities to avoid fashion consumption which misaligned with their moral sentiment. Transferring sustainable principles from other consumption contexts to fashion resulted in uncertainty as to why sustainability was compromised and illustrated a reduced consciousness of what constitutes fashion production, including debating the implications of production on both the environment and for garment-workers. This dissimilarity contrasts with empowerment to adopt sustainability in other contexts situations, where value was maximised in networks sharing children's clothing, reusing plastic bags and recycling behaviours. Conclusions include that consumers can expedite fashion sustainability with meaningful guidance, supporting facilities and assurance of the positive consequences of sustainable behaviours.

**Key words:** sustainability; fashion consumption; consumer value; heuristics; neutralisation techniques; familial consumption; interpretative phenomenological analysis

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# Chapter One: Introduction

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## 1.1: Introduction

This thesis is an exploratory study to understand how sustainability is perceived within the context of fashion consumption and whether sustainable concepts are included within fashion decision-making. This will include examining how consumers negotiate their moral sentiment in the current consumer environment and the tensions between moral beliefs and lifeworld considerations. The research also addresses the discourse within which moral marketing flows are disseminated, contrasting between the context of food consumption, where sustainable consumption can be viewed as established within consumer consciousness, and the fashion industry which is on the cusp of integrating sustainability.

Contrasting perceptions of sustainability between the contexts of fashion and food is important for two reasons: firstly, research exploring consumer perception of sustainability (and ethical consumption) within the context of food is more prevalent, and sustainability is considered both accessible and convenient (Hiller Connell, 2010; Joergens, 2006; Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006). In contrast, within the context of fashion, there are fewer academic studies. Secondly, the fashion industry has been slow to inform consumers of sustainable issues (CFS, 2009) and consumers have little knowledge of the environmental consequences of fashion production (Hiller Connell, 2010; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Fisher et al., 2008; Hustvedt et al., 2008; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007). Thus, consumer consciousness has not been 'nudged' to consider sustainability, nor can concerned consumers confidently source fashion that aligns with their moral sentiment in mainstream retailers.

The rest of this chapter is structured as follows: the introduction is followed by an exploration of the concept of sustainability, locating sustainability within the current consumer market, examining the role of marketing intermediaries to

attract consumers and defining sustainability within the context of fashion. The chapter concludes by introducing the research aims and objectives and offering a brief overview of the structure of the thesis.

Csikszentmihalyi (2000) commented over a decade ago that if all global consumers lived like those in the West, another two planets would be required to provide the resources. This belief corresponds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that current consumption levels are unsustainable (Parker, 2011; CSF, 2009; Jones et al., 2005). The fashion industry contributes substantially to compromising sustainability, particularly as outsourcing production to developing countries has reduced the price of fashion for consumers in developed countries (Jones, 2006; Pollin et al., 2001). Inexpensive fashion, coupled with rapidly evolving fashion trends (O’Cass, 2004; Fernie and Azuma, 2004; Dolan, 2002) encourages planned obsolescence and results in a tendency towards disposability (Friedman, 2011; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Majima, 2008). Coco Chanel stated that fashion is ‘*made to be unfashionable*’ (cited in Davis, 1994: 162), which Easey (2009:1) recapitulates by adding ‘*The industry has a vested interest in developing new products for the customer at the expense of existing items*’.

Despite the lower prices, scarce resources are still required for increased production, contributing to environmental degradation (Rivoli, 2009; Fletcher, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006). Further, outsourcing has incurred allegations of garment-worker exploitation (Action Aid, 2007; Hearson and Morser, 2007), which exacerbate conditions of poverty. The response by retailers and producers to allegations is ambiguous and varied. Ultimately, increased consumption generates increased disposal, either by donations to a charity shop, selling through online auctions, passing onto someone else, restructuring the garment into another garment, use of the fabric for cleaning or disposing into landfill (Winakor, 1969). Furthermore, rapid fashion production amplifies waste from industry (Black, 2008). With landfill space diminishing (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Schiller, 2009) and decomposing fabrics emitting CO<sub>2</sub> or taking

200 years to decompose (Black, 2008; DEFRA, 2007), the impact upon the environment increases.

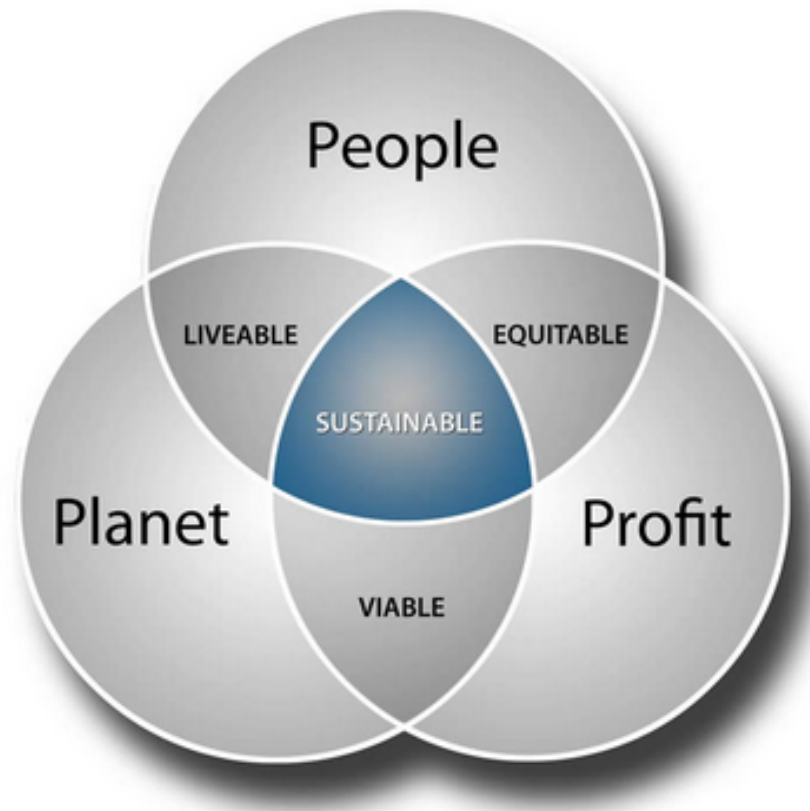
Black (2008: 21) asks if it is '*possible to be both fashionable and environmentally friendly?*' Currently, ethical ranges in UK high street fashion retailers perform poorly (Cervellon et al., 2009), perhaps due to consumer perception that ethical fashion comprises of ethnic styling and hemp fabrics (Black, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Valor, 2007; Bowditch, 2006; Meyer, 2001): an oxymoron in comparison to fashion (Egan, 2011; Hujic, 2011; Cervellon et al., 2009; Aspers, 2008; Devinney et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2006; Joergens, 2006; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). Previous research has found that ethically active consumers struggle to identify and source ethically produced fashion (Valor, 2007; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Shaw and Newholm, 2002). As fashion consumers prioritise style, price and quality (Valor, 2007; Harrison et al., 2005), ethical credentials are insufficient to gain consumer acceptance, especially if the product is more expensive or inferior in quality, thus requiring a sacrifice (Carrigan et al., 2004; Auger et al., 2003; Dickson, 2000).

## **1.2: Sustainability**

The concept of sustainability acknowledges that resources are finite and that future development (of economy and people) should address sustainability, particularly as industrialisation and population growth have culminated in environmental impairment and increasing inequality disparities (WCED, 1987). Sustainability is increasingly an important topic for government, business and consumers. '*Our Common Future*', the seminal report written by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987), introduces the concept of sustainability, stating that economic development should not be separate from the environment and societal considerations. This led to the WCED (1987) proposing international co-operation prioritising sustainable development as incorporating consideration for the environment, economy and social well-being to ensure '*development that meets the needs of the present*

*without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs',*  
as detailed in Figure 1.1.

**Figure 1.1: Factors of sustainability**



As depicted, sustainability relates to:

- A business maintaining profitability and stable economic flows, for example protecting brand values and investors (Lee and Sevier, 2008; Cohen, 2001) and profitability is required for continued existence;
- Minimising the environmental impact, for example production, packaging and product distribution (Musasinghe, 2008; Waste Watch, 2005);
- Socially responsible employment practices, respecting the workers involved in production (DEFRA, 2009a).

Weise et al., (2012) examined the literature to understand how sustainability is considered by retailers (generic) and found two points of interest. Firstly, it was recognised that sustainability was of growing interest to retailers, receiving

greater interest in both academic and trade literature, demonstrating sustainability as a growing market trend. Secondly, the investigation identified the variations in sustainability definitions, the use of different terminology and overlapping meanings. Weise et al., (2012) developed a summary of the way in which sustainability is understood, which is replicated in Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: A sample of definitions and interrelation of sustainability and sustainable development**

| <b>Authors</b>   | <b>Sustainability definition</b>  |
|--|---|
| World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 8)             | "[...] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"  |
| Costanza and Patten (1995, p. 193)                                       | "The basic idea of sustainability is quite straightforward: a sustainable system is one which survives or persists"   |
| United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative (1997, unpagged) | "[...] sustainable development depends upon a positive interaction between economic and social development, and environment protection, to balance the interests of this and future generations"  |
| Parris and Kates (2003, p. 581)  | "[...] a minimal definition of sustainable development [...] includes meeting human needs, which reduces hunger and poverty, while preserving the life support systems of the planet"   |
| Ehrenfeld (2005, pp. 24-25)  | " I define sustainability as the possibility that all forms of life will flourish forever. For human beings, flourishing comprises not only of survival and maintenance of the species but also a sense of dignity and authenticity .. [...] Ultimately, sustainability requires responsible, ethical choices everywhere in daily life" |
| United Nations General Assembly (2005, p. 2)                             | "[...] sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects constitutes a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities"   |
| Lozano (2008, p. 8)  | "[...] in order for us to achieve societal sustainability we must use holistic, continuous and interrelated phenomena amongst economic, environmental, and social aspects, [...] and that each of our decisions has implications for all of the aspects today and in the future"  |

(Weise et al., 2012: 321)

The table illustrates the complex nature of the concept of sustainability. Nonetheless, the common themes in these definitions are the minimisation of environmental impairment and protection of resources for future generations, as well as the sense that these aims require the empowerment of all human beings to act positively and instigate change. Some researchers, such as Wells et al. (2011), suggest that consumer concern for sustainability and social responsibility differ, ascribing sustainability as exclusively environmental concerns, whereas social concern is described as a '*broad construct*', which includes oppressive regimes, worker exploitation and child labour. They argue that the broad spectrum of sustainable concern may be incompatible with allegiance to either political or environmental activism. This is also acknowledged by Weise et al. (2012) who identified that sustainable research was often expressed in interchangeable references of sustainability and environmentalism. This referencing is consistent with the media portrayal of sustainability as addressing environmental issues, such as recycling, reuse of plastic bags and local production to reduce carbon emissions, rather than concern for poverty in developing countries. However, this does not fully address sustainability and particularly with respect to the fashion industry, where it is worker exploitation, including allegations of child labour, which are at the fore of consumer consciousness.

This research takes the view that sustainability cannot be separated from social responsibility. Increased consumption impacts negatively upon the environment, and climate change will initially affect developing countries, due to their geographical location; their dependence on agriculture for economic prosperity, coupled with increasing levels of poverty, results in developing countries being financially ill-equipped to combat the detrimental impact (Stern, 2006). Similarly, Sir Nicholas Stern (2006: 23) advocates the relevance of including ethical principles, such as '*welfare, equity and justice*' when considering policy requirements which address climate change. The level of poverty endured by citizens in developing countries does not enable full participation to contribute to the local economy (Allwood et al., 2006; Hearson,

2006; Kilbourne et al., 1997). If garment-workers were paid a fair price for their work, global poverty could be improved (Action Aid, 2007; Ethical Fashion Forum, ND) (this is further explored in Appendix 2). Consumers indirectly contribute to poverty through benefiting from low cost fashion (Memery et al., 2005; Dower, 1991). Consequently, it is deemed pertinent to address environmental factors and workers involved in production.

Applying moral sentiment coincides with both ethical and sustainable consumption (Crane and Matten, 2003). In view of the extant literature, this thesis postulates that addressing sustainability is akin to applying moral sentiment, albeit within the boundaries of sustainable principles. Therefore, ethics and sustainability will be referenced through overlapping references as implying the application of sustainable principles and this research will view sustainability through the definition offered by the WCED, that is:

- Reducing the environmental impact
- Ensuring that the workers involved in garment production are not exploited physically, emotionally and financially
- Stable economic flows benefit all those involved within the supply chain.

Narrowing the research focus to sustainability as opposed to ethics was important for the research design. Early discussions describing the focus of the PhD research as investigating ethics of the fashion industry inspired varied views on morality, including criticism over the size zero culture of fashion models (Cervellon et al., 2009; Treasure et al., 2008), concern that young girls' clothing is overtly sexualised and the use of fur in fashion garments (Micheletti and Stolle, 2005). Therefore, framing the research within boundaries of sustainability narrows this ethical focus. Sustainability also impacts post-consumption through laundering (Allwood et al., 2006), leading some fashion retailers to support initiatives such as washing clothes at 30 degrees (such as the M&S campaign '*Think Climate – Wash at 30°C*') and line drying clothes to reduce carbon emissions (Goworek et al., 2012). With this information in the public domain, this may also influence sustainable behaviours regarding fashion.



The integration of sustainability requires active participation from three agents: government, business and consumers. Previous research suggests that consumers are increasingly engaging with sustainability as a concept (Weise et al., 2012; Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009), extending from ethically committed consumers to encompass wider norms of social behaviour. One reason for this is the acknowledgement of UK businesses to address sustainable principles (Wiese et al., 2012; Allwood et al., 2006; Carrigan et al., 2004)

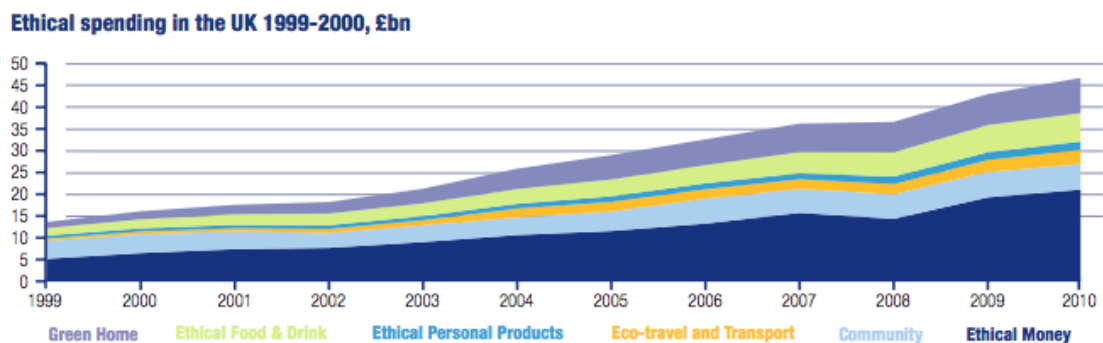
To date, the notion of sustainability has received greater acknowledgment from food producers and retailers, as the food industry has sought to raise consumer awareness of sustainability to motivate sustainable behavioural change (Szmigin et al., 2009), through concepts such as Fairtrade, organic, free-range and local production. Thus, sustainability does not only address environmental concerns, but includes avoidance of exploitation and supports producers receiving a fair exchange. Despite similar issues of exploitation within fashion production, the fashion industry has not yet acknowledged the conditions in which garment-workers work and research examining consumer concern for sustainability within the context of fashion consumption is limited (Hiller Connell, 2010). Further, little is known of the role that consumers expect fashion retailers to adopt in addressing sustainability (Weise et al., 2012). This research aims to address some of the concerns that consumers experience, particularly as Niinimäki (2010) suggests that designers, producers and retailers need a better understanding of these values to progress sustainability within the fashion industry. The next section will examine sustainability in the current consumer market

### **1.2.1: Sustainability in the current consumer market**

It has been noted that organisations are increasingly acknowledging the growth of ethical culture (Carrington et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2006), in, for example, the food, energy, and cosmetic sectors (Cowe and Williams, 2001). Consumers interested in sustainability incorporate extrinsic concerns (Singer, 1979), which Crane and Matten (2003: 341) define as a '*conscious and deliberate choice*' to opt

for products which have not impacted detrimentally on the environment or the workers involved within production. Although consumers in the UK spent £47 billion on ethical products<sup>1</sup> in 2010 (The Co-Operative, 2011), this is still less than one per cent per household (The Co-Operative, 2009). Nevertheless, this is still a rise from £13.5 billion in 1999 and the growth of ethical consumption sales can be seen in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2: Ethical spending in the UK 1999-2010**



(The Co-Operative, 2011)

Figure 1.2 illustrates the growth in ethical consumerism over the last decade. However, it could be argued that consumers have shaped the market by demonstrating this preference (Zabkar and Hosta, 2012; Shaw and Riach, 2011; Diaz Pedregal and Ozcaglar-Toulouse, 2011) and that sustainable production has been embraced by consumers due to availability in mainstream retailers, such as UK supermarkets (Yates, 2009). This thesis postulates that mainstream adoption of sustainably-produced goods is required to satisfy growing consumer concern that their consumption behaviours do not impact negatively upon both the environment and workers who are involved in production. To support this stance, the next sections will consider consumption situations

<sup>1</sup> Ethical products include: organic, Fairtrade, Rainforest Alliance, farmers markets, vegetarian products, free-range eggs, free-range poultry, Freedom foods, sustainable fish, dolphin friendly tuna, food and drink boycotts, energy efficient electrical appliances, energy efficient boilers, energy efficient light -bulbs, rechargeable batteries, green energy, micro-generation, green mortgage repayments, ethical cleaning products, sustainable timber and paper, buying for reuse household products, green cars, public transport, responsible tour operators, environmental tourist attractions, travel boycotts, ethical cosmetics, ethical clothing, real nappies, charity shops, clothing boycotts, local shopping, charitable donations, ethical banking, ethical investment, credit unions, ethical share holdings (The Co-Operative, 2009).

where consumers have demonstrated a preference for sustainable production and how this contrasts when insufficient sustainable fashion options are available in mass-market fashion retailers.

#### **1.2.1.1: Sustainable products in the consumer market**

In relation to the food industry, Fairtrade has a strong presence within mainstream supermarkets and this has contributed to growing sales, as well as increasing consumer awareness (do Paço and Raposo, 2010; Szmigin et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2006). Fairtrade offers a guarantee to consumers that the production process has neither damaged the workers nor the environment (DAWS, 2008; Low and Davenport, 2006; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; McDonagh, 2002; Bachman, 2000) and the producer has received a fair price from the buyer (Lyon, 2006). Fairtrade has been described as consumer driven, developed as an independent response to satisfy growing consumer concern of corporate tactics (DAWS, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Strong, 1996), enabling consumers to take responsibility where governments have failed to protect producers and workers from exploitation (Lyon, 2006).

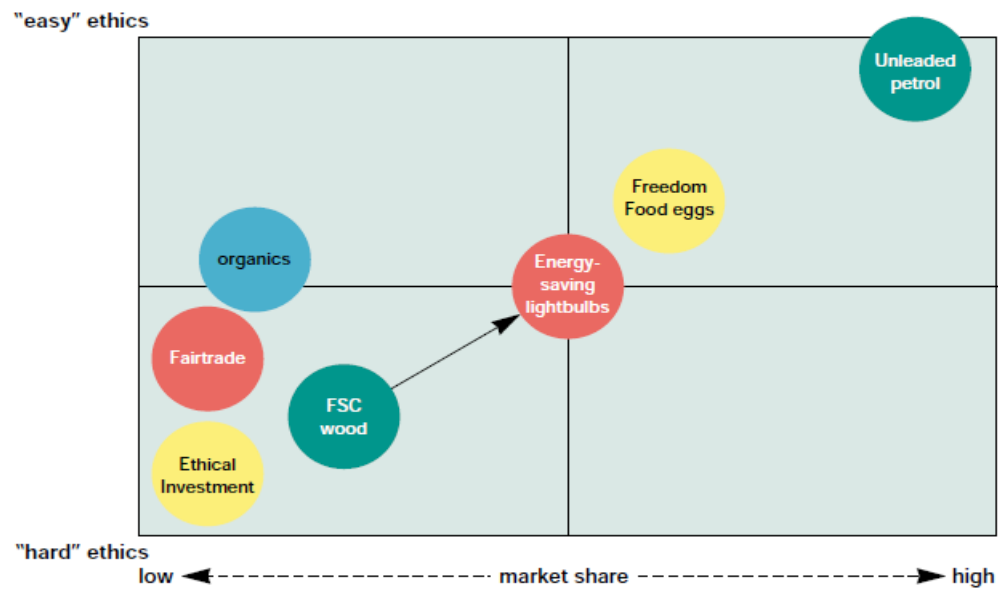
Nicholls and Lee (2006: 369) describe Fairtrade as '*one of the most notable retail phenomena of the past ten years*' benefiting over five million people globally, including protecting human rights within growing economies (Davies and Crane, 2003). Although Fairtrade products are often more expensive (Cailleba and Casteran, 2010), success is thought to derive from the clarity of the principles (Carrigan et al., 2004). Historically, it was considered that supermarkets only stocked Fairtrade to improve their image as pertaining to equitable trade (Strong, 1996), however this has progressed to exploiting a lucrative trend (Szmigin et al., 2007) through capitalising on consumer sentiment. In contrast, Fairtrade clothing within mainstream retailers is currently underdeveloped (Connolly and Shaw, 2006).

Consumers who want to reduce the negative impact on the environment can purchase environmentally friendly cleaning products, such as Ecover, in supermarkets (Szmigin et al., 2007). Consumer concern for the environment

extends to a preference for organic production. Organic farming emerged as a response to concern regarding chemical use in the production, due to irreversible soil erosion (Fletcher, 2008). Organic produce is approved and validated through the Soil Association in the UK, endorsed by a mark or label and requires stringent requirements (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Black, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006). Although organic cotton has been available for the past 15 years, it is only had a presence on the high street latterly (Black, 2008; Fletcher, 2008; Downing et al., 2004).

Increasingly, mainstream producers, such as Heinz, are entering the organic market and this has resulted in the cost of organic foods reducing (McEachern and Carrigan, 2012; Howard and Allen, 2006). Due to the absence of chemicals and pesticides used in production (The Ecologist, 2010a), there is a perception by parents that children will benefit from organic food (Memery et al., 2005), especially as chemicals have been linked to increased occurrence of asthma and eczema, along with a higher incidence of cancer (Lee and Sevier, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006; Waste Watch, 2005; Lee, 2003). Additionally, organic meat is often preferred due to favourable conditions of animal welfare (The Ecologist, 2010a; McEachern and McClean, 2002). Consequently, consumers have a raised consciousness of the pertinent issues, manifesting in behavioural change. To illustrate the pertinence of the availability of sustainably-produced goods within the context of mass-consumption, Cowe and Williams (2001: 22) developed the following chart (Figure 1.2) to identify ethical products within the consumer marketplace. Figure 1.3 depicts products in the bottom left corner as '*niche*', accounting for approximately one per cent of market share.

Figure 1.3: Market share of ethical products



(Cowe and Williams, 2001: 22)

It can be seen that unleaded petrol is considered 'easy ethics' due to tax incentives and regulation increasing availability (Cowe and Williams, 2001). Not only are free-range eggs widely available in mainstream supermarkets, but Sainsbury's and M&S have taken measures to align with consumer sentiment by selling only free-range eggs (Moore et al., 2009; Sainsbury, 2009). Similarly, those retailers sell only Fairtrade tea, coffee and bananas (Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009; Szmigin et al., 2009; DAWS, 2008), indicating the strength of feeling towards sustainability in the current food market. Goworek et al. (2012) refers to removing choice as choice editing: it relieves the consumer of making the choice of ethical value over price by limiting the options, and is advantageous to those with ethical values, as someone else has researched and made the purchasing decision. However, in respect to Sainsbury's efforts to be seen as ethical, this again seems limited to the context of food, as Sainsbury's is said to be 'in complete denial' regarding garment working conditions and pay (Hearson and Morser, 2007). Just as consumers have motivated supermarkets to invest in Fairtrade brands and develop their own Fairtrade products (Strong

1996), consumers could inspire the high street to provide ethical fashion within a highly competitive industry where retailers strive for differentiation. Organisations are recognising consumer awareness of ethical considerations as an opportunity for strategic marketing and increased market share (do Paço and Raposo, 2010). Moisander et al. (2010) take the view that consumers are '*structured*' to generate sales, leading to profit; however, it could also be proposed that consumers could be '*structured*' or encouraged to adopt sustainability into their consumption behaviours.

As the chart is a decade old and the availability of organic and Fairtrade produce is increasingly prevalent in mainstream supermarkets (Moore et al., 2009; Yates, 2009; Low and Davenport 2006; Schaefer and Crane, 2005), it could be argued both would feature in the top right hand corner of the chart due to the ease of access and increasing market share. Figure 1.4 illustrates the increase of sustainable food consumption in the retail sector, particularly as Fairtrade sales have increased by 35.78 per cent, implying consumer preference for equitable production, despite the recession. Availability of global branded Fairtrade products in mainstream retailers has contributed to this growth in sales.

Similarly, free-range eggs rose from £444 to £792 million and sustainable fish consumption grew by 16 per cent to £207 million. In contrast sales for organic produce fell by ten per cent; nevertheless, sales still reached £1,527 million, the highest of all ethical sector sales (The Co-Operative, 2011). Ethical fashion would remain within the bottom left hand corner due to lack of acknowledgement by mass-market fashion retailers, as reflected in the sales of ethical clothing (Figure 1.5), illustrating that ethical clothing sales have reduced from 2009 to 2010, despite growing from 2000 to 2009. This is unsurprising, due to the lack of fashionable sustainable garments in mainstream market-sectors. The Fairtrade Foundation (2011) also reported that sales of Fairtrade cotton have suffered due to competition from inexpensive fashion. However, two notable areas of growth are illustrated in Figure 1.5: clothing boycotts and real nappies. Understanding why consumers make choices to adopt

sustainability in some contexts and not others would make a valuable and interesting contribution to academic studies.

Figure 1.4: Ethical food and drink sales in the UK, 2010

| <b>Ethical Food &amp; Drink</b> | 2000         | 2009         | 2010         | % Growth     |
|---------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|                                 | £m           | £m           | £m           | 2009-2010    |
| Organic                         | 605          | 1,704        | 1,527        | -10.39%      |
| Fairtrade                       | 33           | 749          | 1,017        | 35.78%       |
| Rainforest Alliance             | -            | 1,076        | 1,198        | 11.34%       |
| Free range eggs                 | 182          | 448          | 483          | 7.81%        |
| Free range poultry              | 44           | 174          | 174          | 0.00%        |
| Farmers' markets                | 142          | 220          | 220          | 0.00%        |
| Vegetarian products             | 479          | 549          | 541          | -1.46%       |
| Freedom foods                   | -            | 122          | 127          | 4.10%        |
| Sustainable fish                | -            | 178          | 207          | 16.29%       |
| Food and drink boycotts         | 587          | 1,040        | 1,084        | 4.23%        |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                 | <b>2,072</b> | <b>6,260</b> | <b>6,578</b> | <b>5.08%</b> |

(The Co-Operative, 2011)

Figure 1.5: Ethical personal product sales in the UK, 2010

| <b>Ethical Personal Products</b> |            |              |              |              |
|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Ethical clothing                 | 5          | 177          | 171          | -3.39%       |
| Ethical cosmetics                | 175        | 486          | 528          | 8.64%        |
| Charity shops                    | 141        | 340          | 350          | 2.94%        |
| Buying for reuse - clothing      | 218        | 387          | 321          | -17.05%      |
| Clothing boycotts                | 174        | 399          | 556          | 39.35%       |
| Real nappies                     | -          | 3            | 5            | 66.67%       |
| <b>Subtotal</b>                  | <b>713</b> | <b>1,792</b> | <b>1,931</b> | <b>7.76%</b> |

(The Co-Operative, 2011)

Figure 1.5 illustrates the increase in consumers actively avoiding fashion retailers alleged of exploitative practice, contributing to an increase of 39.35 per cent in clothing boycotts. However, there is little known about how concern is managed. It would be impossible in today's society to maintain ethical consumption in all aspects of life, due to the high profile and dominance of global organisations, for example Tesco or Starbucks (Szmigin et al., 2009).

However, should fashion mainstream brand leaders address sustainability, then ethical fashion consumption would be more inclusive. Mainstream availability also influences consumers not engaged with sustainability (Oates et al., 2008; Hansen, 2005), termed '*passive ethical consumers*' (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001), through reducing established barriers to sustainable behavioural change by ensuring ease of access and comparable pricing with ordinary products (Low and Davenport, 2006; Schaefer and Crane, 2005). Carrington et al. (2010) refer to this as '*automaticity*', which is guided by cues, such as the Fairtrade logo, and enables ease and assurance of sustainable selection.

This thesis postulates that the fashion industry has yet to transfer similar sustainable concepts which are infused within the culturally constructed food sector (Fairtrade Foundation, 2008; Devinney et al., 2007; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). The current consumer market reflects and reproduces shared meanings and practice, where everyday cultural practices are constructed and reconstructed to accommodate the subjective application of social norms and values (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). However, fashion consumption is more complex than food; fashion is subject to constant change incorporating symbolic expression of self, style and identity (Aspers, 2008; O'Cass, 2004; Banister and Hogg, 2007). Further, fashion consumption differs to that of food consumption as the products' '*charms*' often take precedence over other attributes (Hirshman, 1993: 550) incurring greater consumer interest and involvement than other market sectors and this may conflict with ethical concerns, leading to a personal and moral dilemma (Bezençon and Blili, 2010; Dolan, 2002).

For consumers to re-orientate their consumption practice, awareness of the issues is required, followed by accessible, affordable and viable options (Jones, 1991), which are '*compatible with environmental, social and ethical preferences*' (Holzer, 2006: 407). Ethical products need to fulfil basic needs or utilitarian needs as well as desire and aspirational perspectives (Auger et al., 2003). The Centre for Sustainable Fashion (2009) considers that the fashion industry is 15 years behind the food industry in addressing sustainability, suggesting that



introducing sustainability to supply chains or support consumers to incorporate sustainability is implausible while consumers remain ambivalent. However, Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) conclude that MNOs<sup>2</sup> could potentially augment organic and Fairtrade fashions into the high street, to enable concerned consumers the choice to avoid production practice that misaligns with their moral sentiment and increase confidence in their purchasing behaviours. Similarly, Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al. (2006) consider the market potential for sustainable fashion is evolving to include consumers from all segments of society, not just those considered '*hippies*' or '*crusties*'.

Bezençon and Blili (2010: 1305) believe the influence of applying ethical concerns to consumption '*is challenging common theories of consumer rationality*'. Therefore, this research is timely in respect of growing consumer concern within a market sector that has yet to respond, and offers an opportunity to explore an emerging phenomenon to understand '*the abstraction that underpins the explanation*' (Llewelyn, 2003: 664). Moreover, as consumers' awareness and engagement in sustainability grows, retailers could benefit from harnessing this movement with the potential to become a market leader (CSF, 2009). As such, the implications of the research will be of interest to fashion marketing managers, designers, retailers and producers. The next section will consider the current consumer market to identify sectors encouraging sustainability.

### **1.2.2: Extending sustainable behaviours**

UK supermarkets have extended encouragement to adopt other sustainable behaviours, such as recycling and rewarding consumers who reuse plastic bags with '*green points*' (Yates, 2009). The ease of behavioural change has been instigated through increased awareness within consumers' consciousness, including social marketing at both government and local authority levels; for example, recycling campaigns and reusing plastic bags.

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<sup>2</sup> An Multi National Organisation is described as 'co-ordination and integration of activities across national boundaries' (Jones 2006: 130).

Convenience is a key aspect of encouraging sustainable behaviour (Follows and Jobber, 1999) and consumers are encouraged to recycle household waste through kerbside collections for plastic, glass, aluminium and paper (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Downing et al., 2004). These facilities enable recycling to be easily incorporated into consumers' lifestyles (Fletcher, 2008). However, kerbside textile collections are half that of other materials (DEFRA, 2009b), as not all local authorities have facilities to recycle garments and shoes (Friedman, 2011) and textile recycling campaigns are infrequent (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). Fisher et al. (2008) believe that the public will respond positively to encouragement to adopt sustainability in the context of fashion consumption behaviours, particularly noting the potential to increase textile recycling, through encouragement from the appropriate media. An example of this would be M&S encouraging consumers to return worn M&S clothing to Oxfam and being rewarded with a £5.00 M&S voucher. In the last year three million M&S garments have been donated to Oxfam raising £2 million. The clothing is resold, sent to Senegal or downcycled<sup>3</sup> (Cochrane, 2013).

It is important to note that Downing et al. (2004) identify that ethical consumption has been slower to diffuse than other ethical behaviours, such as recycling and reuse. This indicates that consumers have the potential to incorporate sustainable principles when it is convenient, particularly as convenience has been identified as prohibiting ethical consumption (Yates, 2008). Although ethical products incorporating sustainable elements are increasingly available, expansion is dependent on continuing to motivate consumers with the relevant issues (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Rogers (2003: 119) believes *'how a social problem is defined is an important determinant of how we go about solving it, and ultimately, the effectiveness of the attempted solution'*. As consumer behaviour is habitual, sustainable behavioural change will need to be facilitated with additional consumer benefits (Memery et

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<sup>3</sup> Downcycling uses the textiles to make a product of a lower grade (DEFRA, 2008) whereby textiles unsuitable for reuse can be reclaimed for industrial wiping rags mattresses, insulation and vehicle padding in doors and roofs), shredded and made into felt or pulled to make new yarn (Rivoli, 2009; Black, 2008; DEFRA, 2008; Fletcher, 2008)

al., 2005; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000); for example, the consumer has to perceive a benefit (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009), such as the assumption that organic produce is healthier due to the omission of chemicals or making financial savings through investing in energy efficient appliances. Similarly, Zabkar and Hosta (2012) postulate that anticipated health properties may replace utilitarian requirements when evaluating value.

Solomon and Rabolt (2009: 292) describe how a '*social phenomenon*' can impact on consumers' attitudes, leading to new behaviours through the '*identification of change agents*'. Media and the influence of reference groups impact on consumer attitudes, through introducing change agents for motivating behavioural change (Ehrenberg, 2002). It is within this context that marketing intermediaries have a role in guiding consumers decision-making, by bringing to consumers' attention the issues they should consider. This includes the benefits marketed by consumption, as well as the consequences of their consumption, such as the fair exchange located in the Fairtrade principles. Carrington et al. (2010) argue that the attitude-behaviour gap could be reduced if consumers are reminded of ethical behaviours through visual media. This has been successfully implemented to encourage the reuse of plastic shopping bags.

Rogers (2003) suggests comparative studies are indicative of diffusion and the rapid social adoption of innovation. Plastic shopping bags are an example of changing consumer behaviour, where media campaigns led by consumers, alongside mainstream supermarket promotions, have initiated positive voluntary action, leading to a reduction in plastic bag consumption (Ritch et al., 2009). Previous campaigns by retailers to encourage consumers to reuse bags include offering consumers a free bag for life (Ritch et al., 2009; Wood and Marsham, ND). This has already resulted in a reduction of bags given at the point of sale, emphasising the potential for consumers to engage with issues which require behaviour change. This is consistent with other research where consumers want to '*do their bit*' to improve the environment (McCallum, 2008). The example of shopping bags as a successful adoption of ethical behaviour is a

visual means of expressing a sustainable stance (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). Further, the movement to encourage reuse of bags has led the fashion industry to capitalise through offering cloth bags, which have become fashion statements supporting the conservation of the environment. This example reflects the fashion cycle of innovation, which begins with adoption from innovators before becoming an established social norm (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009).

The '*eco-epiphany*' of cloth bags can be illustrated through a reusable shopper, designed by Anya Hindmarch with the slogan '*I am not a plastic bag*'. Desire for the bag was stimulated by the media and the popularity of the bag ensured it was sold out globally, eventually selling for up to £200 on eBay (Sorooshian, 2009). This reflects a new ethos of concern for sustainability, as depicted in designer fashion magazines reporting on the new '*cool to care*' attitude (Lee and Sevier, 2008), which is said to be altering consumer perceptions, by making plastic bags as unacceptable as wearing fur coats (Sorooshian, 2009). From this example, it could be assumed that consumers could perceive sustainability as a fashionable trend and would therefore reward retailers who provided ethical alternatives which were easily accessible and affordable (Newman and Patel, 2004: 774).

As described within this section, some retailers are communicating their sustainability ethos to consumers as a marketing tool to attract consumers who hold a similar moral sentiment. This can be used to develop consumer trust and loyalty. The next section will review the role of marketing intermediaries in attracting customers through aligning with shared morals.

### **1.2.3: Marketing intermediaries**

Retailers seek to maintain a relationship with consumers through marketing intermediaries with the aim of developing trust in the brand name (Moisander et al., 2010; Jones and Kim, 2010; Ashton, 2009; Hines and Quinn, 2007; Webb, 2007). Marketing also seeks to entice consumers and enhance retailers'

reputation and image (Thomson and Arsel, 2004; Kapferer and Laurent, 1986). As Hines et al. (2007: 231) describe:

*It is the retailer identity that is important rather than the customer identity. This is because customers identify with the retailer and their products to build parts of their own multiple identities manifested through what they wear.*

This quote depicts fashion consumers as selecting a fashion retailer based upon the style of clothing and evaluating the meaning of the marketing message projected (O'Cass and Choy, 2008; Marzo-Navarro et al., 2004). Otieno et al. (2005) refer to this as the self-image congruence, as the consumer aligns their perceived self-conception to products and retailers. Such consumer perceptions are outwith retailers' full control (Hines et al., 2007). Therefore marketers develop brand personalities to attract consumers who perceive themselves as having similar traits, with the aim of developing brand loyalty (O'Cass and Choy, 2008; Gutman and Mills, 1982). Shukla (2008: 28) describes brand image as '*symbolic meaning*' which '*is a social process that helps an individual to construct and maintain an identity*'. Although fashion cycles rapidly change, the brand image remains consistent (Evans, 1989).

Similarly, retailers are attempting to align with consumers moral sentiments, through analysing consumers' demographic and lifestyle characteristics (Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005; O'Cass and Choy, 2008), developing marketing intermediaries to communicate similar values and beliefs (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). Solomon (1999) refers to stratification, where groups of consumers are segmented by lifestyle traits to define consumption habits. This assumes that consumers assign meaning to their social world through absorbing the messages communicated through marketing. However, Dodd et al. (2000) postulate that the current consumer environment is fragmenting and consumers re-evaluate their notions of desire when new ideas are presented, an opinion supported by Mayo and Fielder (2006) who suggest that behaviours are established within the realms of social conformity. Therefore, un-sustainable

behaviours are habitual or reflect a lack of awareness of the components of fashion production.

However, it should be acknowledged that segments within fashion marketing are progressively fragmenting as consumer groups blur and become difficult to identify. Hines and Quinn (2007) warn that the application of additional data will expand to become multiplicative segments, compounding existing segments and adding to complexity. Should mass-market fashion retailers further dilute marketing strategies to appeal to consumers who want fashionable clothes produced sustainably, this potentially narrow target market may result in a reduction in market share. For example, the homogeneity of the market (in terms of fashion styles and standardisation of fit) facilitates mass-production, enabling competitiveness through appealing to a broader segment. Narrowing these segments, through style, fit and a preference for sustainable production could result in the retailer's inability to sell all the garments produced, leading to a reduction in profitability.

Goworek (2011) explored sustainability (as implementing concern for sustainable issues into the fashion supply chain) within the current UK fashion sector, with a specific case study analysis of the ethical fashion business 'People Tree'. She identified that sustainability within the fashion supply chain is not only possible, but can strengthen the brand's identity and reputation, through addressing both environmental and social concerns to encompass a broad approach in response to consumers' concerns (Goworek, 2011; Connolly and Shaw, 2006). The ethos of supporting the producers is a core component of the organisational structure of People Tree, which is communicated through transparent information on the products and suppliers. This is important for developing and reinforcing trust, as retailers are unable to address sustainability without ensuring that all aspects of the supply chain adhere to sustainable principles (Weise et al., 2012). As the retailer acts as an intermediary between consumers and producers, this offers an opportunity to

acknowledge sustainability within supply chains and obtain a competitive advantage (Weise et al., 2102).

Defining sustainability has been described as complex at the beginning of this section, therefore prior to reviewing the sustainable fashion literature, a definition of what could constitute sustainability within the context of fashion is provided.

#### **1.2.4: Defining sustainable fashion**

Although a definition of sustainable fashion has yet to be established (Friedman, 2010; Gam et al., 2010; Gashi, 2010; Cervellon et al., 2009; Joergens, 2006), the Ethical Fashion Forum (n.d.) describes ethical fashion as '*an approach to the design, sourcing and manufacture of clothing, which is both socially and environmentally sustainable*'. Mintel (2009) has offered a description of terms, described in Appendix 3, in an attempt to explain the various characteristics falling under the umbrella term of ethical. Ethical Fashion has been addressed by London Fashion Week (LFW) through the inclusion of Estethica where designers adhere to one of Estethica's sustainable principles, including Fairtrade production and recycling (British Fashion Council, 2010). In September 2010 sustainable fashion was integrated into LFW featuring Vivienne Westwood, Stella McCartney and People Tree (Woodhead, 2010). However, this relates to designer or luxury fashion where the main barrier of access for consumers is affordability (Yates, 2008; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Therefore, ensuring cultural change is dependent on mass-market fashion retailers embracing sustainable principles (Gashi, 2010), as high street retailers are both easily accessible and affordable (Shaw and Clarke, 1999). Nevertheless, Dan Rees, Director of ETI (Ethical Trade Initiative, 2009a) questions the need for alternatives, believing all mainstream products should be produced ethically. However, without an industry standard, sufficient labelling and ambiguity of codes of conduct, consumer confidence is unlikely to increase (Fineman, 2001).

Consumers link the concept of fashion intrinsically with clothing (Wagner, 1999), therefore this thesis will encompass both the fashion and clothing industries as one (Naderi, 2011; Rocha et al., 2005). Allwood et al. (2006: 68) identify in their report *'Well Dressed? The Present and Future Sustainability of Clothing and Textiles in the UK'* the steps required by consumers to adopt sustainable fashion behaviours and the following changes are required on a greater scale:

1. Purchase second-hand clothing
2. Buy fewer fashion and textile products
3. Buy products made by workers who are paid a living wage and have workers' rights respected
4. Lease clothes
5. Choose new products with low emissions
6. Repair clothes rather than replace
7. Wash clothes less frequently
8. Recycle or donate unwanted clothes

These established steps will be considered as applying sustainability to fashion consumption, offering guidance on how to determine from the participants narrative the components required for sustainable behaviour in the context of fashion. The next section establishes the demographics of consumers who have been identified as more engaged with sustainability.

#### **1.2.5: Consumer profile under investigation**

Catteral (1998) suggests it is pertinent to ask who should benefit from the research. This research adopts the approach advised by Hirshman (1993: 551) who proposes researchers utilise the research agenda to benefit consumers, seeking positive change which is empowering, and allows for *'progressive social growth'*. This thesis posits that consumers' understanding of sustainability is increasing and will naturally extend from one behavioural context to others. Therefore, understanding how consumers evaluate their contribution to sustainability warrants further investigation, including encompassing the wider implications of motivating and empowering consumers to understand sustainable implications; this research has a role in contributing to the debate



(Szmigin et al., 2009; Newholm and Shaw, 2007).

To understand the manifestation of sustainability in everyday behaviours, the sample selected for investigation will focus solely on the demographics identified as most likely to embrace sustainable behaviours. Although academics debate the applicability of demographics to the likelihood of engaging with sustainable issues (Bray et al., 2011), certain lifestyle traits encourage an interest in sustainability. Similarly, lifestyles encapsulate similar characteristics which establish commonality (D'Souza et al., 2007). For example, a higher level of education increases the level of interest in current affairs, including concern for climate change and human rights (Kriwy and Mecking, 2012; Carey et al., 2008). Females are also considered as having a greater interest in sustainability (do Paço and Raposo, 2010) and are more interested in fashion, therefore more likely to browse leisurely for fashion related products than men (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Hourigan and Bougoure, 2011). Further, motherhood has inspired consideration for the world in which children encounter (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) and a desire to avoid unnatural applications; this leads to a preference to purchase organic food to avoid children ingesting pesticides (Shaw et al., 2006). This research asserts that this cohort have greater awareness of sustainability and, therefore, are potentially more likely to transfer sustainable principles to other contexts.

Consequently, the sample selected are mothers who work in a professional occupation, as representative of receiving a higher level of education as required for a professional role. The research will focus on their fashion selection for themselves and their children and underlying tenets of value. This also includes how sustainable concepts are processed and applied to consumption behaviours. However, the research also seeks to determine the relationship with fashion pertaining to identity formation, not only as the participants deliberate the meaning of their visual representation for themselves, but the consensus with their children's emerging socialisation. This has the added contribution of an investigation to the negotiations between

mother and child for fashion selection, an area neglected by academic research (de Kervenoael et al., 2011). Having established the topic under investigation and the importance of the issues, the rest of this chapter will establish the research aim and objectives, before outlining the structure of the thesis.

### **1.3: Research aim and objectives**

The thesis aims to contribute a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour and the application of sustainable behaviours. To this end, the overarching research aim is:

To investigate the lived experience of mothers working in a professional occupation when selecting fashion for themselves and their children and determine if sustainability contributes to perceptions of value.

The following objectives will enable the aim to be achieved:

1. To explore the experience of fashion within the everyday constructs of the participants lifeworld
2. To investigate perceptions of sustainability and how this manifests within everyday experiences
3. To explore the evaluation of fashion selection through the lens of consumer value
4. To consider the role of marketing intermediaries in influencing sustainable behavioural choice
5. To identify how current behaviours contribute to a misalignment with moral orientation and how participants manage a reconciliation

### **1.4: Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is structured as follows:

**Chapter One** introduces the scope of the research and establishes the aims and objectives.

**Chapter Two** provides the theoretical underpinning of the research through critically reviewing the literature to identify research gaps and develop research questions.

**Chapter three** introduces the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) to understand the interplay of value negotiated during decision-making. This also includes notions of how consumers manage decision-making when information is scarce and outcomes are uncertain as well as neutralising behaviours which do not align with moral sentiment.

**Chapter Four** delineates the methodological approach of the research, including the rationale for research methods and sampling criteria. This chapter also describes the research journey and application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis.

**Chapters Five, Six and Seven** present the empirical findings which emerged from the open coding embedded within an explanation from the extant theory: Chapter Five explores the lifeworlds of two selected case study participants to determine their lifeworld experiences when accessing fashion; Chapter Six establishes the importance of self when selecting fashion and explores areas in which the participants expressed confidence in sustainability and how this relates to negotiating value; and Chapter Seven examines how uncertainty leads to the inclusion of heuristics to determine sustainability and how neutralisation is adopted amid uncertainty.

**Chapter Eight** provides the conclusions to the research to explicitly outline the contributions of the thesis to consumer behaviour research and the advances to theoretical development.

# Chapter Two: Literature review

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## 2.1: Introduction to the literature review

This chapter reviews the ethical fashion literature by unpacking concepts which can be considered as applying sustainability in relation to fashion consumption behaviours. As established in Chapter One, the aim of the research is to explore the lived experience of applying sustainability to fashion consumption within the current market, an area under-researched. In particular, understanding how consumers view sustainable concepts, such as organic, recycling and carbon neutrality within the context of fashion, has to date received little attention (Hiller Connell, 2010; Niinimäki, 2010; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). This research seeks to contribute to academic understanding of the way in which mothers working in a professional occupation make choices about their fashion purchases, and the extent to which sustainability is or is not of concern. This chapter will review the main themes which have emerged from previous research and locate where gaps in the literature exist.

## 2.2: Ethical fashion literature

The literature examining sustainability within the context of fashion has received little academic attention. However, previous ethical fashion studies, which may have relevance to the arguments about sustainability include:

- Willingness to pay a premium for organic cotton (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Hustvedt and Bernard, 2008)
- Disposal of fashion garments (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007)
- Avoiding fashion which is derived from worker exploitation (Iwanow et al., 2005; Shaw et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2006; Dickson, 2001; Dickson, 2000; Dickson and Littrell, 1997)

- Exploring fashion consumption from a business perspective (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Jones and Williams, 2012; Goworek, 2011; de Brito et al., 2008; Fineman, 2001; Meyer, 2001)
- Applying concern for the environment (Cervellon and Wernerfelt, 2012; Chan and Wong, 2012; Hiller Connell, 2010)
- Dual application of ethics (environmental impact and workers involved in production) (Jägel et al., 2012; Joergens, 2006)
- Sustainable behaviours in the context of fashion (Fisher et al., 2008)

These studies will be critiqued in this chapter. Not all of the studies are specific to fashion: some seek to determine consumers willingness to pay a premium for sustainable concepts, such as organic or locally produced cotton, in non-fashion items, such as socks or a t-shirt, where there is little emphasis on style selection. Many of the studies have specifically sampled consumers who are already actively ethical, accessing potential respondents through Non-Government Organisations (NGO), subscribers to Ethical Consumer Magazine or similar socially conscious catalogues and online '*green*' fashion forums. However, previous studies have not examined the holistic experience of applying sustainability to fashion consumption behaviours for mass-market consumers.

Further, even when previous researchers combine sustainable concepts (of environment, people and disposal), only the study by Fisher et al. (2008) defines the integration of these behaviours as sustainability; the others follow the discourse of applying ethical concern to the environment and social responsibility. This lack of definition of sustainability within fashion consumption behaviours further supports the lack of consciousness to apply sustainable concepts within the context of fashion. Some of the studies have been displayed in a table which can be found in Appendix 4 outlining the research design, methods, main findings and identified gaps; therefore this critique will not include the specifics of the research approach and focus on the contribution of these studies in developing understanding of the phenomena. The next sections will begin to unpack concepts of sustainability within the context of fashion, as previously identified in the literature outlined above.

### 2.2.1: Negotiating sustainability and the value of fashion consumption

A holistic approach was undertaken by Fisher et al. (2008), who examined consumer understanding of sustainability from the context of fashion consumption behaviours in a report for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, UK Government). This included determining consumers' relationship with fashion to understand how the concept of sustainability was perceived within the context of fashion behaviours. The purpose of the research by Fisher et al. (2008) was to understand how best to encourage consumers to adopt fashion sustainability within their everyday behaviours. The research found that awareness of sustainability within the context of fashion was low and the participants evaluated purchase decisions based on their individual constructs of self-identity and economic factors.

Fisher et al. (2008) concluded that retailers should be proactive in alerting consumers to sustainability within the context of fashion. However, this was an exploratory study and Fisher et al. (2008) did not examine how consumers consider sustainable concepts in relation to fashion consumption, nor contrasted sustainable behaviours from other consumption contexts. Further, the research suggests life-stage influences both sustainable behaviours and consumers' relationship with fashion. For example, younger consumers are more likely to purchase inexpensive fashion, due to a reduced budget and the desire to follow evolving trends. As the study by Fisher et al. (2008) included a cross section of society, it would be pertinent to further identify how this manifests in everyday influences and habits. Consequently, this suggests the potential for further research to look at a specific life-stage, such as mothers with a young family, who may be considering concepts of sustainability in other contexts, such as food, for familial provisioning (Gam et al., 2010; Carey et al., 2008; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000).

Fisher et al. (2008) also found that classic clothing is purchased for a particular purpose and that consumers will pay more for increased quality in some instances. Although desire for quality clothing is not linked to concepts of

sustainability, identifying what motivates the desire to pay more for quality fashion would deepen the understanding of the application of value to fashion consumption. Joy et al. (2012) respond to this by considering why consumers do not view luxury fashion as a response to concerns for sustainability, postulating that luxury fashion fosters respect for artisan, the environment, quality and ultimately sustainability. They found that their male and female participants aged between 20 and 35 years enjoyed responding to evolving fashion trends and that fast fashion offers, through inexpensive price points, an ability to keep up with new trends (a description of fast fashion can be found in Appendix 5). Fashion was likened to the fast food industry, something Lee (2003) referred to as '*McFashion*', where easy access and low price points encourages planned obsolescence, demonstrating a preference for quantity over quality or perceptions of longevity.

Longevity was inconsequential to the participants who contributed to the research by Joy et al. (2012), access to the latest trends superseded the desire to keep fashion garments. Further, unwanted clothing was disposed to landfill. This obsolescence contrasted with the participants intentness to behave sustainably in other contexts: selecting sustainably-produced food, such as organic, and recycling behaviours in other contexts, for example packaging. Joy et al. (2012) do not explore why concepts of sustainability do not transfer to fashion and focus primarily on the concept of desire as motivating fashion consumption, as established in the literature investigating fashion consumption behaviours (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Workman and Studak, 2006; O'Cass, 2004; Gutman and Mills, 1982; Tigert et al., 1976).

Joy et al. (2012) assume that luxury fashion is attainable for ordinary consumers, whereas other research posits the higher pricing as prohibitive (Yates, 2008; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Price was primarily the barrier to purchasing ethical fashion for the participants in Joergens' (2006) study. Using small focus groups in both the UK and Germany, Joergens (2006) found that awareness of the environmental impact from the

fashion industry was low. Although the participants were aware of allegations of worker exploitation, it was less concerning to them than animal cruelty and they felt unable to transfer concern to their fashion consumption behaviours. For example, some considered country of origin may be indicative of worker exploitation, but felt uncertain of the accuracy of this assumption, particularly as the participants also considered that all of the fashion available on UK high streets was produced in developing countries. It is important to establish that fashion production occurs in countries from which consumers are physically and culturally distanced (Lyon, 2006; Sayer, 2000), which does little to enhance understanding of what constitutes fashion production. Marx and Engels (2012) initially introduced the distance between production and consumption as diluting understanding of what consumption entails. Similarly, Sartre (2003) considered the importance of consciousness prior to intentionality to incorporate behavioural change. Thus, the participants in Joergens study perceived that there was no alternative to fulfil their fashion needs and wants, particularly as ethical fashion was not considered fashionable and was more expensive.

Within the current fashion retail sector, decreasing price points are an important consideration for consumers. The price of fashion garments has decreased by a third in the last decade (DEFRA, 2007; Waste Online, 2006). Inexpensive fashion retailers, such as Primark, and increasingly supermarket fashion ranges (Sorenson, 2009; Hines, 2007) maintain low price points (Moisander et al., 2010; Herve and Mullet, 2009; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2006) to attract consumers who desire quantity over quality and attain a competitive advantage (Hansen, 2005). The students in Joergens' (2006) study were both price conscious and wanted garments that followed fashion trends, stating that it was style that inspired consumption. Joergens (2006) concludes that to engage consumers with sustainability, more information is required to educate them of the consequential impact of their consumption, especially as fashion choice is aesthetically motivated and consumers prioritise their consumer-self over allegations of unethical production practice.



Joergens' (2006) sample consisted of students, where it could be argued that fashion is an important factor in expressing self and conforming within peer groups (Damhorst, 2005a; Berry and Kunkel, 2002; Solomon, 1999; Belk, 1988). Much of the fashion literature focuses upon younger consumers, although Ogle and Damhorst (2005) and Damhorst (2005b) acknowledge that older consumers (those termed forty and over!) are still interested in their appearance. Consequently, this offers further justification to explore a life-stage which is currently under-researched (Naderi, 2011). Further, since Joergens' research was published in 2006, sustainability has progressed further in mainstream supermarkets, as described in Section 1.2.1. Increased awareness and accessibility has raised the concept of sustainability in consumers' consciousness, and this may be reflected in behaviours, with consumers taking the initiative to transfer sustainable principles from one context (food) to another (fashion).

Similarly, Niinimäki (2010) surveyed 246 Finnish consumers and observed that the value of fashion was perceived through hedonistic behaviours, whereby the respondents did not attempt to transfer sustainability to the context of fashion. The research discusses the stance of the Theory of Altruism (Schwartz, 1973, cited in Niinimäki, 2010), which predicts that the desire to want to do the right thing will transpose to all behaviours. However, this theory contrasts with the substantial literature establishing the attitude-behaviour gap (discussed in Section 3.2.8). Consequently, Niinimäki (2010) posits that for consumers to perceive value in sustainable fashion, availability must be comparable with consumer preferences for style, price and access, thus linking consumer identity with their ideology for sustainability.

Niinimäki (2010) identifies that the respondents termed by the author '*ethical hardliners*' wanted to illustrate their strong personal ideology for sustainability visually, as opposed to following fashion trends or complying with social norms. Thus, sustainable production increased their perception of value. Nevertheless, most of the respondents, including the '*ethical hardliners*', valued beauty and

creation in fashion, further emphasising that fashion consumption value differs from other products' contexts due to increased aesthetic value. Niinimäki (2010) concludes that designers, producers and fashion retailers lack the knowledge of understanding consumers' relationship with sustainable fashion, including values, desire and needs. However, it would also be useful to better understand a holistic manifestation of values; therefore, gaining an understanding of consumer perception regarding fashion sustainability within the context of everyday lifeworlds is pivotal to facilitating change.

Jägel et al. (2012) also consider ethics in the context of social responsibility and environmental concern, through assuming that value guides consumption choice and will translate into decision-making. Using Means End Theory, which depicts how means (products, activities) are harnessed to gain an end result (valued states of being), the researchers attempt to predict how consumer evaluations view attributes which maximise benefits and reduce risk. This more recent research depicts the amalgamation of both traditional decision-making with ethical criteria, heightening the desire to apply sustainability to fashion consumption. Nevertheless, the results still reveal a hierarchical preference for style, self-identity, price and quality over sustainability. Overall, the results show that compromising on product features, including notions of ethical production, implicates a compromise on end goals, thus leading to a value trade-off. It is this effort to balance their consumption behaviour with moral sentiment that is especially interesting; the research by Jägel et al. (2012) illustrates the evolution of consumers to recognise sustainability in their everyday behaviours. However, the balancing of trade-offs for sustainably aware consumers who negotiate value within the current consumer marketplace merits further exploration, to understand how these values manifest within everyday experiences and what constitutes a valid trade-off in consumers lifeworlds.

Shen et al., (2012) suggested that consumers have sufficient information to apply sustainable concepts to fashion consumption, and considered the

marketplace in Hong Kong as providing sufficient sustainable fashion options to enable consumers to purchase sustainably-produced fashion. However, the findings report that 90 per cent of the respondents had not purchased sustainable fashion, nor were they able to name any sustainable fashion brands. Further, Shen et al. (2012) report that both awareness of allegations of garment-worker exploitation and the environmental impact of fashion production was low in the respondents. The research by Shen et al. (2012) does not reveal any new information, however cumulatively these studies illustrate that sustainability is not currently addressed by the fashion industry. Consequently, consumers' consciousness of the issues has not been stimulated. However, some of the concepts of sustainability have been researched individually and will be explored in the following sections. It should be noted that these concepts, such as Fairtrade fashion or organic cotton will not resolve the issue of sustainability within the fashion supply chain in isolation (de Brito et al., 2008), however they do offer consumers the option to consider concepts of sustainability and participate in sustainable fashion consumption behaviours.

### **2.2.2: Applying environmental concern to fashion consumption**

Although it is considered that consumer concern for the environment may be growing, research to date has identified that consumers have a low awareness of the environmental impact of the fashion industry (Niinimäki, 2010; Hiller Connell, 2010; Hustvedt and Bernard, 2010; Fisher et al., 2008). An overview containing greater depth of the environmental impact can be found in Appendix 1. To summarise, some of the environmental consequences of fashion production include:

- The water intensity of cotton production (Rosselson, 2008)
- The use of pesticides to maximise cotton production which deplete the soil (Rivoli, 2009; Dahllöf, 2003)
- The use of chemicals for finishing processes, such as enzyme washing (Mazumder, 2010; Fletcher, 2008)
- The length of time fibres take to decompose in landfill (Black, 2008; Rosselson, 2008; DEFRA, 2007)
- The use of scarce resources, such as cotton and oil to make polyester (Fletcher, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006)

There are also opportunities to use fibres which are sustainable to produce, such as:

- Bamboo, which is carbon neutral (Fletcher, 2008)
- Biodegradable fibres, such as Tencel (Black, 2008)
- PET<sup>4</sup>: polyester made from recycled plastic bottles (Fletcher, 2008; Lee and Sevier, 2008)

Although little is known about consumers' perceptions of buying fashion garments made from sustainable fibres, there are a number of studies which explore consumer perceptions of applying environmental concern to fashion consumption. Hiller Connell (2010) found that lack of awareness skewed the participants' perceptions of what fibres had the least environmental impact, assuming cotton production was not damaging as it was a natural product (a description of the environmental impact of cotton production can be found in Appendix 1). This lack of awareness as reflected within the current consumer marketplace resulted in the participants being unable to identify where they could purchase eco-conscious fashion. Further, the desire to do so was reduced, due to perception that eco-conscious fashion was not fashionable, stylish nor suitable for work purposes. Furthermore, eco-conscious fashion, when identified, was limited in sizing, fit, and limited in options, for example style and colour. Despite a lack of recognition of the environmental impact of fashion production, the participants considered sustainability in other contexts, predominantly food, similar to the research presented above. The participants indicated that production information on garment labels would be beneficial to facilitate integrating environmental concern into decision-making. Consequently, it would be interesting to observe consumers evaluating garment labels pertaining to sustainable concepts to better understand their interpretation of sustainable status.

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<sup>4</sup> Patagonia, the outdoor brand, began 14 years ago to use PET (polyester fabric made from plastic bottles), redirecting 86 million bottles from landfill and this initiative was recently utilised by M&S (Fletcher, 2008; Lee and Sevier, 2008) where 25 two litre bottles make one fleece jacket (Edwards, 2004). Consequentially, this has two benefits: the removal of plastic bottles from landfill where decomposition takes over 200 years whilst emitting carbon emissions and the reduction of polyester production reliant upon scarce resources and energy (Lee and Sevier, 2008).

Although Chan and Wong (2012) state their research purpose as exploring consumers' relationship with sustainable concerns of fashion consumption, they view sustainability solely through the lens of the environmental impact. Variations of referring to sustainability and environmentalism as indistinguishable were discussed in Section 1.2. Chan and Wong (2012) assume that product-related attributes, such as style, price and quality, coupled with store-related attributes, such as store environment, convenient locations and the retailers' code of practice, will influence eco-fashion consumption decisions. The findings identify that that product-related attributes are not related to eco-friendly decision-making, an aspect the researchers attribute to fashion selection prioritising style and identity building. However, store-related attributes led to perceptions that the garments were sustainably-produced, which the authors believe as related to paying a price premium.

Although the authors cannot substantiate why this may be, they believe it may infer that store related attributes are intangible, however relating a higher price to sustainable fashion consumption offers a palatable perception. In isolation, and without further exploration, this finding makes little sense; however, it links with research from Shaw et al. (2006a) where participants assume some established UK high street fashion retailers were free from worker exploitation. It can be assumed that paying more for fashion is a result of an increase in implementing procedural practice in production. The link between service has been found to impact directly on value and trust (Aurier and Siadou-Martin, 2007; Birtwistle and Shearer, 2001). Consequently, the consumer interprets the attributes communicated through marketing orientation (Marzo-Navarro et al., 2004), whereby an augmented customer services strengthens perceptions of trust. Oates et al. (2008) found that consumers trust high street retailers, perhaps seeking to reduce the likelihood of an unsatisfactory purchase through the familiarity of a brand name, endorsed by social conventions, as well as the ability to access the tactile qualities and fit of the garment (Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995).

Chan and Wong (2012) conclude that eco-fashion decision-making can be encouraged through improving the in-store experience, such as the ambiance and décor. Whether this will influence sustainable fashion consumption is debateable, however it does determine the need for an in-depth exploration of consumers' perceptions of fashion retailers and what subtle cues are utilised to make consumption decision-making evaluations which align with a consumers moral sentiment. In summary, what values do consumers relate that are transferred from the retailer through marketing intermediaries.

Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) sought to explore consumer perceptions of applying environmental concern to fashion consumption through a netnographic<sup>5</sup> approach. They followed the online discussions of members from two North American green forums: Treehugger and Care2, in two stages: 2007-2008 and 2010-2011. Although it should be recognised that the members who contributed to the discussions were actively seeking information to incorporate their concern for the environment into fashion consumption behaviours, it is interesting to note that the researchers identify a change in the discussion from stage one and two. In stage one (2007-2008) the focus of the discussion was mainly about the environment, such as carbon emissions, pollution and waste; whereas, in stage two (2010-2011) the focus shifted to fashion behaviours, such as how to purchase fashion produced without detrimental impact on the environment, sustainable fibres, vintage clothing and consumption issues. This illustrates that consumers are starting to align sustainable concepts with fashion consumption, as opposed to being driven by concern for the environment. In addition, this research offers an understanding of what concepts are considered as environmentally friendly, such as Fairtrade and organic status. Furthermore, the research identifies a network of support, where information and best practice was shared, demonstrating that those with a similar outlook influence and support perceptions.

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<sup>5</sup> Netnography is an ethnographic approach which analysis online behaviours (Kozinets, 2010)

This leads on to the question of whether there are similar networks of consumers sharing information and best practice, such as which retailers are adopting sustainability within the fashion supply chain or how best to dispose of unwanted clothing. Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) conclude that the online members believe that mainstreaming sustainability through mass-market fashion retailers is the only way to satisfy the variety of fashion needs expressed by consumers. This view is supported by Prothero and Fitchett (2000: 51), who believe that success for ethical products relies upon reflecting '*existing trends, tastes and fashions*' to achieve '*long-term and wide-ranging environmental change*' (p 48). Consequently, sustainable fashion will need to be desirable, particularly as aesthetic orientation is unfulfilled by utilitarian needs (Lin and Xia, 2012; Holbrook, 1999). Valor (2007) suggested that if it became fashionable to purchase ethically produced clothing, this would influence those who are fashion-orientated consumers. Current ethical ranges available are restricted to core garments, such as t-shirts or young children's clothing (Aspers, 2008). It will be difficult to influence consumers to prioritise sustainability, unless mass-market retailers adopt sustainable practice, reducing consumer responsibility to actively seek sustainable fashion, whilst ensuring that clothes not ethically produced are less competitive (Holt, 2008). Moreover, it is the mass-market fashion producers who contribute to many of the ethical concerns which arise within the fashion industry (Sorenson, 2009), particularly as increased consumption leads to more garments being disposed of. Consumer disposal behaviours are considered in the next section.

### **2.2.3: Fashion disposal behaviours**

Inexpensive fashion has facilitated increased consumption and the low price does not encourage retention of the items, allowing for a perception of disposability (Friedman, 2011; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Majima, 2008). Consequently, how consumers dispose of fashion impacts on sustainability and a few studies have focused on consumer disposal behaviours. Birtwistle and Moore (2007) consider how increased fashion consumption is disposed through the assumption that low price points have reduced the risk of consumption, as

new fashion is more affordable, encouraging fashion consumption as a leisurely pursuit in the UK and US (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; CSF, 2009; Holt, 2008; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; O’Cass, 2004; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). Birtwistle and Moore (2007) also examine the consequence of inexpensive fashion relating to a reduced quality, which lessens the garment’s lifespan and facilitates a perception of disposability (Friedman, 2010; Majima, 2008): inexpensive fashion garments are not made to be worn more than ten times on average (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009).

Birtwistle and Moore (2007) identified that paying more for fashion resulted in either retaining the garments for longer or donating garments to charity. The increased price heightened perceptions of value and the desire to maximise the lifespan; accordingly, inexpensive consumption was directly related to increased disposal. However, the research by Birtwistle and Moore (2007) neglects to explore how these behaviours fit within the everyday behaviours, in particular do families still retain clothing to be worn by siblings and what rules or habits exist for passing clothes between friends? Further, do consumers repair or restyle unwanted or worn garments when necessary (Majima, 2008; Black, 2008)? Further investigation is required to understand the factors which lead to disposal and the value placed on clothing.

Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012) undertook a comparative study of consumers in Australia and Chile, with the assumption that the development stage of the country may influence disposal behaviours. An online questionnaire was sent to participants to investigate attitudes towards environmental concerns that influenced fashion disposal behaviour. The research identified that current recycling behaviour, motivated by concern for the environment, led to donating unwanted clothing to charity as well as passing on clothing to friends and family. Further, age was related to awareness for environmental concern, whereby older consumers were more likely to consider the potential for reuse and recycling of unwanted clothing. The research concludes that this could be further encouraged through increasing the collection points of unwanted



textiles, and that the media and fashion retailers can play a role in raising awareness of the potential of textile recycling.

Recycling represents a '*Closed-Loop Business Model*' where consumers return unwanted clothing to retailers for fibre reclamation (Allwood et al., 2006: 69) and offers potential for retailers to initiate sustainable practice and obtain competitive advantage. Currently legislation does not regulate textile recycling or recovery (Parfitt, 2006; Waste Watch, 2005); however, fibres can be reclaimed and reused for the manufacture of new fabrics and garments (Waste Watch, 2005). Textile recycling was once a lucrative business which could be replicated (Rivoli, 2009; Allwood et al., 2006; Waste Online, 2006). However, recycling is not financially attractive, especially during the current recession (Goodwin, 2009), as sorting the clothing is costly (Allwood et al., 2006). DEFRA (2008; 2009b) recognise the need for government subsidies as an incentive to encourage innovation and technological solutions (Black, 2008; Fletcher, 2008; DEFRA, 2007; Bhate, 2002), along with the growing requirement for increasing the collection of unwanted textiles which could be reused or recycled through upcycling<sup>6</sup> or down-cycling.

Recycling fibres offers the opportunity to reduce landfill along with reliance upon scarce resources (Waste Online, 2006), particularly as reclaiming fibres reduces energy consumption (The Ecologist, 2010b; Paulins and Hillery, 2009; Fletcher, 2008). However, neither Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012) nor Birtwistle and Moore (2009) investigate consumers' evaluation of garments made from recycled fibres, illustrating a gap in understanding consumers' predetermination of sustainability and value. Continuation of landfill usage reduces the quality of the environment, limiting natural resources for future generations (Waste Aware Scotland, 2009). Consumers may struggle to understand the concept of disposal: once rubbish is put out for collection it

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<sup>6</sup> Upcycling involves restructuring clothes or waste fabric into a new garment. An example of upcycling includes Oxfam commissioning upcycled garments made from second-hand clothes and textiles (such as duvet covers) which are reworked by designers into new creations (Waste Online, 2006). A definition of downcycling was offered in the footnote on page 18.

disappears from the consumer's consciousness (Dobscha, 1993), and it is only when consumers see pictures of landfill, the depth of the problem can be understood. Landfill is not infinite and it is thought that in ten years time, we will cease to have this option (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Schiller, 2009). Alternative options include extending landfill capacity or changing the behaviours of both consumers and businesses (Schiller, 2009).

Although used and recycled products are increasingly available, Prothero and Fitchett (2000) believe that motivating consumers to engage with the problems will be the pivotal issue. For example, Chen-Yu and Kincade (2001) found that consumers were reluctant to purchase clothing made from material derived from recycled blended fibres. However, consumer perception of purchasing fashion from recycled fibres was not explored by Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012) or Birtwistle and Moore (2009). The next section will review previous research which has investigated perceptions of sustainable fibres.

#### **2.2.4: Willingness to pay a premium for organic cotton**

Hustvedt and colleagues have undertaken a few studies to understand consumers' perceptions of organic cotton and to determine whether consumers will pay a premium for organic status. Organic farming emerged as a response to concern regarding chemical use in production (Fletcher, 2008) and is growing in availability and popularity, encouraged by the success of organic foods (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009). Organic cotton requires less water than conventional cotton production and is grown without using pesticides, consequently the soil is less depleted and chemical costs are unnecessary (Fletcher, 2008; Hamer and Anslow, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006). Further, organic cotton includes a '*social element*' where farmers are paid an increased price, similar to Fairtrade, and therefore Fletcher (2008: 19) believes it is '*a tool for social change*', allowing small farmers to compete with commercial farms.

Although consumers' perceive organic fashion to be more expensive (Hiller Connell, 2010; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004), the introduction of high street

organic fashion disproves this. Nike, M&S and H&M have committed to producing more organic garments (Black, 2008; Fletcher, 2008); however, styles are limited, thus hindering organic clothing sales (Hiller Connell, 2010; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). With increased production, the price will reduce (Allwood et al., 2006; Bhate, 2002); however, without an obvious rise in consumption, it is unlikely that organisations will increase organic options (Black, 2008). Some producers currently use a blend of organic and conventional cotton, which may be contradictory in terms of retaining organic properties, however it serves two purposes: increasing demand and further developing the organic market (Black, 2008; Fletcher, 2008). Consequently, although organic cotton conveys sustainable status, understanding consumers' perceptions is pivotal to increasing demand.

Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) investigated consumer willingness to pay for organic, GM cotton, and PLA fibre (made from a renewable corn) socks. Although the context (socks) does not portray fashion, the findings offer an idea of perceptions of value in the fibre content. The findings identify organic status resulted in the greatest willingness to pay a premium. The respondents expressed a reduced perception of value for the PLA fibre socks, which the authors assume is related to a lack of knowledge of fibre manufacturing technologies, a lack of knowledge of the sustainable status of PLA fibres or the perception that increased manufacturing is related to increased carbon emissions, increasing the impact on the environment. Therefore, further investigation is required to determine how consumers evaluate fibre content and how this relates to their perception of value. For example, the perception of the renewable aspect may reduce consumers' perception of value: it may equate to recycled fibres.

Research by Gam et al. (2010) found participants considered potential benefits of organic cotton limited to the environment and not the wearer; however, Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) found consumers who purchased organic textiles (in this instance, a t-shirt) believed the perceived benefits were both personal,

through improved health properties to the wearer, and environmental, through contributing to growth of the organic industry. The inclusion of the perception that organic cotton will benefit the health of the wearer is interesting, as organic cotton does not claim any health-related benefits and this warrants further investigation. Desire to support production which aligns with moral sentiment was also identified in the research by Hustvedt and Bernard (2008), who found support for locally produced cotton. Although this does not transfer to the UK as cotton is predominantly grown in warmer climates, it does indicate that consumers are willing to support local economies, and extends the ethos of sustainability to reduce carbon footprints. Consumers incorporate concern for carbon emissions by reducing air miles and supporting local food producers (McDonald et al., 2009; Vyse, 2005). Local producers are described as being within a fifty-mile radius (Howard and Allen, 2006). Diaz Pedregal and Ozcoular-Toulouse (2011) found that their French participants were more likely to opt for locally produced food than Fairtrade, one reason being the perception of a superior quality. In contrast, consumers do not have the same opportunity to purchase fashion from local producers, as 90 per cent of fashion sold on the UK high street is imported (Oneko, 2011).

Hustvedt and colleagues identify that consumers are happy to pay a premium for organic fibres; however, why should consumers pay more for organic cotton, especially when the potential exists for the price to reduce? de Chernatony et al. (2000) review the literature of the creation of added value through two perspectives: pricing and consumer behaviour, and postulate that from the pricing perspective, a price premium is likely if consumers perceive additional benefits. However, consumer behaviourists believe that price premiums are psychologically processed as augmenting benefits. If consumers are unable to identify a personal benefit to wearing organic cotton, they are unlikely to opt for this option. The increased cost fuels consumer suspicions that sustainable status is used as a tool to increase the price and profit for the retailer (Bray et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2008; Peattie, 1999; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Fineman (2001) believes consumers are critical of ethical attempts, which are considered

as insincere and this can manifest into scepticism. Hence, further research can address consumer perceptions through an in-depth study to explore consumers' evaluation of organic status in the context of fashion and determine how marketing can respond to encouraging increased organic cotton consumption. As described in Section 2.2.1, the retailer acts as a mediator between consumers and production and the next section will review how businesses communicate production to consumers.

### **2.2.5: Business perceptions of integrating sustainability in the fashion supply chain**

A number of studies examine the integration of Fairtrade principles to the fashion supply chain, to provide consumers with similar options to prioritise social responsibility in the context of fashion. Jones and Williams (2012) analysed semi-structured interviews from three businesses which sell garments produced under Fairtrade conditions. They identified a hierarchy of Fairtrade practice, and this illustrates the complexity of the types of information that consumers have to negotiate to determine production practice. This contrasts with consumers' confidence in purchasing Fairtrade products in the supermarket, where consumers understand that Fairtrade offers a fair price between producer and buyer (Lyon, 2006), whilst improving conditions within communities (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009). As consumers are often limited in time when shopping, the recognition of a familiar logo, can offer the consumer assurance that the product has not contributed to exploitation of workers or the environment.

Although the research by Jones and Williams (2012) acknowledges that businesses are considering harnessing well-known logos, such as Fairtrade, to increase the credibility of communicating information about production, a key communication strategy was to offer consumers information about the women involved in production. This direct link to bring to the consumers' attention the workers stories and the positive impact Fairtrade production had on their own and their families lives, is a narrative to which consumers can relate. Meyer

(2001) also recognises the importance of offering relevant information to encourage consumption from socially responsible producers and retailers. He examines the success of Patagonia to build a brand that is both fashionable and has sustainability at the fore of every stage within the supply chain, an ethos which is communicated through the catalogues and website. The inclusion of this information also endorses consumer choice that consumption aligns with moral sentiment. To date, no previous research has explored consumer perception of a garment label which depicts the workers involved in production and the story of how, through buying a garment, consumers are positively contributing to everyday lives in developing countries. Further, consumer perceptions of the garment-workers was not identified within this study, leaving a gap of understanding about how consumers view their responsibility for the conditions experienced by garment-workers. However, this was addressed in other research and will be discussed in the next section.

#### **2.2.6: Intentness to avoid fashion derived from worker exploitation**

A number of studies have investigated consumer intention to avoid fashion derived from worker exploitation. Early studies sought to determine if values and attitudes influenced behaviour. The assumption was that consumers' attitudes towards social injustice would motivate support for garments produced in equitable conditions. Iwanow et al. (2005) sought to explore the impact of media allegations that Gap clothing may have been produced using worker exploitation and child labour, although they acknowledge that Gap are working towards a commitment to eradicate worker and child exploitation from production. They targeted consumers whilst shopping, and of the 200 participants, 71 per cent of males and 80 per cent of females had visited a Gap store in the previous year, with only two per cent not making a purchase. The participants exhibited a high awareness of the allegations that child labour was utilised to produce fashion (96 per cent of males/ 88 per cent of females); however, this had little impact on the participants' evaluations, as fashion, style, price and quality were prioritised. Consequently, it was personal motives as opposed to societal concern which were at the fore of decision-making.

The findings from Iwanow et al. (2005) begin to illustrate the complexity of evaluating the inclusion of exploitation in fashion production. The participants' discourse includes that retailers, like Gap, have a responsibility to provide the child workers with schooling and that Western employment regulations should not be forced on developing countries, yet they also acknowledge that the workers have little control over their working conditions. Nevertheless, they note that trade with developing economies should be encouraged. Although not asked explicitly, this illustrates the trade not aid approach (Jones and Williams, 2012), as preferred by NGOs (Action Aid, 2007). The research by Iwanow et al. (2005) illustrates the need for a deeper exploration of consumer perceptions of worker and child exploitation and how consumers evaluate allegations in their decision-making. It also leads to questioning whether a heightened emotive attachment to the issues, such as motherhood, would alter perceptions of the emotional appeals to avoid fashion alleged to have been produced utilising child labour, particularly as the participants in Iwanow et al.'s (2005) study seem to display a detachment between production and consumption.

Dickson and Littrell (1997) sent questionnaires to consumers in North America who had either requested a catalogue or purchased from a catalogue which sold clothing and accessories made under Fairtrade conditions in Pueblo in South America. It was assumed that consumers who perceived value in equitable production would reflected this stance in their appearance, therefore the participants would prefer clothing of an ethnic design. The findings supported Dickson and Littrell's hypothesis and they found that the respondents perceived value in supporting the workers. This was not only linked to feelings of altruism, but the participants believed the garments were of a superior quality. However, it should be noted that these respondents were actively sourcing fashion which aligned with their moral sentiment, and their fashion selection reflected a greater involvement with ethics than fashion. Consequently, the research does not address consumers with a greater involvement with fashion and who may be expressing other aspects of their persona, such as status and fashion involvement.

Similarly, Dickson (2000) sought to explore if consumer values could predict the intention to purchase jeans from socially responsible apparel manufacturers and retailers. The findings from a random sample of consumers identified a strong relationship between knowledge of garment-worker exploitation which led to concern. The respondents also indicate their desire to support US apparel production which occurs alongside negative perceptions of production in foreign countries. Nevertheless, awareness of worker exploitation was low; therefore, concern did not transfer into support for socially responsible producers and retailers as the participants were mostly unaware of the issues, opting to prioritise attributes such as style and past experience. Further, the research focuses solely upon a pair of jeans, and does not assume a holistic approach to selecting fashion.

Within the conclusion, Dickson (2000) notes that the data was gathered prior to an extensive media focus on the exploitative practice which is prevalent in the fashion industry. She considers whether this will have an impact of consumer attitudes to fashion consumption due to increased awareness. Since 2001, allegations of fashion garment-worker exploitation have continued to grow (AFW, 2009; Hearson, 2008, 2007; WoW, 2008) and there has been a greater focus on the conditions of garment-workers in developing countries, including the exploitation of children (child-labour). Thus, it could be assumed that a more recent study would illustrate greater awareness of the exploitation of garment-workers, which manifests into behavioural change.

Dickson (2001) sought to explore consumer attitudes to a hang tag label: No Sweat, which offered consumers assurance that the workers involved in production had not been subjected to '*sweatshop labour*'. A random sample of consumers in North America were sent a questionnaire which measured the likelihood of purchasing a '*No Sweat*' shirt, alongside beliefs and attitudes and demographic information, with a view to determining the socio-demographics of the types of consumers more likely to purchase garments displaying the No Sweat label. Although this market segment was identified, it was a small



segment (16 per cent of the overall sample) and included unmarried females with lower educational levels, which was surprisingly different to other research undertaken by Dickson and Littrell (1997) linking increased awareness with a higher level of education. Nevertheless, these concerned respondents were highly motivated to avoid contributing to the exploitation of workers, placing desire for the label over concern for quality, fibre content and colour, and the presence of the label also increased their willingness to pay a slightly higher premium.

Similarly, Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) identified that students were willing to pay more for t-shirts which had information on the label regarding the garment-workers involved in production. This information was either explicit, for example: '*made in a factory that complies with international labour laws*' or ambiguous, simply: '*Living Wage*' (information on a living wage can be found in Appendix 2). The study also measured positive attitudes towards social responsibility and Fairtrade, which were positively aligned with the results. There was no significant difference between the types of information offered (explicit or ambiguous), which the authors attribute to consumers unquestioningly accepting any information to avoid contributing to garment-worker exploitation. Although, this study determines a positive perception that consumers want information to avoid worker exploitation, it should be acknowledged that the participants were not making fashion related evaluations, therefore they were not sacrificing expressing their appearance over moral sentiment.

Shaw et al. (2007) also sought to identify if attitudes shaped intention to avoid fashion made from sweatshop labour and found that attitudes require personal motivation, such as negative perceptions of sweatshop labour, to actively avoid sweatshop fashion. Avoiding fashion retailers' accused of exploitation is what Bannister and Hogg (2007: 221) refer to as negative symbolic consumption, and the authors believe this to be a more powerful construct than positive marketing messages. Shaw et al. (2007) conclude that consumers require

volition to actively avoid sweatshop fashion through, for example, research to identify a retailer's production policy. However, Shaw et al.'s (2007) participants were subscribers to Ethical Consumer magazine, so were already actively seeking information to combine their moral sentiment with their behaviours.

Similarly, Shaw et al. (2006a) also sampled Ethical Consumer subscribers, narrowing the sample with an initial questionnaire to identify consumers who intentionally avoid fashion derived from exploitation. Shaw et al. (2006a) posit that ethical fashion consumption is lagging behind ethical food consumption, with the focus of the research illustrating the prevalence of Fairtrade in the food sector as enabling consumer confidence of fair practice in production. Despite the participants' intention to avoid fashion derived from exploitation, the findings identify that they use '*imperfect cues*', such as judging the country of production on what is known (thus, China was considered as harbouring exploitation) or considering that well-known retailers, such as BHS or M&S, would not utilise worker exploitation. The participants found it easier to avoid fashion retailers' alleged of exploitation, rather than identify those from whom they could confidently make purchases. Further, the participants considered ethical fashion as limited in styles, unfashionable, and more expensive. In particular, smart clothing for work was difficult to source ethically, and ethically produced clothing was also limited in sizing.

Overall, Shaw et al.'s (2006a) participants were seeking a Fairtrade logo, as this was considered as synonymous with sweatshop-free production. However, within fashion, Fairtrade relates to the farmer being paid a fair price and that children have not been involved in cultivating the cotton (EJF, 2007) rather than garment construction, an aspect that may contribute to consumer confusion (Lee and Sevier, 2008; Hickman, 2008). Shaw et al. (2006a) conclude that just as Fairtrade food has to satisfy consumers' perceptions of taste, quality and availability, so must ethical fashion fulfil fashion consumers need to have access to fashionable clothing that is produced without exploitation.

Although these studies are useful in shaping the research described in this thesis, there has been criticism of measuring attitudes and beliefs as a prerequisite to consumption criteria, due to bias where consumers respond in a way they think is socially responsible (Shaw et al., 2007). Further, much of the fashion consumption literature has denoted the emotional, psychological and involving nature of fashion consumption which is related to identity formation; thus heightened emotions are unlikely to manifest in laboratory experiments. Furthermore, consumers' intentions to purchase ethical products do not always transfer to behaviours, as noted in the sales of sustainably-produced goods (Szmigin et al., 2009; Pepper et al., 2009; Devinney et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2006; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Strong, 1997). This has led to calls for research to examine actual behaviours rather than the intention to adopt ethical consumption (McEachern and Carrington, 2012). Therefore, this research will explore perceptions of value as integral to decision-making, including the concept of sustainability.

### **2.3: Summary and research questions**

Chapter Two has reviewed the literature investigating applying sustainable concepts to fashion, establishing that fashion consumption behaviours examined through the lens of sustainability are sparse. The review has contributed to the development of the research described in this thesis. This summary section will highlight the important implications from the literature review and explicate the gaps identified.

This chapter has illustrated the need to adopt a holistic approach to explore how sustainability is incorporated into everyday behaviours and to understand how consumers react to sustainable implications, interpret sustainable concepts and the ease of adopting sustainable behaviours. The literature illustrates the progression of increased engagement with the concept of sustainability, which has become a term which is embedded into everyday lives and spans a number of consumption contexts, notably food (Joy et al., 2012; Hiller Connell, 2010).

However, the reasons why consumers are engaging with sustainability warrants further exploration, particularly as Chapter One postulated that marketing intermediaries have increased awareness and influenced sustainable behaviours. In contrast, the lack of awareness of what constitutes fashion production has not stimulated consumer concern for sustainability within the context of fashion. Thus consumers are unaware of the implications and consequences. This thesis seeks to address how sustainable concepts (such as carbon neutrality, workers' conditions, organic cotton and recycled fibres) are viewed and negotiated within the macro (wider societal implications) and micro (individual lifeworld) perspectives through a holistic manifestation of value.

The literature has described how personal value constructs motivate fashion consumption (Jägel et al., 2012; Joy et al., 2012; Fisher et al., 2008; Joergens, 2006), however this focus has concentrated on adults and does not address whether the application of values differs between fashion consumption for adults and children. The suggestion from the literature that inexpensive fashion entices increased fashion consumption (Chen and Wong, 2012; Jägel et al., 2012; Joy et al., 2012; Hiller Connell, 2010; Joergens, 2006), particularly for children's clothing. Dickson (2001) considered that increased allegations would alert consumers to the consequences of consumption. With the prevalence of NGO accusation highlighting garment-worker exploitation and child labour linked to UK high street fashion retailers, it could be assumed that this will transpose into behavioural change. However, equally with the economic decline in the UK, familial provisioning may be prioritised, as may be the desire to align fashion consumption with expressing self-identity. Further, it would be interesting to explore how garment labels detailing the workers involved in production are evaluated, such as those described by Jones and William (2012). This may eradicate the perceptions of detachment expressed by Iwanow et al.'s (2005) participants who differentiated production practice from consumption.

The literature also describes perceptions that sustainable fashion is not on trend, more expensive and not available on the UK high street. This was

consistent by the sustainable consumption research by Connolly and Prothero (2003) where sustainable consumption was perceived as *'giving up and losing out'*. However, Niinimäki (2010) identifies that sustainable production was considered as signalling augmented value, albeit with *'ethical hardliners'*. Similarly, Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) found a link between perceptions of health benefits and organic cotton. Augmented value, coupled with the increased engagement with sustainability, may transpose to mass-market consumers who may also perceive value in sustainability that aligns with their moral sentiment and is compatible with family values. It could then be considered relevant to structure the research around understanding the discourse of familial provisioning to better understand how familial concern is transposed with sustainability. For example, how do perceptions of value relate to disposal and repairing of garments?

The literature supports a narrow focus on life-stage which may offer greater depth to understanding how sustainability aligns with current belief systems. Fisher et al. (2008) and Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012) indicate that life-stage influences sustainable behaviours, where older consumers have an increased interest in the issues. The extant literature also identified fashion as more important to younger consumers (Majima, 2008; Joergens, 2006); however, more recent research by Lin and Xia (2012) considered cognitive age as more important than chronological age. This suggests exploring fashion consumption behaviours through the lens of consumers who are open to an array of ideas and not just their appearance (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005). Such an approach would be able to explore with greater depth whether fashion involvement interjects with perceptions of sustainability. It also enables an investigation to understand fashion involvement from the perspective of consumers aged over 40 years, an area which has received little attention (Naderi, 2011).

Jägel et al. (2012) identify a balancing of trade-offs, where sustainability and other value attributes are interchangeable priorities. Further, exploration is required to understand the interplay of values which contribute to decision-

making and how trade-offs are negotiated. This includes what information is included within negotiating the implications of sustainability, as well as how perceptions of sustainability are formed. For example, Shaw et al. (2006a) and Chen and Wong (2012) found that the retailer's image was considered as transmitting a sustainable ethos. This leads to asking what contributes to perceptions of value specifically within the context of sustainable fashion consumption behaviours, particularly as gaining an understanding of consumer perception is pivotal to facilitating change. The Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) offers a framework to explore the everyday experience of perceptions of value and will be discussed in Chapter Three.

# Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

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## 3.1: Introduction to the theoretical framework

This chapter establishes the theoretical literature framework to understand the interplay of value types within decision-making. This links back to the research aim of investigating the lived experience of fashion consumption and perceptions of value. The review of the literature in Chapter Two established what is already known about the phenomena under exploration in this thesis, and emphasised the gaps identified from the extant literature to which this research will respond. Three main themes have emerged strongly from the review of the literature and are established below.

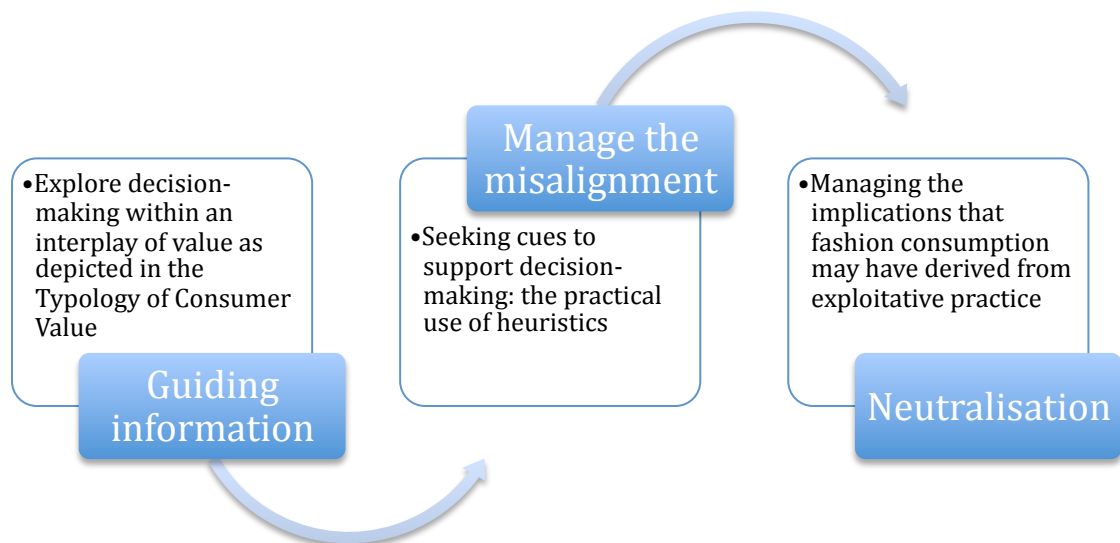
1. Consumers seem to have to choose either to express their involvement in fashion or ethics, as the two concepts presented by the current fashion industry are incompatible: sustainable fashion is not considered as following fashion trends and fashion retailers do not acknowledge sustainability. This research will explore how perceptions of value are evaluated when attempting to merge fashion with sustainability. To this end, the Typology of Consumer Value offers a framework to understand the evaluation of value described within the participants' narratives and will be explored in the first section.
2. Information to support applying sustainability to fashion consumption is scarce, as is guidance advising consumers of the issues which affect fashion consumption sustainability. Consequently, as established within the literature review, consumers are unaware of the environmental impact of fashion production and concern for garment-workers is shrouded in ambiguity. This research seeks to determine what sustainable concepts are harnessed to guide evaluation when

information is unavailable. This includes the interpretation of generic information and the practical use of heuristics.

3. Despite the literature review identifying examples of consumers unable to align their moral sentiment to their fashion consumption, there has been little reported guilt in the literature. A few researchers have noted the use of neutralisation techniques (Jägel et al., 2012; Valor, 2007) to justify consumption which is inconsistent with attitudes and beliefs. This research will use the theory of Techniques of Neutralisation, as devised by Skyes and Matza (1957), to understand how the participants dilute their contribution to production practice to avoid potential feelings of guilt.

These concepts convey the conceptual framework, as illustrated in Figure 3.1:

**Figure 3.1: Conceptual framework**



Having established the conceptual framework, the next section will introduce the Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) and frame this within the relevant literature of fashion, sustainable concepts and consumer behaviour.

### **3.2: The Typology of Value**

Holbrook's (1999) Typology of Value was focal in shaping the research design of this thesis. Holbrook (1999) and colleagues contend that consumers seek value



in their consumption and it is this concept which frames the theoretical approach of the research undertaken. The underlying premise of the Typology of Consumer Value originates in Kotler's (1991) account of marketing: the transaction depends on exchanging something of value for something of greater value (Holbrook, 1999: 1). Consequently, perceptions of consumer value are central to understanding what marketing intermediaries are employed to communicate the benefits of the transaction. Holbrook (1999: 2) conceptualises that product positioning is harnessed by marketers to entice consumers from specific segments to attain '*an optimal location in a market space*'. However, understanding what characteristics comprise of the optimal location is reliant on understanding the target segment and their underlying notions of value.

Holbrook (1999: xiii) developed the Typology of Consumer Value as a framework to understand '*the philosophical and empirical underpinnings of a concept that plays such a critical role in the formation of our discipline*'. Ritchie and Spencer (1994: 73) describe a typology as a '*systematic classification of types of social phenomenon as they fall within a particular category*' to guide the data inquiry and identify pattern formation. This is considered useful in developing theoretical and empirical advancement. The literature indicted certain segmentation characteristics as likely to renegotiate value from a new perspective, that of mothers who have turned to organic produce to avoid their children ingesting pesticides (Gam et al., 2010; Carey et al., 2008; Hustevdt and Bernard, 2008; Tsakiridou et al., 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Memery et al., 2005; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). Marketers tend to develop strategies to attract a specific substantial market segment, such as '*baby boomers*' or '*working mothers*' (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009: 19). This research will focus on understanding value from the perspective of mothers working in a professional occupation, and a full justification of the sample can be found in Section 4.3.6.

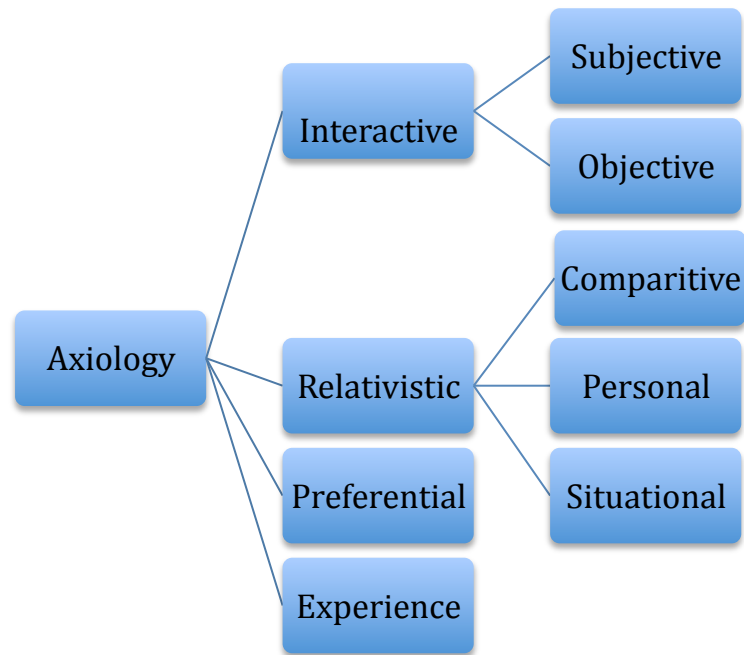
Having established the consumer segment under investigation, the rest of this section will explain the Typology of Consumer Value as described by Holbrook (1999) and colleagues, which will be integrated with the literature depicting the

lifeworld of mothers working in a professional occupation. It is important to establish the relevant sample, as perceptions of what components create value are subjectively applied and evolve dynamically (de Chernatony et al., 2000). The next section introduces the theory of value: axiology, which Holbrook employs to establish the essence of the Typology of Consumer Value. The notion of value described by axiologists includes both the nature and types of value as experienced by consumers. Holbrook (1999) is keen to emphasise that the assessment of value can only be considered through comparing value types. For example, quality is compared against price, or quality is compared against beauty or desire. It is through the act of comparison that consumers evaluate to make a judgement and decide on the most important attribute. This may include a value trade-off (Jägel et al., 2012; Young et al., 2010; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001) or accepting a level of flexibility (Szmigin et al., 2009; Parsons et al., 2009), depending on the specific situation.

### 3.2.1: Axiology

Axiology refers to the theory of value, which Holbrook (1999: 5) describes as an '*interactive relativistic preference experience*', as illustrated in Figure 3.2. Value is the '*evaluation of some object by some subject*' (Holbrook, 1999: 5). This concept is applied empirically to the participants (subject), regarding fashion consumption (object) for themselves and their family. Smith (1999) argues that perceptions of value include both the consumption experience and the experience derived from ownership of the product; for example, fashion related products are considered valuable through the experience of adornment or possession, as well as gaining pleasure from the fashion shopping experience (Workman and Studak, 2006) which is often linked to fulfilling a fantasy (O'Guinn and Faber, 1989).

Figure 3.2: Axiology



(Holbrook, 1999: 5)

Within an *'interactive relativistic preference experience'*, the interaction describes the desire for the product as both objective and subjective. Objectively, value is transferred from the product itself, where value is transferred from ownership of the product, which transmits identity to either conform to social norms or expressing other orientation. Subjectively, the consumer is attracted to the product through the pleasure perceived to be gained from the purchase, through for example, fashion involvement or desire. As consumer value is relativistic, choice is comparative through evaluating criteria (the value types) within decision-making and the interactive process is individualistic. Further, fashion value is also situational, evaluated within context or requirement, for example fashion maybe instigated through a change in the season or an event. Furthermore, the outcome of the consumption process is anticipated to be preferential, where value-as-singular (*'a preferential judgement'*) as opposed to value-as-plural (*'the relevant judgement on which such a summary judgement rests'*), is gauged to provide a summary evaluation (ibid: 8).

Holbrook (1999) also describes two key dimensions of consumer value:

1. Extrinsic
2. Intrinsic

Extrinsic value refers to the utilitarian purpose of consumption; however, axiologists are concerned with the experience of consumption and not the product. Extrinsic value will be evaluated within the exchange, and as the product is purchased through service provision, this is consequently an experience enhanced through symbolically harnessing a visual statement to communicate a desirable image (Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004; Banister and Hogg, 2004; Dittmar et al., 1996) which is reinforced through the retail environment (Memery et al., 2005). Fashion is also intrinsic (subjective), as the purchase is projective, for example indicating a lifestyle which may or may not be a reality (Belk et al., 2000). Therefore the purchase has to satisfy functional, hedonic and symbolic dimensions (Olshavsky and Granbois, 2002). When consuming ethically, Cooper-Martin and Holbrook (1993) suggest the experience is intrinsic, as the product itself may be largely similar to unethical products, or in some cases the product may be inferior, however the knowledge that the product is less detrimental to the environment or production workers, is satisfying.

Previous research has attempted to determine attributes that constitute consumer value and identified different analogies, including the perception of price, quality and perceived benefits (Babin et al., 1994). From a utilitarian perspective, where the product provides a response to problem recognition, the perceived value is the effectiveness of the product as a solution; in contrast, hedonic value would prioritise emotive satisfaction (Babin et al., 1994). This exemplifies the mundanity of certain aspects of consumer behaviour, where products, for example food, are required continuously and are not as pleasurable as fashion shopping, which can be described as fun and fulfilling (Babin et al., 1994), especially when consumers feel an involvement with the product. Although value can be evaluated through self-orientation, the pleasure

gained through ownership, it is other-orientated that is of importance to axiologists. Therefore, the value of fashion is judged upon the reaction and effect upon the micro, intermediate and macro society. This includes notions of conformity, belonging or communication of identity. Finally, consumer value can be active or reactive. For example, active value is evaluated on consumers' contribution to the product, through manipulating and personalisation. However, reactive consumer value relates to how the product makes the consumer feel, a concept similar to that of '*Romantic Ethics*', where ownership of art or poetry transfers creativity to the possessor (Storey, 1999). Therefore the fashion consumer assumes an identity through possessing fashion, or a professional worker transmits a professional outlook through their semblance. Having established the nature of the typology, the next sections will consider the eight interconnected types of consumer value and how this relates to fashion consumption for mothers working in a professional occupation. The framework is illustrated in Table 3.1, and is followed by considering each of the interconnected value types in the following sections.

**Table 3.1: Typology of Consumer Value**

|                  |          | <b>Extrinsic</b>                                    | <b>Intrinsic</b>                                       |
|------------------|----------|---|--|
| Self-orientated  | Active   | Efficiency<br>(Convenience)                         | Play (Fun)   |
|                  | Reactive | Excellence (Quality)                                | Aesthetics (Beauty)                                    |
| Other-orientated | Active   | Status (Success,<br>Impression,<br>Management)      | Ethics (Virtue, Justice,<br>Morality)                  |
|                  | Reactive | Esteem (Reputation,<br>Materialism,<br>Possessions) | Spirituality (Faith,<br>Ecstasy, Sacredness,<br>Magic) |

(Holbrook 1999: 12)

### 3.2.2: Efficiency

As consumer value is considered through reflecting upon the experience, efficiency plays a key role in measurement and is both objective and subjective. Efficiency relates to notions of competency, whereby efforts are maximised to

make the most of the available resources, such as *'time, money and effort'* (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010: 23; Parsons et al., 2009). Current lifestyles are said to induce *'time poverty'* and consumers often adopt strategies to minimise time devoted to menial tasks, relying upon previous experience and knowledge to provide shortcuts (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009: 463). Working mothers have reduced time to both shop and source information, due to the demands on time required for both work duties and familial provisioning (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Felker Kaufman et al., 1999). The various roles undertaken by mothers working in a professional occupation, reflect that *'individuals are not members of one particular segment, sphere or system of society, but participate in many of them'* (Holzer, 2006: 407). These competing roles place demands on finances, time and information and Carey et al. (2008) believe academic research incorporating the complexity of additional pressure is sparse.

Efficiency relates extrinsically to the convenience of the shopping experience, for example the stores' opening times or restrictions of time through lifestyle constraints. Therefore, time to shop and evaluate criteria differs between individuals. Multiple roles affect the time available to actively seek information regarding both sourcing products and obtaining product information. Frequently, consumers rely upon easily accessed information to guide choice (Rotfeld, 2007; Hansen, 2005), relying upon generic information such as price or brand name as a heuristic to simplify the decision-making process (Lepisto et al., 1991). This may include relying upon something once heard or read, without checking for accuracy (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Jones, 1991; Irwin, 1999; Lepisto et al., 1991). Furthermore, heuristics are stimulated by cues identified on the labelling or packaging; for ethical consumers, this may include the Fairtrade logo which offers assurance that producers are paid fairly within the supply chain.

One aspect of efficiency which is growing in popularity is supermarket fashion (Sorenson, 2009; Hines, 2007), attracting consumers through the convenience of food and clothing being available in one store (de Kervenoael et al., 2011;

Ross and Harradine, 2009; Sorenson, 2009). Primarily, this attracts mothers who often find planned activities are disrupted by '*the demands of others*' (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006) leading to stressful situations, which de Kervenoael et al. (2011) suggests is a trade-off enabling multi-tasking. Ross and Harradine (2009) identified that supermarket fashion provided an opportunity for mothers to acquire fashion for themselves and their children conveniently and inexpensively, particularly as supermarkets are leading the current price competition in providing inexpensive school uniforms (Orbach and Macleod, 2008). The low prices are attractive, particularly as children's continued growth determines the need to replace clothing and reduces the inclination to pay more than required (Orbach and Macleod, 2008). Another value sought by consumers is excellence, where consumers are attracted to retailers by the assumed quality of the products available and this will be explored in the next section.

### **3.2.3: Excellence**

Excellence is akin to the concept of quality and is reactively evaluated pre- and post-consumption (Oliver, 1999; Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995). Evaluation traditionally encompasses the criteria of price, quality and convenience (Hansen, 2005; Mohr et al., 2001), seeking the best quality at the best price (Harrison et al., 2005). Therefore, consumers extrinsically assume retail prices are indicative of the quality (Aspers, 2008; Memery et al., 2005; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2001). Previous performance of a product or brand is used to predict product satisfaction; for example, a garment bought previously, which did not wash well will be judged negatively, as will the fit of the garment in relation to body-shape (Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995). Therefore, the product is self-orientated and evaluated reactively rather than actively, as the fit or quality is determined during production.

Family finances impact upon consumption (Kaiser, 2005) and affordability frequently restrains consumers from purchasing (Lepisto et al., 1991). Finances were increasingly pertinent during the 2009 economic downturn where it was

assumed growth within the ethical sector would take secondary position (Seigle, 2009), despite expansion between 1999 and 2007 (Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009). Classic strategies within a recession are trading down and minimising luxuries. Value fashion retailers, for example Primark and TK Maxx, have become more prominent during the recession, particularly with the '*middle-class*' (Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009). In the UK, inexpensive pricing is a key marketing tool, for example, competition between retailers to provide the least expensive school uniforms resulted in Asda selling a complete school uniform with shoes for under £10 (Rosselson, 2008; Smithers, 2008).

Inexpensive fashion may have enabled affordability (Budnarowska, 2009), however it does not offer a legitimate alternative to express the value of sustainability, especially as ethical products are associated with higher price points (Bray et al., 2011; Carrigan et al., 2004; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2001). Those on a reduced income will not prioritise sustainable practice (Yates, 2008), particularly if ethical products are considered an inferior quality (Bray et al., 2011). As consumers enter different life stages affecting income and expenditure, for example buying property or having children, spending money has to be justifiable (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). Therefore, some consumers feel that ethical considerations are a luxury for those who can afford to make better choices (Hiller Connell, 2010; Yates, 2009; Aspers, 2008; Devinney et al., 2007; Lyon, 2006). Hence, Hiller Connell (2010) argues that affordability is as much an ethical issue as the ethics of production.

Although research has found that consumers are prepared to pay a higher price for ethical products (Hustvedt and Bernard, 2008; McGoldrick and Freestone, 2008), the increased price has to be justified and is dependent on the price variation (Bray et al., 2011; Carrigan et al., 2004). Furthermore, some consumers believe ethical credentials are manipulated to charge a higher price (Bray et al., 2011; Peattie, 1999; Gabriel and Lang, 1995), as ethical products are more expensive. Consequently, it is easier and less expensive to purchase mass-produced goods from the high street (Yates, 2008), and previous research has



found that the majority of consumers shop for fashion on the high street (Otieno et al., 2005). Additionally, customers of multi-national retail chains know what to expect from the store and the products, and this element of familiarity and trust ensures minimum risk in the purchase. Quality is also indicative of status and indicates social standing, such as professional status and the family's socio-demographic standing. The value of status enhancement will be explored in the next section.

### **3.2.4: Status**

Status is communicated socially, therefore orientation is actively and extrinsically portrayed, where symbolic qualities are prioritised over functional, for '*social identification and distinction*' (Banister and Hogg, 2004: 851; Phau and Lo, 2004). Dodd et al. (2000) postulate that appearance offers an initial impression upon meeting for the first time and is symbolically interpreted within a socially constructed world; this is dependent on understanding the imagery presented. Shopping for fashion is linked to the communication of status, through expressing lifestyle characteristics (Park and Burns, 2005), self-identity and seeking peer acceptance (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Faber et al., 1987). Self-identity is expressed through behaviour, society and role identity, within the accepted norms of belonging to a social group (Dodd et al., 2000; Wagner, 1999; Solomon, 1999; Sparks and Guthrie, 1998), which Szmigin and Carrigan (2006) believe unites people visually, as evident in sub-cultures or group membership (Damhorst, 2005b; Wagner, 1999; Evans, 1989).

Cherrier (2009: 183) refers to this positional consumption as '*social integration*'. Possessions allow individuals to adopt a persona (Belk, 1988). Therefore consumption is akin to the purchase of an identity (Holbrook, 1999), bridging the gap between what is actual, ideal and social self (Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005; Banister and Hogg, 2004; Goldsmith et al., 1999) and often resulting in a sense of social embarrassment when unable to conform (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008). Expressing status is increasingly linked to the

ownership of ethical products (McGoldrick and Freestone, 2008). Griskevicius et al. (2010) investigated transcending status and displaying wealth through the acquisition of environmentally friendly products. For example, purchasing a hybrid car is considered as more expensive with a lower performance, therefore expressing a willingness to sacrifice comfort for the greater good of the environment. Griskevicius et al. (2010) refer to this as conspicuous conservation, which is pro-social in contrast to pro-self. However, often this is a mutual value purchase encompassing '*personal satisfaction*' along with concern for ethical attributes (Smith, 1999: 154). Cervellon et al. (2009) also identified the elevation of status linked to the purchase of organic produce, as did Zabkar and Hosta (2012), who found pro-social status was more important for women. Similarly, McEachern and McClean (2002) identified participants perceived organic food consumption as '*middle-class*'.

This aspect of exhibiting sustainable orientation visually was also identified by Cherrier (2006), who found that some consumers use '*green*' shopping bags rather than plastic bags, to illustrate their commitment to environmental conservation. However, despite taking a reusable shopping bag, they still continued to take a plastic bag, which was placed inside the '*green*' shopper. Those participants reasoned that plastic bags were useful for other purposes, such as used nappies, sports equipment and refuse. Cherrier (2006) concludes that '*this conception of community of meaning and support seems to indicate that ethical consumer practise is a shared consumption used symbolically to bind autonomous individuals into a small world of meaning and community*' (ibid 519). Consequently, status can be indicative of both self-expression and participation in group identity. As encouragement to participate in sustainability is growing, consumers are evidently seeking to illustrate their commitment to the issues, despite this at times being superficial. Nevertheless, adopting behaviours which are pro-social rather than pro-self was linked to perceptions of altruism and esteem in the literature reviewed (Dickson, 2001). The relationship between consumption and esteem will be explored in the next section.

### 3.2.5: Esteem

Status is connected to esteem, however esteem is reactive and extrinsic through validation within a socially constructed world (Richins, 1999). For example, esteem comes from the respect of others, therefore is dependent on the manipulation of a communicated identity. Esteem also reflects conformity to social norms and seeking acceptance within peer groups (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Faber et al., 1987), albeit this is dependent on understanding symbolic cues (Kaiser, 2005; Damhorst, 2005a). The relevance of esteem for the framework of this thesis depicts both fashion and ethical orientation. Carey et al. (2008) believe that motivation to adopt sustainability could be considered fashionable. The adoption of new behaviours, especially ones which are considered to benefit broader notions of the environment and social welfare, could be viewed as progressive. Research has identified that responsible consumption is adopted within communities of similar views (Schaefer and Crane, 2005), leading to a collective of like-minded people forming shared meaning through consumption and community (Micheletti and Stolle, 2005; Shaw, 2007). Knowing the symbolic cues of belonging to a pro-social group was evident in Cherrier's (2006) study, where participants wanted to be viewed as adopting sustainable behaviours, even though their actual behaviour did not reflect a sustainable ethos.

Belonging to a certain group influences beliefs and builds a sense of unification (Shaw, 2007; Cherrier, 2006; Zavestoski, 2002; Shaw et al., 2000). This was also evident in Cervellon and Wernerfelt's (2012) study of fashion consumers sharing knowledge of how to purchase fashion with a reduced environmental impact. Opting for ethical brands indicates lifestyle choice (Szmigin et al., 2007; Cherrier, 2007) and consumers have expressed that purchasing ethically had contributed to '*feeling good*' (Szmigin et al., 2009: 228; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Smith, 1999). However, whether this is purely an act of selflessness is debatable, as ethical behaviour could be described as altruistic, particularly when involving personal sacrifice (Smith, 1999), a trait which is also other-orientated, reactive and extrinsic. Nevertheless, the fashion consumption

literature suggests that fashion offers intrinsic pleasure. The notion of engaging with fashion related activities for amusement is explored in the next section.

### 3.2.6: Play

In contrast to esteem, play is actively sought for intrinsic pleasure and this can be demonstrated through fashion involvement, reflecting the level of interest and value projected (Naderi, 2011; Bauer et al., 2006; Xu et al., 2004; Tigert et al., 1976). This includes the pleasure gained from shopping for fashion (Workman and Studak, 2006). Further, involvement reflects the satisfaction ownership of the product will bring (O’Cass and Choy, 2008). Involvement stimulates desire for a product, chosen for attributes more potent than ethics, resulting in a passion for the purchase regardless of any other consideration (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005). To understand the influence of desire as a motivating force as central to consumption, Belk et al. (2000: 99) propose the following explanation:

*We burn and are aflame with desire; we are pierced by or riddled with desire; we are sick or ache with desire; we are tortured, tormented and racked by desire; we are possessed, seized, ravished, and overcome by desire; we are mad, crazy, insane, giddy, blinded, or delirious with desire; we are enraptured, enchanted, suffused, and enveloped by desire; our desire is fierce, hot, intense, passionate, incandescent, and irresistible; and we pine, languish, waste away, or die of unfulfilled desire. Try substituting need or want in any of these metaphors and the distinction becomes immediately apparent. Needs are anticipated, controlled, denied, postponed, prioritised, planned for, addressed, satisfied, fulfilled and gratified through logical instrumental processes. Desires, on the other hand, are overpowering; something we give in to; something that takes control of us and totally dominates our thoughts, feelings and actions.*

From this explanation, it is apparent that desire is a powerful emotion, which is not easily controlled, adding to the complexity of decision-making. Desire originates from media and societal influence and is not constrained, but fuelled by imagination (Belk et al., 2003). Belk et al. (2003: 328) describe desire as ‘an experimentally lived phenomenon’ constructed by society and ‘harnessed by marketing to enable consumers an enhanced identity’ (p 329). From this description, it is imperative to explore a phenomenological process of consumer

behaviour, to understand the emotive motivations of fashion consumption within the modern consumer market, as Belk et al. (2003: 345) explain, '*with imagery co-shaped by capitalistic markets and consumerist ideologies, much of our consumer behaviour appears better characterised as the pursuit not only of desired objects, but of desire itself*'. It can be seen that desire influences consumption subjectively as experiences within the context of lifeworlds. Much of this desire is borne out of imagery in fashion magazines and aesthetics play a strong role in the co-creation of imagery, as will be discussed in the next section.

### 3.2.7: Aesthetics

The studies reviewed in Chapter Two overwhelmingly identified that sustainability was perceived as secondary to following fashion trends and personal preferences of style. Consequently, for fashion consumption, aesthetics are an important consideration for evaluation, most likely the most important feature. Consumers interested in fashion have an elevated involvement for following fashion trends (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; O'Cass, 2004), an aspect influenced socially through established symbolic cues (Kaiser, 2005; Evans, 1989). The desire to maintain appearance and express '*social identification and distinction*' (Bannister and Hogg, 2007: 851) is constructed socially (Richins, 1999) and reconstructed throughout a consumer's lifetime, reflecting notions that consumers have '*multiple selves*', for example employee, wife, mother (Evans, 1989: 10). In contrast, consumers interested in sustainability are disposed to prioritise extrinsic consideration for implications external to self (Aspers, 2008). Therefore, it is important to note that sustainable fashion stands alone from ethical provenance.

Ming Law et al. (2004: 368) describe fashion consumers' needs as threefold:

- Psychological attributes: does the garment express an indication of personality
- Physical attributes: considered through wearing the garment, for example does it enhance the body-shape
- External: the purpose of owning the garment, is it required for work, or for a specific occasion such as an event

Ming Law et al. (2004) suggest that selecting fashion is a personal interpretation of presenting oneself visually to others. Unpacking these fashion needs, the psychological attributes prioritised by a fashion consumer include the communication of a desirable image depicting self, status and belonging (Cherrier, 2009; Easey, 2009; Goldsmith and Clark, 2008). Physical attributes reflect that the garment will be chosen to enhance the body-shape, masking features and enhancing preferred physical attributes. Externally, the style of the garment will be selected to suit the occasion.

Hiller Connell (2010: 280) suggests that consumers apply an '*A-B-C model of behaviour*', including internal factors of attitude (A) and behaviour (B) as well as external factors, conditions (C) to individually evaluate choice (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010). Internal (psychological and physical) attributes are motivated by opportunity within the retail environment (Workman and Studak, 2006) and new purchases are borne out of desire; therefore, fashion-orientated consumers dispose of garments because they are no longer desired, not necessarily because they are worn out (Fletcher, 2008; Jones, 2006). Wagner (1999) offers the example of a luxury car: pleasing aesthetically but also a pleasurable experience to drive. This applies to fashion, where a dress can be aesthetically attractive, and the experience is further enhanced through the experience of wearing the dress, as well as the reaction from others. Therefore, fashion consumption needs are personal, deriving from an emotional perspective, as well as cognitive, and influenced by social aspects interpreted by the individual (Diaz-Meneses, 2010).

Interest in fashion and styles adopted are influenced by internal factors such as age, gender, lifestyle, personality and level of education (Diaz-Meneses, 2010; Workman and Studak, 2006; Wagner, 1999). As women age, their expenditure on clothing per item increases and fashion is purchased less frequently. Birtwistle and Tsim (2005) found their sample of women aged over 45 years preferred quality clothing, with an expectation of longevity and a comfortable

fit, while continuing to maintain interest in their appearance and follow fashion trends. Similarly, Ogle and Damhorst (2005) found that women aged over 40 years were more confident of their 'self' and expressed this through other aspects unrelated to appearance. Fit is an important criteria for post-consumption evaluations, whereby consumers who do not conform to standardised body-shape have a reduced involvement in fashion and enjoy shopping for fashion less (Otieno et al., 2005). Law et al. (2012) refer to the fit as conformation to body-shape which ensures comfort and ease of movement.

However, recent research has argued that fashion consumption behaviours are more related to cognitive age than chronological age, that is the '*age one perceives one to be*' (Lin and Xia, 2012: 97). Lin and Xia (2012) found that cognitive age influenced interest in fashion, as well as retailer selection. Younger women (cognitively and chronologically) shop more often, choosing inexpensive fashion which can be bought more frequently (Majima, 2008). Although fashion expresses internal factors, such as personality, self and mood, external factors, such as occasion and activity also influence fashion choice.

Fashion consumption is also influenced by external factors, such as the anticipated daily activities. One such activity to be considered is dressing for the work environment, particularly when the culture of the organisation dictates the organisations norms are reflected through employees' appearance (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). As more women have entered the workplace, fashion has adapted to include work-based fashions which create a professional appearance whilst still following fashion trends (Hymowitz, 2005; Evans, 1989). Work clothes often take priority for consumers, as appearance can create a professional identity, especially as work provides income and could be the result of many years in training and education (Hymowitz, 2005; Damhorst, 2005a; Miller-Spillman, 2005). Hence, work appearance communicates self-definition and can inspire confidence internally and externally (Miller-Spillman, 2005; Damhorst and McLeod, 2005). Previous research identified appropriateness and quality were preferred for workplace attire (Solomon and

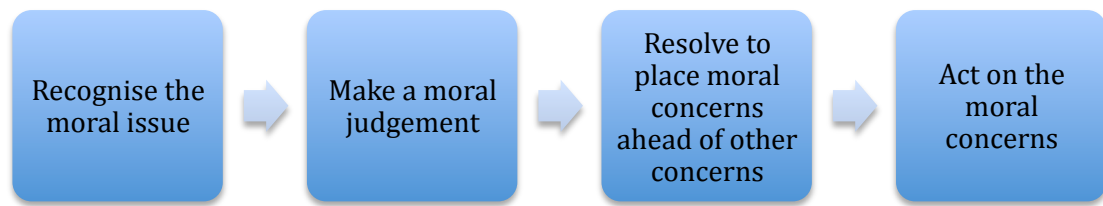
Rabolt, 2009) and dress is related to certain occupations, for example a white coat and a stethoscope indicates someone who works in a medical role and a suit denotes a professional role (Miller-Spillman, 2005; Banister and Hogg, 2004; Dewsnap and Hart, 2004). Furthermore, some employers have expectations of employees' appearance and stipulate a dress code (Stevens, 2005). Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) found that ethically orientated consumers particularly found that sustainable produced work-wear was difficult to source. The next section will further examine the value perceived in ethics.

### **3.2.8: Ethics**

Ethical concern is other-orientated through consideration of extrinsic factors, for example concern for workers and the environment, which are actively evaluated pre-consumption (Follows and Jobber, 1999). As consumers primarily respond to satisfy an individual need or desire, Singer (1979) explores why consumers should consider anyone other than themselves. This develops the question of consumer integrity, as morals are dependent on the level of desire for a product, as well as individuals assuming responsibility for their consumption (Singer, 1979). The conscious decision of whether to consider the ethics of production as part of the decision-making process is one consideration of many (Moisander et al., 2010; Callen-Marchione and Owenby, 2008; Nicholls and Lee, 2006). Prior to considering the application of moral principles, initially awareness of the issues is required. The application of ethics demotes self-interest as secondary, however practice is dependent on subjectivity and the equality of all humans (Singer, 1979). Rest (1986) developed the following model (Figure 3.3) depicting the steps required for consumers to comprehend their responsibilities as moral agents.



Figure 3.3: Application of moral concern



(Rest 1986, cited in Jones 1991: 368)

The figure depicts that the application of morals depends upon cognitive development; the recognition and understanding of the issues, coupled with the desire to make a positive contribution (Davies and Crane, 2003; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Trevino, 1986). Chapter Two identified that consumers' application of sustainable concerns to fashion consumption was restricted both by the availability of information alerting consumers to the pertinent issues (particularly the impact on the environment) and by the retailer's commitment to sustainability. Newholm and Shaw (2007: 258) believe that consumers do not have sufficient information to make objective decisions about products, as *'fully informed is unattainable'*. Especially as consumers require knowledge of an organisation's business practices to decide whether it is ethical (Webb et al., 2007). Previous research has identified barriers that deter sustainable consumption (Consumers International, 2007), including lack of awareness and accurate information (Bray et al., 2011; McDonald et al., 2009; Yates, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Gabriel and Lang, 1995), scepticism over retailers claims, as well as lacking control to make positive changes (Schaefer and Crane, 2005). The dearth of information available does not alert consumers' consciousness to issues which may be of concern in other contexts, as is evident in food consumption or recycling behaviours.

It is difficult to hold the consumer entirely responsible when there is a lack of information and knowledge about the issues (Aspers, 2008; Schaefer and Crane, 2005). Currently, consumers rely upon the media and NGOs to disseminate information (Yates, 2009; Consumers International, 2007; Gulbrandsen, 2006),

however it could be considered that consumers have a right to information regarding the production of the products they consume (McDonagh, 2002). Currently the consumer has to do the research and this is time-consuming, complex and reliant on available resources (Rose et al., 2008). It is questionable as to whether this is the responsibility of individuals independently researching each retailer or whether it ought to be a collective response (Friedman, 2010). Singer (1979) argues that to act ethically is to act rationally; however, it is difficult for consumers to think collectively in favour of society. This is supported by previous research where consumers reported helplessness and uncertainty due to the scale of the issues, uncertainty over which aspects to prioritise and lack of knowledge of retailers engagement (Consumers International, 2007). Quottrone and Tversky (2000: 469) refer to this as the '*certainty effect*', implying that motivation increases when assurance of the outcome is certain. Similarly, an inability to identify and influence organisational practice has been identified as hampering engagement with ethical concerns (Devinney et al., 2007; Joergens, 2006; Schröder and McEachern, 2004).

Insufficient labelling is also considered as prohibiting sustainable consumption (Aspers, 2008; Shaw, 2007; Valor, 2007; Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Iwanow et al., 2005; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Cohen, 2001). Labelling communicates attributes to aid the decision-making process (Moisander et al., 2010; Aspers, 2008; Oates et al., 2008), including guiding ethical consumption (do Paço and Raposo, 2010; Hustvedt et al., 2008). Newholm and Shaw (2007) found that in terms of ethical information '*less was more*', as supported by McDonald et al. (2009) and Carrigan et al. (2004) who found that an encouragement to apply ethics to consumption was simple yet effective labelling. Further, labelling would require transparency and independence to capture consumer confidence (Moisander et al., 2010; DEFRA, 2008; Schröder and McEachern, 2004). However, Consumers International (2007) are of the opinion that certification or labelling is not the sole solution, what consumers require is an assurance

that retailers and policy makers are working toward solutions to enable consumers to achieve behavioural change.

Further, some consumers do not care about the ethics of production (Devinney et al., 2007), prioritising other attributes, for example price (Barrientos and Smith, 2006; Ehrich and Irwin, 2005). Kilbourne et al. (1997) argue that choice is a civil liberty that consumers ought to be able to choose both ethical and non-ethical products. Cohen (2001: 585) expresses this by arguing consumers have the right to choose a '*highly polluting*' car even though this '*violates other's*' right to a clean environment. However, despite an increasing number of consumers expressing ethical concern for current production and consumption practice, this does not translate to ethical consumption. This disparity has been termed the attitude-behaviour gap and was first identified by Boulstridge and Carrigan, (2000) and noted in other research (Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009; Szmigin et al., 2009; Pepper et al., 2009; Carey et al., 2008; Devinney et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2007; Newholm and Shaw, 2007; Shaw et al., 2006; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; Iwanow et al., 2005; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Other researchers refer to this gap as: paradoxical behaviours (Jägel et al., 2012); an ethical purchasing gap (Bray et al., 2011; Nichols and Lee, 2006); and ambivalence (Valor, 2007).

Research has also sought to identify why the attitude-behaviour gap exists, noting the disparity between the number of consumers who profess to be motivated by moral value and the actual sales of sustainably-produced products (Carrington et al., 2010). Although well-documented, the prevalence of the attitude-behaviour gap remains poorly understood. Therefore, it has been identified that understanding why such a gap exists is important socially, theoretically and specifically for the fashion industry itself (Carrington et al., 2010). Reasons offered for the attitude behaviour gap include the exaggeration of intentions to consume sustainably (Carrington et al., 2010), which is consistent with research bias, whereby respondents respond with answers which they think the researcher wants to hear (Boulstridge and Carrigan, 2000),

or they feel obliged to express opinions which adhere to social desirability to avoid appearing selfish and uncaring (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001).

### **3.2.9: Spirituality**

Spirituality is other-orientated and reactive, the embodiment of the experience as mystical for intrinsic value. Fashion involvement inspires value dimensions of pleasure and interest (Naderi, 2011; Yurchisin and Johnson, 2004; Bauer et al., 2006; O'Cass, 2004; Kapferer and Laurent, 1986), adding to the '*emotional experience*' of consumption (Park et al., 2006: 440). Brown (1999: 167) compares consumption to a spiritual experience, where '*devotional*' fashion-orientated consumers enjoy '*dulgence, extravagance, luxury, usury, hedonism, materialism, greed, covetousness, fashion consciousness and consumption*'. O'Guinn and Faber (1989: 156) described how emotions are engaged through the shopping experience, arousal and excitement of the senses; '*sight, sound and tactile sensations*' and this hedonistic variable enhances the shopping experience (Park et al., 2006; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Kapferer and Laurent, 1986). This results in an assumption that consumption can bring pleasure and increase quality of life (Kilbourne et al., 1997), which Prothero and Fitchett (2000) believe is a result of effective marketing. Coupled with the emotive incantation of the influence of desire, it can be seen that fashion is akin to spirituality to satisfy intrinsic persona, thus reducing sustainability in the consumers consciousness.

### **3.2.10: Summary of the Typology of Consumer Value**

The Typology of Consumer Value has offered a framework to understand the types of value that consumers consider during evaluation of a new product. This section has described how it is important to note that evaluation does not just include the attributes of a product, but also the experience of accessing products. The shopping experience denotes that consumption is situational and context dependent, some consumption pertains to a more pleasurable experience than others, partly due to the type and frequency of the shopping, but also dependent upon the specifics of the experience. For example shopping

with children adds to the stress of the experience, whereas shopping in a retailer who provides an augmented customer service has been identified as enjoyable.

Although the Typology of Consumer Value has depicted that consumers seek all of the values in their consumption, variably some values will be considered more important, again depending on the situation and the purpose of the consumption. This was evident in Chapter Two, where fashion and work purposes eclipsed sustainability. Further, excellence was perceived as being dependent on the nature of consumption, and age was identified to influence the preference of quality, where younger consumers preferred increased consumption over longevity. Overall, the typology has deepened understanding for the types of value preferred by consumers, in particular the cohort under investigation in this thesis. This will enable the discussion chapter to explore the interplay of value types. However, the typology does not offer much of an understanding as to on how opinions on sustainability are formed. This will be considered in the next section.

### **3.3: Decision-making under uncertainty: the role of heuristics**

As established within Chapter One, this thesis is an exploratory study of understanding a specific cohort and their experiences of applying sustainability to fashion consumption. As this is an area previously under-researched, the analytic approach was interpretative and the themes described in Chapters Five, Six and Seven (Findings and Discussion) derived directly from the data. One theme which was identified in the participants narratives was the inclusion of generic information (price and retailers' reputation) which appeared to offer the participants assurance that the garment did not derive from exploitative practice.

Chapter Two and Section 3.1 have established the complexity of applying moral value to fashion consumption, highlighting the lack of information to guide decision-making when seeking to apply sustainability. It could be argued that

consumer preference to support workers in developing countries has shaped market preference to increase the availability of sustainably-produced food, yet consumer concern for environmental degradation and garment-workers has yet to be acknowledged by fashion retailers. As consumers determine responsibility for their behaviours commensurate to moral value (Wells et al., 2011) through considering the evidence to determine social consequences and incorporate sustainability, an understanding of the potential detrimental implications that stem from production is required (Hansen, 2005; Jones, 1991). As stated in Section 3.3.2. without sufficient information to evaluate decision-making, consumers rely upon heuristics as a guiding principle to simplify the decision-making process (Nisbett et al., 1982a).

The development of theories about decision-making under uncertainty originated through experimental studies to understand how outcomes were determined. Studies focused upon decisions based on chance, such as lotteries and betting, where loss was perceived greater than potential gain: the participants were reluctant to gamble what they already owned (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000). Subsequent researchers have used these theories to understand other types of consumer behaviour, such as inadequate saving for retirement and health-related behaviours (Thorgeirsson and Kawachi, 2013). When the outcome of behaviour is uncertain, the experiments found participants utilised heuristics, described by Nisbett et al. (1982a) as a guiding principle to simplify the decision-making process. This theory suggests that heuristic rules are used as a subjective predictor of probability. Heuristic rules can be described as a '*rule of thumb*' (Bar-Hillel, 1982) or an inference which guides behaviour (Ross and Anderson, 1982). The heuristic propensities of relevance to this thesis are: representativeness; availability; risk aversion; and, adjustment from an anchor (Tversky and Slovic, 1982). Each will now be explored in the following sections.

### **3.3.1: Representativeness**

Representativeness will be applied to judge the subjective probability of an outcome through considering similar outcomes which may transfer from one

context to another (Tversky and Slovic, 1982). This manifests itself through considering the likelihood that essential properties represent the salient features described to facilitate predictive consistency within decision-making (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982a; Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a). This implies that stereotypical information provides consistent representational cues to transfer similar outcomes from one context to another (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982b). With regard to sustainability, representativeness includes applying well-known concepts (Ross and Anderson, 1982) already embedded within consumers consciousness, such as organic or Fairtrade status (Fairtrade Foundation, 2009; Howard and Allen, 2006), as well as country of origin (Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Dickson, 2000). Inherent understanding of the concept of Fairtrade has resulted in embedding the principles into consumers consciousness (Carrigan et al., 2004). Therefore, consumers may believe that the philosophy of Fairtrade status can transfer within other consumption contexts.

Representativeness also includes harnessing what is known socially: communicated through word of mouth, previous experience, and marketing communication. Consumers form perceptions based on retailers' reputation, which will increase or decrease expectations of the products on offer. For example, some retailers have an enhanced reputation for quality, value for money or customer orientation. This was identified in the research by Chan and Wong (2012) and Shaw et al. (2006a) who found that consumers had unsubstantiated confidence in some high street retailers in relation to sustainable practice. Consumers rely upon the information communicated at point of purchase and interpret the cues communicated as meaningful. Trusting retailers marketing intermediaries may include a transferral of assuming superior credence. Notions of trust represent prototypicality (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982b), offering assurance to reduce perceptions of risky consumption which would manifest in a loss through poor quality, reduced longevity or a similar disadvantage that would require further investment.

### 3.3.2: Availability

Availability relates to the ease with which salient issues can be recalled and the prominence of the issues within the consumers' consciousness. This includes familiarity of the concepts described and the medium of communication, whereby information easily recalled is foremost (Tversky and Slovic, 1982). With regard to sustainability, this will involve recalling instances or scenarios indicating the likelihood of prominent issues, such as production practice, environmental concerns and allegations of worker exploitation. As consequential cause and effect outcomes are assessed retrospectively (Einhorn, 1982), comparisons are drawn from past experiences and salience is determined by distinctive stimuli, influencing and endorsing choice (Taylor, 1982).

Availability can be viewed as ambiguous, as information is selectively recalled and individually interpreted (Ross and Anderson, 1982). Disparity occurs when the social consequences cannot be accurately assessed and the motivation to assume responsibility derives from understanding the impact of the consequences (Ross and Sicoly, 1982) and accurate information (Slovic, Fischhoff and Lichstein, 1982). Despite NGOs highlighting workers' conditions and low salaries, which have been verified by academic case studies such as Yu (2008), to both inform and motivate consumers to pressurise producers to make positive changes (Gulbrandsen, 2006), Devinney et al. (2007) and Iwanow et al. (2005) found participants believed that workers in developing countries could not expect similar salaries and conditions as workers in developed countries.

Information recalled from negative media allegations of worker exploitation may lead to a biased interpretation of atypical information (Taylor, 1982; Nisbett et al., 1982a), whereby ambiguity is further exacerbated when allegations of exploitation are conflicted by retailers purportedly rectifying workers' conditions or attempting to apply a cultural context as justification for workers' conditions (Jasiewicz, 2009). Consequently, cultural ambiguity is subject to individual interpretation and how the information is disseminated.



Nisbett et al. (1982b) consider that familiarity is increased when recalling personal or peer experiences, this information is considered more realistic within everyday life; in contrast, reading about experimental research has a reduced impact. For example, visual or first-hand experiences increases the impact and significance of the issues of concern and this can influence the motivation to make behavioural change or result in rejection (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982c).

As ambiguity is exacerbated by an in-vivo experience, a personal connection will have a greater impact on the ability to recall information (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a; Nisbett et al., 1982b) which are reflected within a social consensus where behaviours are perceived as harmless or acceptable (Taylor, 1982). A '*social consensus*' refers to societal norms and rules to which consumers are conditioned to adhere to (Foxall, 2002). Therefore, the richness of the information presented influences the motivation to assume responsibility. This may explain why consumers have an increased motivation to avoid animal exploitation under certain conditions, led by the richness of visual media by animal rights organisations (Adams, 2002; Emmelhainz and Adams, 1999). This diverts attention away from the general structure, that is exploitation and forced conditions, to a subjective application which is context dependant. Consequently, concern does not transfer to fashion consumption and consumers are less informed of the moral issues. Social consensus is linked to condemnation of the condemner which will be discussed in Section 3.3.3.

### **3.3.3: Risk Aversion**

One of the functions of decision-making is to minimise risk through anticipating satisfaction of the product post-consumption, whereby satisfaction is perceived as a gain and dissatisfaction considered a loss (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000). Although decisions are made without absolute certainty, the potential outcome is evaluated in an attempt to determine a surer outcome which Tversky and Fox (2000) term risk aversion. Risk aversion is more important when attempting to protect a belief, such as moral sentiment, or protect finances. Therefore, the

pricing strategy can endorse consumption or increase reluctance to pay more than what the product is considered worth (Thaler, 2000). This is also reflected in paying an increased price and valuing the product more, as identified in Chapter Two, where paying more for fashion increased retention and inexpensive fashion was perceived as disposable. Risk aversion is also evaluated through past experience, where clothing from a retailer was found to have an inferior quality and the retailer is rejected for further consumption (Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995).

#### **3.3.4: Adjustment from an anchor**

Finally, adjustment from an anchor assimilates a benchmark for comparison, by setting a base rate to judge an outcome to determine value properties (Tversky and Slovic, 1982). This translates to perceptions of value which are used as a mediation for judgement, including price and related attributes (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982b; Lichstein et al., 1982). For example, a higher retail price is considered as reflecting a superior quality (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2001). Benchmarks are particularly pertinent when assessing new products. Therefore, when evaluating sustainable products, familiar products will be used as a predictor of value. Although sustainable properties may be deemed as displaying additional value or improving perceptions of quality, the increased price will be evaluated within the trade-off.

#### **3.3.5: Summary of decision-making under uncertainty**

This section has established how consumers make decisions under uncertainty, the decision to include this literature being taken after the initial analysis of the data. Further, much of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two identified the lack of guidance to inform the interested consumer that their moral sentiment was compromised and respondents sought cues like the country of origin (Dickson, 2001) or the retailers reputation to take into account within decision-making (Shaw et al., 2006). It is important to note that DelVicchio (2001) found that when consumers obtain the information relevant to guide their consumption, the use of heuristics decreases, therefore heuristics are used as a substitute for

information. Section 3.1.8.1 also considered that lack of information prohibited sustainable consumption and considered the attitude-behaviour gap, where consumers' ethical motivation did not align with actual behaviours. This leads to establishing how consumers cope with accepting that their consumption behaviours may not align with their moral sentiment and previous research has harnessed the Techniques of Neutralisation to explain consumption disparities.

### **3.4: Techniques of Neutralisation**

Section 3.2 explored the criteria harnessed by consumers to guide decision-making when there was insufficient information available to ascertain whether their consumption aligned with their moral sentiment. This section seeks to explore how consumers apply coping mechanisms when they suspect their consumption behaviour does not align with their moral sentiment. Festinger (1957) coined the term cognitive dissonance to explain inconsistencies in beliefs and behaviours. This theory suggests that consumers will seek to create an equilibrium of their beliefs through creating a new belief system through dissonance reduction (Chatzidakis et al., 2007). It is anticipated that the participants will experience cognitive dissonance, as much of ethical consumption research identified an inability to apply sustainability to fashion consumption and allegations of garment-worker exploitation are increasing.

Skyles and Matza (1957) developed the framework 'Techniques of Neutralisation' to understand how delinquents legitimise their behaviour through five spheres of neutralisation. Subsequently, researchers have harnessed the spheres to explain unconscionable behaviour, such as crime motivation (Byers et al., 1999), controversial behaviour, for example participation in child pageants (Heltsley and Calhoun, 2003), consumer misbehaviour (Harris and Daunt, 2011; Mitchell and Chan, 2002) and ethical intentions which do not result in behavioural change (Chatzidakis et al., 2007; Chatzidakis et al., 2004). It is this latter strand of research that is of relevance to the thesis. It is not proposed that consumers are demonstrating deviance by

purchasing fashion derived from exploitation, nor that consumers are obliged to apply a moral component within evaluating product attributes; the thesis seeks to explore the consumer decision-making process to determine the components which comprise a misalignment of moral value within the context of fashion consumption, specifically relating to garment-workers involved within fashion production. The spheres are described in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2: Technique of Neutralisation**

| <b>Spheres</b>                    | <b>Description</b>  |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| The denial of responsibility      | An inability to align moral obligation is absolved as the responsibility to the retailer, particularly as the hardship is unintentional                       |
| The denial of injury              | Questioning whether someone has been hurt in the act. This could relate to the distance between consumption and production                                    |
| The denial of the victim          | Used when the circumstances are vague, or the victim was deserving of retribution, for example when delinquents damage property.                              |
| The condemnation of the condemner | Blame is apportioned to those who criticise, in exemplifying inconsistencies or hypocritical behaviour  |
| The appeal to higher loyalties    | The consumer will defend their actions through justifying their behaviour, for example through 'I did it for my family', implying the purchase is situational |

The spheres offer an opportunity to explain divergence from cultural norms and avoid feelings of guilt (Skyles and Matza, 1957). However, through utilising the techniques, consumers are illustrating that their moral sentiment has been compromised. This links back to Rest's (1986, cited in Jones 1991: 368) model of the steps required for moral development. Jones (1991) developed this model by suggesting the concept of moral intensity, including: the magnitude of the consequences, social consensus, probability of effect, temporal immediacy, proximity and concentration of effect. It should be recognised that these tenets of moral application are important determinants of applying moral concern to consumption, as is neutralisation (Chatzidakis et al., 2007), and therefore the two coincide within the following discussions.

Callen-Marchione and Owenby (2008) do not explore fashion consumption from the perspective of applying sustainable concern; they do explore how attitudes are based on values, which manifest within behaviours, and how this is influenced socially. The authors focus upon the ethics of consumer misbehaviour: not alerting the sales assistant that too much change was received during the consumption transaction; not paying for accidental damage when trying on fashion in the store; and buying fashion with the intention to return the clothing after it has been worn. The findings offer an indication of how consumers rationalise unethical behaviour, since much the rationalisation that was constructed was related to the particular circumstances. This implies that consumers construct scenarios to negotiate the '*wrongness*' of their behaviour which leads to the question of how consumers negotiate their responsibility to address sustainability and what constitutes '*wrong*' behaviour? It is within this ethos of considering the best outcome that is important in neutralisation.

Neutralisation also offers the perspective of flexibility to absolve a deviation from norms and Szmigin et al. (2009) and Parsons et al. (2009) utilised this term to allow for balancing ethical values alongside the practicalities of daily life. Similarly, Valor (2007) refers to ambivalence when ethical beliefs are inconsistent with consumption. Flexibility was evident in research by Szmigin et al. (2009) where a participant purchased Nike, but not Gap clothing, therefore the application of the primary principle of sweatshop avoidance are unbalanced with both names linked to unsatisfactory working principles. Despite consumers' claims that they would not purchase items known to have been produced unethically, if the product or brand is one that the consumer relies upon, ethics would become a secondary consideration (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). The same could be said if the consumer desired a product due to another attribute, such as fashion orientation, as was established through reviewing the literature of ethical fashion consumers in Chapter Two.

Further, previous research has found consumers apply '*logic and meaning*' (Devinney et al., 2007) to resolve '*value conflicts*' (Schröder and McEachern, 2004: 170), through '*trade-offs*' (Jägel et al., 2012; Webb et al., 2007: 94). For example, participants in the research by Joy et al. (2012) and Jägel et al. (2012) suggested that they apply sustainability to other behaviours, such as food consumption, yet felt unable to transfer this to fashion consumption due to a lack of knowledge of the environmental consequences and the lack of fashionable alternatives. Nevertheless, previous research has also acknowledged that consumer concern for workers does not always impact upon purchase decisions (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Klein, 2000; Shaw and Clarke, 1999).

Within the next sections, examples from previous consumer research will further explore this concept of applying neutralisation to justify the attitude-behaviour gap. Previous literature was reviewed and inductively applied within the neutralisation framework (Chatzidakis et al., 2007), utilising four spheres through merging the denial of injury with the denial of the victim (because there is uncertainty as to whether garment-workers are exploited and experience injury or victimisation). The application of denial of the victim may be appropriate to explain lack of consumer concern for the environmental impact (based on the environmental being harmed by fashion production), however previous academic research has generated little knowledge regarding this aspect of neutralisation.

#### **3.4.1: The denial of responsibility**

Zavestoski (2006) suggests that the responsibility for the existence of sweatshops belongs to the consumer, endorsing exploitation through continuation to purchase from retailers alleged of exploitation. However, some consumers blame the organisation that has behaved unethically in production and continuing to purchase these products, believing their responsibility is absolved (Devinney et al., 2007). Further, it could be accepted that the harm has already occurred; for example, Schröder and McEachern (2004) identified

consumers believe that if meat is already in the shops, whether it is purchased or not is insignificant, as the animal has already suffered. Similarly, Joergens (2006) identified that all fashion derives from developing countries, leaving the consumer few alternative options. Nevertheless, within the literature, animal inhumanity appears to gather more antipathy than human exploitation (Joergens, 2006; Howard and Allen, 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001), although little is known about why this is.

Nevertheless, some consumers could not have on their conscience the consumption of products derived from worker exploitation (McDonagh, 2002) and accept responsibility for decision-making through boycotting fashion retailers accused of using exploitative practice (Shaw et al., 2007; Iwanow et al., 2005). This repercussion was incurred by Primark, Gap and Wal-Mart, among others, when investigations by NGOs alleged unethical practice (AFW, 2009; Hearson, 2008, 2007; WoW, 2008) and Figure 1.5 in Chapter One provided evidence of the increase of consumers boycotting fashion retailers. Boycotting is described as a '*a moral act*', making a decision to refuse to engage in a business or social transaction to influence business practice (Smith, 1999: 153) and instigate social change through positive consumption or boycotting (Shaw, 2007; Holzer, 2006; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Historically, negative media coverage of unethical practice has pressurised brands (Micheletti and Stolle, 2005; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Davies and Crane, 2003), as well as informed consumers (Gulbrandsen, 2006). The influence of NGOs has greater significance in modern society, enhanced through the internet and media campaigns. For example, Labour Behind the Label encouraged consumers to boycott Gap due to unsatisfactory conditions within factories used by Gap, claiming that '*The Gap uses sweatshop labor, if you buy Gap you do too*' (Micheletti and Stolle, 2005: 470), thus transferring responsibility to the consumer.

An example of consumer power influencing mainstream Multi-National Organisations (NGO) can be seen in Starbucks, where campaigns and persuasion led in the inclusion of Fairtrade coffee (Shaw, 2007; Low and Davenport, 2006)

and in 2008, Starbucks became the largest purchaser of Fairtrade certified coffee (Smith et al., 2010; Fairtrade Foundation, 2009). Within the fashion industry, NGO campaigns have helped improve workers' conditions within Gap's supply chain<sup>7</sup> (Hearson, 2006). Negative word of mouth has a greater impact on consumers than positive reports, by damaging consumer confidence and the credibility of the organisation (Smith and Vogt, 1995). Therefore, NGOs are important in borrowing consumer purchasing power with the aim of pressurising producers to make positive changes (Gulbrandsen, 2006). This enables consumers' greater influence through supporting organisations with similar morals (Shaw and Moraes, 2009; Szmigin et al., 2007). It is this level of campaigning that has moved Fairtrade from being '*alternative*' to the high street, improving accessibility and raising the profile of workers' conditions (Low and Davenport, 2006; Shaw and Newholm, 2002).

Bannister and Hogg (2007) refer to boycotting as negative symbolic consumption, where rejecting emblematic characteristics disassociates consumers from connotations unsympathetic to their moral sentiments. Previous academic research has identified much support for boycotts (Shaw et al., 2006; Hertz, 2001); however, Bray et al. (2011) found that avoiding retailers or products considered unethical did not result in participants motivation to seek ethical retailers. Moreover, boycotting also depends upon whether the consumer concludes that sweatshop labour is morally wrong. Jones (1991)

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<sup>7</sup> The Gap has been linked through the media to sweatshops and child labour and this caused a detrimental effect on sales (Black, 2008). Therefore, Gap have introduced transparency after having admitted to poor conditions (Fletcher, 2008; Iwanow et al., 2005), including the development of a Code of Conduct addressing workers conditions, hours worked, child labour discrimination and the working environment (Harrison, 2009). Further, Gap has membership to Social Accountability International 8000 (Strategic Directions, 2006). Fletcher (2008) believes SA8000 to be the most stringent code of conduct. Furthermore, workers are allowed to join associations, such as unions to bargain for improved conditions (Adams, 2002) and Gap have collaborated on a joint initiative with the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation where all Gap compliance staff have freedom of association to join trade unions (ETAG, 2006). The Gap also ensures that internal monitoring is unlimited, unrestricted and without notice (Adams, 2002) and allows NGOs to monitor one of their suppliers (Kolk and van Tulder, 2002a). The Gap has to date terminated contracts with factories said to be failing to meet the principles and standards imposed by Gap (Iwanow et al., 2005; Kolk and van Tulder, 2002a) and has been granted membership to the ETI, so far the only US based organisation involved (Iwanow et al., 2005).



describes this as associational responsibility, where the consumer is held responsible for the actions of retailers through consumption.

### 3.4.2: The denial of victim/injury

Despite growing consumer concern over exploitative working conditions and child labour (Aspers, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2006), there is little acknowledgement of the victims by UK fashion retailers. The salaries for workers in developing countries and the conditions in which they work are sometimes unimaginable for consumers in developed countries. When considering that a fifth of the global population lives in '*absolute poverty: hunger, malnutrition, widespread disease, high infant mortality, squalid living conditions, fear and insecurity*' (Dower, 1991: 273), mainly in developing countries, there is an assumption that developed countries would be actively engaged in improving the situation (Singer, 1979), particularly, as the value of life is not dictated by nationality. The physical and cultural distance between production and consumption has discouraged empathy for workers (Lyons, 2006) and it could be argued that consumers in developed countries cannot comprehend such living conditions and are therefore unable to understand the consequences of consumption (Jones, 1991). Without verification of the actual impact, consumers will appease any potential guilt by diluting the impact.

Steenhaut and Van Kenhove (2006) suggest that the anticipation of guilt can increase consumers' intentions to align their consumption with their moral sentiment. However, the authors suggest that ethical beliefs influence behaviours, but they do not explore decision-making under ambiguity, therefore call for further research to explore neutralisation techniques to reduce feelings of guilt. As the consequences of purchasing fashion produced without consideration for the workers or the environment does not affect those who actually make the purchases, information is required to facilitate decision-making (Allwood et al., 2006). However, consumers may be unprepared to change habits to accommodate environmental concerns and engage with practices ordinary consumers are physically removed from (Lyon, 2006; Sayer,

2000), especially when consumers remain uninformed of production processes (Oneko, 2011; Auger et al., 2003), have little knowledge of who the manufacturer was (Evans, 1989) and assumed victims are unidentifiable (Singer, 1979). Further, previous research has identified that consumers are uncertain how to avoid exploitation within production (Devinney et al., 2007; Valor, 2007; Shaw and Newholm, 2002), nor fully understand the consequences of their consumption.

Jones (1991: 375) describes a '*probability of effect*' where uncertainty exists over the actual conditions of the workers. As described within Section 3.2.8, certainty links with urgency (Jones, 1991) and as the biggest impact from the fashion industry on both the workers and the environment occurs overseas, consumers in Europe and North America will neither be alerted to the issues, nor suffer from the impact, hence establishing the objective distance between production and consumption (Singer, 1979). Therefore, the reliability of information on the actual conditions of the garment-workers is uncertain and this enables consumers to construct scenarios to neutralise allegations of garment-worker exploitation. One such tactic is applying a '*wilful ignorance*' (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005: 275), where consumers avoid the issue to reduce the stress of decision-making, suggesting the scale of responsibility transferred to the consumer can be overwhelming. Consequently, some consumers avoid information to protect themselves emotionally, however if ethical information were available consumers would consider it along with other relevant attributes (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005).

Another identified technique utilised by consumers to appease guilt is through indeterminate assessment; for example, Zwolinski (2006) argues that the workers are not forced to work. Similarly, previous research found that participants considered that if workers willingly work under unsatisfactory conditions, where it could be argued that a small wage is better than no wage, then who has the right to criticise? (Devinney et al., 2007; Adams, 2002; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Complexity is compounded by actions which may

lead to unethical practice, for example worker exploitation being socially acceptable or even expected in developed countries (Jones, 1999).

Further, some consumers believe that developed and the developing countries cannot be compared as equal and outsourcing can improve the economies of developing countries, while exploitation is natural within capitalist societies (Devinney et al., 2007; Adams, 2002; Sayer, 2000). For example, Iwanow et al. (2005) identified that consumers did not feel Western regulations and standards should be imposed upon developing countries (Joergens, 2006; Carrigan et al., 2004), where children are required both culturally and economically to help provide for the family in contrast to the Western ideal where children's lives involve play and school (Bachman, 2000). The inclusion of child labour within allegations of exploitation are often more emotive than concern for adult workers (Gabriel and Lang 1995). Some consumers apply a hierarchy of concern: for example research by Auger et al. (2003) found that consumers were concerned about child labour, however considered inadequate wages for adults of moderate concern. Previous research identified that knowledge of child labour used in production would result in rejection of the retailers implicated (Auger et al., 2003; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001) and such practice is said to result in negative attitudes (Mohr et al., 2001).

Cultural disparities are often used by MNOs who dissimulate responsibility by quoting different laws in developing countries and our laws and expectations cannot be forced on developing economies (Emmelhainz and Adams, 1999) nor can cultural values (Wong and Taylor, 2000). Singer (2004: 139) refers to this as '*cultural imperialism*', imposing cultural values upon another culture. However, Singer (2004: 141, 152) also introduces the concept of reciprocity, where the implication is to '*treat*' others as you wish to be '*treated*' because '*all human life is of equal worth*' or moral imperialism, where morality is expressed to defend human rights. As the application of moral obligation cannot be applied without information regarding the production, would consumers have greater

understanding and empathy when faced with visual evidence of children in sweatshops (Lyon, 2006)?

### 3.4.3: Condemnation of the condemners

The condemnation of the condemner refocuses attention to question the agenda of those who are critical, through exemplifying the hypocrisy of the criticism or claim that everyone is doing it, thus their behaviour aligns with social norms. Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2011) identified their participants alleviated feelings of guilt for excessive consumption by blaming marketing as influencing increased consumption, which the authors attribute as a displaced denial of responsibility. However, much of this blame is attributed to prevailing marketing systems and the symbolic need to possess goods, therefore it appears more akin to adhering to the social consensus.

de Kervenoael et al. (2011: 466) postulate that '*consumers play a central role in creating, diffusing and legitimising practices of purchasing products such as apparel*'. This is reflected in the popularity of value fashion retailers and supermarket fashion, where the shared conventions of seeking increased fashion consumption is facilitated by low pricing (Joy et al., 2012; Joergens, 2006). It was established in Section 3.1.2 that supermarket fashion was increasingly the preferred option for mothers to purchase fashion for themselves and their children to maximise efficiency through shopping for food and fashion simultaneously. de Kervenoael et al. (2011) believe that supermarket fashion is indistinguishable from high street fashion, in style and quality, with smaller price points, pointing out that often well-known fashion designers contribute with collections. Correspondingly, the success of value fashion retailers, such as Primark (Hines, 2007; Sorenson, 2009) demonstrates consumers' preference for inexpensive fashion.

Although consumers can signal a preference for lower pricing through purchasing habits, they may not understand the implications of their consumption (Kilbourne et al., 1997). For example, consumers may choose to

shop at value fashion retailers, but do they understand that in order for the prices to fall, so will the working conditions of garment-workers in developing countries? Singer (1979) argues that to act ethically is to act rationally; however, it is difficult for consumers to think collectively in favour of a larger (worldwide) society. This is supported by Parsons et al. (2009), where participants noted that their personal behaviour of boycotting may not make much difference in comparison to the power of multi-national organisations. There is an assumption that consumers have no control over organisational practice, therefore resist engaging with applying moral sentiment due to feelings of helplessness (Devinney et al., 2007; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001).

Helplessness was also reported by Levitt (2009a), particularly as recognition of socially accepted norms such as the prevalence of inexpensive fashion, make an individual's actions appear insignificant (Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis, 2011). Therefore, consumers look for endorsement from other stakeholders, for example government, retailers and other consumers (Mayo and Fielder, 2006). A lack of acknowledgement for sustainability could be perceived as confirmation that their own behaviours conform to social norms, thus forming a discourse around a social consensus (Jones, 1991). Further, more recent research by Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2011) identified that sustainably aware consumers were beginning to distance themselves from consumers who do not adapt to sustainability, as predicted by Hawkins (2001) in Section 1.2.2.

#### **3.4.4: The appeal to higher loyalties**

The literature reviewed identified two main components of appealing to a higher loyalty: that of familial provisioning and the determination not to sacrifice self-identity through visual appearance.

A familial appeal to higher loyalties prioritises family provisioning, where lifestyle restrictions and finances restrict the decision-making process (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006), leading to the development of personal constructs to

alleviate associated guilt (Taylor, 1982). However, previous research has identified that the birth of a child arouses parental interest in environmental and ethical issues where morals and values are re-evaluated (Carey et al., 2008; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). This leads to a divergence of incorporating the needs of family members, along with constraints incurred through the family dynamics and finances, which add to the complexity of aligning moral value with consumption (Parsons et al., 2009; Carey et al., 2008).

Further, the multi-faceted roles of a mother, such as employee, wife and the inclusion of household chores (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006), reduces the time and inclination to obtain information regarding the ethical provenance of goods to be purchased. Carey et al. (2008: 556) found the application of ethics as part of decision-making was both a '*contradictory rationale*' and a '*paradoxical trade-off situation*', where a conscious decision to purchase a product or adopt a behaviour known to be unethical occurred to satisfy other family members requests. Research by Parsons et al. (2009: 145) supports this application of flexibility to suit other family members, concluding that flexibility is not '*lowering of their ethical voice*', but responding to a '*higher loyalty*', that of the family, while maintaining awareness of the ethical issues. It is this negotiation of value trade-offs where external (for the environment or garment-workers) moral orientation may be conflict with internal (familial) moral obligations.

The appeal to higher loyalties also relates to visual appearance and fashion orientation. Chapter Two established that consumers were not prepared to compromise their appearance for sustainable considerations, as expressing intrinsic self-identity is considered of greater importance than extrinsic ethical concerns (Jägel et al., 2012; Joy et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010; Hiller Connell, 2010; Joergens, 2006; Valor, 2007; Iwanow et al., 2005; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Dickson, 2001). Further, children may have strong ideas of how they wish to present themselves visually, particularly as peer acceptance is more prevalent in younger consumers (Ming Law et al., 2004).

The age at which this may occur is unknown and subjective; however, Pole et al., (2006) carried out research under the Cultures of Consumption research programme which ran from 2002 to 2007, focusing upon children's clothing consumption. The findings identify that children as young as six were influenced by popular culture (pop stars and footballers) as a reference to what was 'cool' and that adhering to the latest fashions provided social inclusion. Further, high status labels and logos were highly desired by this cohort and this was a source of tension between the children and their parents. The parents frequently made sacrifices to provide their children with the fashions they desired. This is consistent with research by The Children's Society (Main and Pople, 2011) where children expressed that fashionable clothing was important, in particular to fit in with their peer groups; they also stated that they would reject friends whose appearance did not fit their own. Consequently, fashion is increasingly important for children's development of their perception of self and adhering to social norms eases their experience of peer socialisation. Therefore, perceptions of risk influences parental decision-making to prevent unwanted consumption, which are considered as wasting money (Boden, 2006).

#### **3.4.5: Summary of the Techniques of Neutralisation**

The Techniques of Neutralisation offered an opportunity to categorise consumer responses to production practice, in particular garment-worker exploitation that may misalign with moral sentiment. It established initially that moral sentiment was dependent on the volitional construct that worker exploitation was morally wrong. Despite previous research identifying that consumers are inconsistent with their application of moral value, segmenting consumers responses to garment-worker exploitation within the Techniques of Neutralisation is a novel approach. The techniques suggest that consumers often deny responsibility for garment-worker exploitation by appropriating blame to the retailer, who negotiates the contract with the suppliers. Nevertheless, the literature illustrates the potential for consumer movements to motivate retailers to address concern for workers involved in production through boycotting retailers alleged of exploitation.

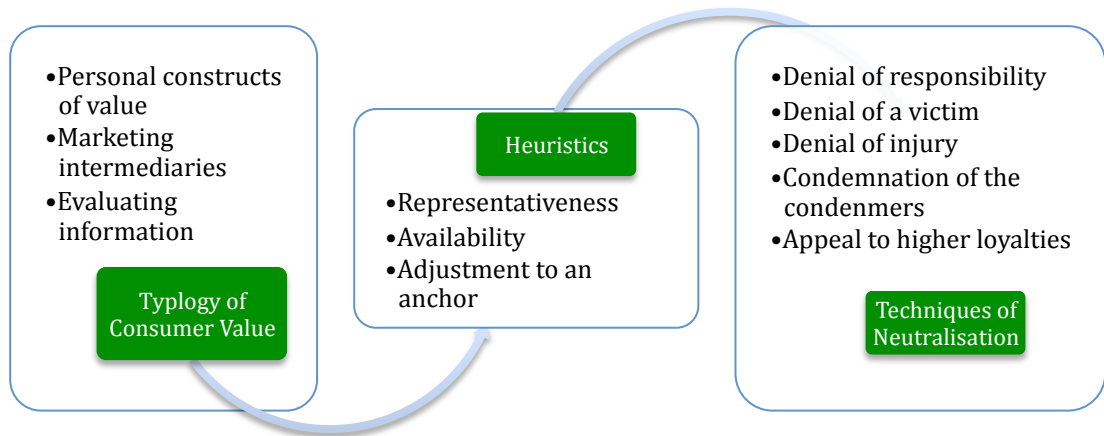
Further, the ability to deny victims within fashion production is facilitated through lack of understanding for the culture of developing countries, including working and living conditions. This enables consumers to apply a cultural context to allegations, an aspect exacerbated by a lack of understanding of what constitutes fashion production. Condemnation of the condemner explores the prevalence in the current consumer society to opt for inexpensive fashion without questioning why the prices are so low. This suggests that consumers take solace in recognising similar traits in their contemporaries rather than rallying against socially accepted norms. Finally, the appeal to higher loyalties established the responsibility to familial provisioning, which can be described as immediate through affecting the consumers' personal lifeworld, over unsubstantiated claims regarding workers in developing countries. Similarly, the literature has described consumers as unwilling to compromise their self-representation through appearance, which extends to children who recognise their preference to align with peer groups and adhere to social conventions.

### **3.5: Summary**

This chapter has established the theoretical framework for the research described in this thesis, illustrating consumers include a number of value types within decision-making. This includes recognition that some consumers apply sustainability where they can and prioritise other value types when sustainable consummation is unattainable. It is this the '*ethical balancing act*' (Parsons et al. 2009: 144) that will be explored in this thesis to develop an increased understanding of the consumer's perspective so that such considerations can potentially be addressed by retailers. Having fully established the conceptual framework, it is illustrated in Figure 3.4. Chapter Four will outline the methodology which will underpin the research process and fulfil the research aim and objectives established in Chapter One.



Figure 3.4: The theoretical framework



# Chapter Four: Methodology

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## 4.1: Introduction to the methodology

Chapter One introduced the topic under investigation and Chapter Two established how the research has been informed by the literature. Chapter Three introduced the value typology and how uncertainty is managed within decision-making. Throughout, the literature has expressed the complexity of consuming ethically as well as projecting self, identity and status through fashion consumption, with little research incorporating these two areas, especially considering how these '*decisions are thought through*' (Szmigin et al., 2008: 379). This determines a need to listen to the voice of consumers and understand their lived experience, particularly as the previous literature has identified a behaviour-attitude gap, whereby consumers' attitudes contradict with sales of ethical products. Therefore, the premise is to explore how fashion choices align with morals and beliefs, how this is stipulated by lifestyles and how consumers rationalise their behaviour in order '*to discover new knowledge*' (Vindigni et al., 2002: 634) that could support progression towards sustainability of fashion consumption behaviours.

This chapter introduces the methodology selected for this research. Methodology depicts the worldview or assumed framework of knowledge adopted by researchers, establishing how reality is viewed (McGregor and Murnane, 2010; Creswell, 2009; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al. (2008) recommend stating explicitly the methodological approach, to enable a clear understanding of the research method and tentatively suggesting the best methods from which to investigate the generation of new knowledge (McGregor and Murnane, 2010). Establishing the philosophical underpinning of the research also benefits the researcher through providing security and direction for the application of the methodology (McGregor and Murnane, 2010). This chapter will establish the philosophical position before outlining the design of the research, the methods utilised and the sample under

investigation, before concluding with the efforts to assure quality in the design framework.

## 4.2: Paradigm

The application of a paradigm demonstrates the philosophical underpinning of the research through establishing the principle of beliefs (McGregor and Murnane, 2010; Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). This determines methodology, epistemology, ontology and axiology described in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Four methodological axioms**

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|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| <b>Ontology</b>     | What counts as nature, reality, feeling, existence or being   |
| <b>Epistemology</b> | What counts as knowledge and how people come to know it   |
| <b>Logic</b>        | What is accepted as rigour and inference in the development of arguments, judgements and insights             |
| <b>Axiology</b>     | What counts as fundamental values and what is consciousness (moral choices, ethics, and normative judgements) |

(McGregor and Murnane, 2010: 420)

Table 4.1 establishes the methodological framework, where the epistemological stance specifies the nature of reality and the ontological position determines how reality is known (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The traditional paradigm in consumer research is logical positivism (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 2003; Thomson et al., 1989; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988) where the emphasis is on categorisation and generalisable objectivity (Hirshman, 1993). Increasingly consumer research has incorporated an empathic view of the consumer, looking to replicate the consumer environment to develop understanding of the consumer perspective (Hirshman, 1993).

This research will follow a post-positivist paradigm, to understand how reality is socially constructed. Through adopting social constructionism as a theoretical framework, '*reality and knowledge*' are central to understanding the development of consumer behaviour considered embedded within life or '*reality*' (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 13, 15). Hirshman (1993) is critical of the

application of quantitative methods, through asking the participant to choose which characteristic best suits, describing this as a '*cold rationality*'. Fashion consumption has been described as emotive and involved, therefore the application of quantitative methods is somewhat impersonal and detached from the exploration and application of meaning (Hirshman, 1993). It is within this context this thesis will progress, developing consumer involvement of the production process to understand if there is potential to develop a mainstream market for sustainably-produced fashion and how consumers currently reconcile fashion consumption with their moral values and beliefs. This will offer an opportunity to explore consumers' attitudes and behaviours in response to the phenomena under investigation, and to '*reveal power relationships and structures*' (McGregor and Murnane, 2010: 422) as apparent within the UK fashion retail industry. The following sections will explain the rationale behind this.

#### **4.2.1: Ontology, epistemological, and axiology**

Ontology refers to the '*philosophical assumptions of the nature of reality*' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008: 60), and the main ontological positions are constructivism and objectivism. Assuming a positivist stance, that of objectivity, dictates the results are used as a predictor of generalisability (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Objectivity does not reflect either '*cultural beliefs or personal values*' (Thomson, 1991: 64) and is therefore inconsistent with the nature of this research (Bradley, 1993). Fashion consumption and moral sentiment are aspects constructed socially where norms are communicated within the context of life and interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Therefore a constructivism approach would allow a holistic overview incorporating lifestyle dynamics as experienced within real-life (Soklaridis, 2009; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988), and reality is translated into behaviour (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Further, although larger statistical samples, typical of a positivist paradigm, offer generalisation relevant to the development of policy, the rigidity inhibits understanding of the '*process*' or '*significance*' of nuance which support the generation emerging theory (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008: 71). Despite the

trepidation of policy makers to rely upon anecdotal research expressing consumer opinion, this research incorporates two opposing orientations, fashion and ethical consumption, considered an oxymoron (Black, 2008). Therefore a holistic approach will enable an understanding of applying ethical concerns to fashion consumption (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008).

The ontological position of social constructionism assumes the researcher can adopt an objective or subjective stance (Olsen, 1995). As the research aims to explore consumer perception, it is imperative that the research captures the reality perceived by the respondent. Therefore, understanding the context in which the phenomenon is situated, is beneficial and this research will be subjective (Olsen, 1995) or '*intersubjective*' through shared meaning typical to the sample (Poonamallee, 2009; Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008; Schwandt, 2003; Bradley, 1993; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). For example, it must be recognised that societal norms and information regarding fashion trends and ethical concerns, for example climate change and workers conditions, are disseminated within society and are objective, despite being interpreted subjectively (Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008). Further, socialisation is dynamic, responding to information and influence, particularly between those with similar attitudes through sharing knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). This is reflected within the participants' view where knowledge forms their experience of life (Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992), supporting the epistemological stance where narrative offers greater acuity (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Although the research is subjective, it will be captured objectively to form a conceptual construct, therefore the role of the researcher is to interpret the participants' subjectivity and develop themes (Schwandt, 2003).

The epistemological stance implicates the moral perspective of the research and the researcher, however axiology defines the moral position (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Holbrook, 1999) and it is relevant to establish how the participants' moral framework affects consumption choice. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe an interpretative epistemology as interaction between the

'*knower and the known*', which has implications regarding the role of the researcher. In contrast, a positive objective view assumes reality is independent of people, and through experimental elimination, reality can be identified (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) and predicted (Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992). Positivism defines '*the world as rational [and] ordered*' (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009: 33); this does not fully reflect the complexity of social and cultural influences experienced in real-life (Schwandt, 2003; Meamber and Venkatesh, 2000) and created within society (Hirshman, 1993). Further, postivism restricts explicate explanations of behaviour that reflect objectivity subjectively through interpretation (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

Hirshman and Holbrook (1992: 64) advise that positivism '*capture[s] a view of the social world as a concrete structure*'; however, this is an attempt to confine and minimise consumer experience. Foxall (2002) emphasises the need to incorporate an extensive array of theories including descriptive accounts of experiences which will enhance understanding and knowledge. Moreover, incorporating a large sample, as dictated within a positive paradigm, would not enable integration with the experience of everyday life, including constraints (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), through exploring characteristics of meaning and how this is manifested (Hirshman, 1993). Smith et al. (2009a) support this stance, where the methodological approach should result in rich and relevant data demonstrating the existence of the phenomena. Thomson (1991) believes that the natural sciences, for example real-life experiences, contrasts with scientific and rational explanations. Similarly, Riley and Love (2000) question quantitative research when it does not explore meaning and understanding. Moreover, previous research has expressed concern of understanding consumer behaviour without considering other factors within lifestyles (Celuch and Showers, 1991). Therefore, positivism would not enable an exploration of applying sustainability to fashion consumption behaviours within the context of real-life (Schwandt, 2003). Statistical data also limits the potentiality of exploring potential solutions which could enable the fashion industry to become sustainable.

#### 4.2.2: Social constructionism

From a social constructionist stance, experiences are largely subjective, constructed individually in response to lifestyles, attitudes and opinions, which are set within a context of unique and dynamic symbolism (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Humphreys and Brown, 2007; Gray, 2004; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). As reality is constructed and developed through knowledge and experience, perspectives multiply through seeking to explain actions and motives, reflecting the world around (Humphreys and Brown, 2007; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Küpers, 2000; Silverman, 2000; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Therefore, social interaction evokes '*shared conventions*', through conversations (Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992: 53) where symbolism is constructed and legitimised through shared realities (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Hudson and Ozanne (1988) recommend that in order to understand reality, behaviours need to be understood within the context of a situation. Consequently, the reality of life is not reproduced objectively, but reflected subjectively. From this, it can be assumed that behaviours are considered holistically, not just through one dimension of a consumers' life, to provide some understanding of interplay of value types within everyday experiences. Thus, incorporating the objective acceptance of aspects within the social sphere, for example communicating identity through appearance, despite subjectively interpreting the meaning assigned (Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008). Specifically, the philosophical approach of this research is existential phenomenology, a holistic perspective to understand the experience as '*lived*' (Thomson et al., 1989: 135; Smith et al., 2009a; Schwandt, 2003; Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

#### 4.2.3: Existential Phenomenology

Existential phenomenology defines '*phenomenology as a philosophy as well as methods*', seeking to understand experiences as meaningful (Creswell, 2009: 13; Smith et al., 2009a; Hines and Quinn, 2007; Riley and Love, 2000; Küpers, 2000;

Thomson and Tambyah, 1999; Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992). Phenomenology investigates experience and Husserl believed that the phenomenon should be investigated as lived, by '*going back to the things themselves*' and exploring intentionality: the connection between consciousness and reflection (Smith et al., 2009a: 12). Consequently, Husserl believed that to explore phenomena, the researcher would apply epoche or bracketing to their own experiences to enable a '*fresh perspective*' (Creswell, 2007: 59). However, this stance is applicable to transcendental phenomenology, whereas existential phenomenology, developed by Heidegger (Husserl's student), seeks to encapsulate particular experiences within a specific cohort. Subsequently, Heidegger believes that bracketing out with one's own existence is not possible, as people are not separate to the world (Smith et al., 2009a). Thomson et al. (1989) explain the premise of adopting a holistic approach.

*Existential-phenomenologists do not seek to study individuals separate from the environments in which they live or the interactions of the two (which implies separation); rather, the study is of the totality of human-beings-in-the-world.*

(Thomson et al., 1989: 135)

As identified, existential phenomenology incorporates a holistic view of exploring consumer perception through a phenomena (feeling, knowing, thinking, remembering) as influenced by changes incurred in life; for example student, professional, wife, mother. Similarly, consumers' lifestyles evolve as personal circumstances change (Kohler Riessman, 2001), for example another child in the household will impact on time and money or a change of job may affect the family budget, just as cultures within society change through new and emerging ideologies and the acquisition of information (Meamber and Venkatesh, 2000). This holistic approach takes into account the environment in which the phenomenon is situated (Schwandt, 2003; Olsen, 1995) and particularly useful when '*little [is] known*' about the phenomenon (Appleton, 1995: 993). It is within everyday practice that consumers operate as social agents and are required to make sense of their actions (Powell and Gilbert,



2008). Therefore developing an understanding of the relationships consumers have with ethical concerns within the context of fashion consumption will be increased through narrative.

Schwandt (2003: 303) explains that when understanding is *'lived or existential'*, the premise is not to solve a problem, but to clarify the circumstances in which the phenomena exist. Smith et al. (2009b: 12) refer to capturing *'essential qualities'*, whereas Lincoln and Guba (2003: 285) denote this as *'representation'*, the *'unique perspective'* of exploration with limitless boundaries. Thomson (1991: 63) argues that rather than defining existential phenomenology as a *'pre-science'*, it should be considered as generating *'unique forms of knowledge'*, through understanding the actions of consumers, described by Thomson (1991: 67) as the *'most basic and intriguing of all human phenomena'*.

Incorporated within existential phenomenology is the hermeneutic circle of *'pre-understanding'* and *'understanding'*, utilising what is already known about the phenomena, as well as what is known about the methodology, to develop what can be understood from the collection of data (Bradley, 1993: 434). Socialisation constructs meaning, a collective understanding, experienced through observation and participation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003) and this would enable an understanding of how consumers interact with fashion retailers, as well as how information is absorbed regarding sustainability; for example, the expected lifespan of products and financial constraints. Further, qualitative methods will facilitate meaning implied by behaviour and frequency of the research phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Each life stage proposes emerging priorities, ways of thinking and barriers, as the focus for consumers is not consistent but constantly evolving (Thomson et al., 1989).

#### **4.2.4: Explication of the research rationale**

Section 4.2 established the research rationale and it is important to explicate this within the context of the extant literature. Chapter Two identified that

consumers did not incorporate sustainability within their fashion consumption behaviours. This was in part due to a lack of response by the fashion industry to address sustainability. Further, as fashion selection expresses self-identity, this is an aspect consumers are unwilling to compromise, despite concern for workers involved in production or environmental degradation. Therefore, the research approach seeks to determine the lived experience within the world in which they inhabit (the participants lifeworld), through incorporating what information is available and negotiating consumption values within the current fashion marketplace. Husserl (1970) introduces the concept of lifeworld as including consciousness for the existence of living. For the purposes of this thesis, this includes awareness of both internal and external influences relevant for existence and everyday experiences. As decision-making in the context of fashion consumption and familial provisioning is emotive, the evaluation will not follow a rational processing. Consequently, the research will explore how meaning is interpreted and what personal values are incorporated within socially constructed lifeworlds that reflect existential dynamics. This includes negotiations between family members within an interactive processing, to reveal the complexity of aligning moral sentiment with behaviours and underlying tensions.

It must be acknowledged that inspiration for the research design derived from the seminal paper '*Putting Consumer Experience Back into Consumer Research: The Philosophy and Method of Existential-Phenomenology*' written by Thomson, Locander and Polio (1989). This paper begins by explaining and justifying the philosophical stance adopted by the authors. Through determining the worldview, the authors acknowledge that there are other perspectives from which to view human phenomenon. The premise of existential phenomenology is to understand that people exist and interact in external environments, and this influences their own worldview and behaviours. Therefore, the research objective is to describe the context in which experience emerges: the lived experience; thus, certain events are pivotal to developing individual perceptions

and the method chosen should enable this context to be situated through observing the '*person-in-an-environment*' (ibid: 136).

This view recognises, as expressed in the literature reviewed in Chapter Two, that sustainability is progressing as a shared convention, however this is reliant upon a holistic understanding which is reactive to the world inhabited. Therefore, consumers may be reconstructing their lifeworld and everyday practice to reflect new information presented in the dynamic consumer environment. This implicates that the research is important and timely, to determine how available sustainable information is evaluated, especially within the context of an industry which is on the cusp of recognising consumer concern for production practice. It is through acknowledging the underlying tensions of consumer perceptions of sustainability, within the context of fashion consumption, that enables this research to progress the sustainable debate within consumer behaviour literature. Such an approach is validated through acknowledging the complexity, competing tensions and dearth of information; this leads the research enquiry to go '*back to the things themselves*' (Husserl, cited in Smith et al., 2009a: 12) to understand what values are significant within decision-making and how this is phenomena is experienced existentially. Should another method have been selected, understanding the experience from the participants perspective would have been excluded due to preclusion of the participants voice.

### **4.3: Research methods**

Olagogun and Fatoki (2009: 13) suggest the adoption of the correct technique is required to draw emerging '*understandings of social life*', while Soklaridis (2009: 721) recommends the method is '*sensitive to the social context*'. The research method seeks to explore '*lived*' consumer experiences as reflected through the current consumer market, incorporating lifestyle limitations juxtaposed with morals and values (Moisander et al., 2010; Olagogun and Fatoki, 2009; Carey et al., 2008; Schwandt, 2003; Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992; Thomson et al.,

1989). As cognitive processing cannot be directly measured, exploration of incidental and ancillary information can offer a portrayal of consumer consideration (Vindigni et al., 2002). Therefore phenomenological interviews which are open-ended and in-depth will allow the researcher to enquire whether working mothers apply morals and values to consuming fashion for themselves and their family.

This method is considered particularly useful when attempting to understand complex behaviour (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010; Fontana and Frey, 2005) or multiple meanings (Warren, 2001). As the literature has described the application of sustainability to the context of fashion consumption as lacking in consumer consideration and that motivation for fashion consumption primarily exists to express self-identity, this depicts fashion consumption decision-making as complex and contrary. Consequently, this directs the data enquiry to explore the lived experience, as opposed to measuring attitudes and beliefs, to understand what values contribute to deliberating sustainability within the context of fashion consumption.

#### **4.3.1: The role of the researcher**

The role of the researcher is pivotal due to the level of power and influence not only in the design of the research but also in the interpretation. Ensuring the balance or equality of the researcher and the participants can be beneficial in encouraging an open exchange (Neal and McLaughlin, 2009; Kakkuri-Knuuuttila et al., 2008; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Silverman, 2000). Shared control is particularly pertinent within a constructionist paradigm, specifically within subjective research, as the role of the researcher lies in tandem with the sample. Olaogun and Fatoki (2009) recommend subjectivity is recognised and minimised enabling the researcher to consider the phenomenon experienced (McGregor and Murnane, 2010; Soklaridis, 2009; Stenbacka, 2001) and clarify or probe further when required to enable understanding (Smith et al., 2009a).

Knowledge and experience of the topic can aid sensitivity and understanding enabling a platform for the development of questions through '*insight*' (Olaogun and Fatoki, 2009: 19) and a '*cooperative enquiry*' (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988: 512). The researcher's viewpoint of subjectivity was established within the paradigm whereby '*constructivists tend to immerse themselves more completely in the participants' experiences*' (Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009: 577), a stance supported by phenomenologist's (Kakkuri-Knuuutila et al., 2008) where the ethos is to infer purpose from the participant, who in turn communicates their consumption experience (Smith et al., 2009a). Therefore, the researcher's experience of aligning concerns for sustainability with the goods consumed for personal and family use within the constraints of time, finances, knowledge, accessibility and availability, enhances understanding (Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992). Moreover, the similarities between the researcher and the participant prevent domination by either (Dobscha, 1993).

Understanding the consumer perspective can enhance the understanding of the discourse during the interpretation of the transcripts or enable compassion and empathy for certain predicaments (Hirshman, 1993). Berger and Luckmann (1966: 83) refer to this as primary knowledge, '*what everyone knows*', structured within the roles undertaken by the sample's characteristics. Additionally, access to textual information available socially within cohorts, for example media sources, will ensure embedding the research within the context of real-life (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Humphreys and Brown, 2007; Fontana and Frey, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Layder, 1998).

#### **4.3.2: Qualitative approach**

Qualitative research is not concerned with gathering statistics (Olaogun and Fatoki, 2009; Catterall, 1998), but seeks to explore the '*experience of others*' within the context of a specific topic (Bradley, 1993: 434). Researchers use qualitative research to understand social circumstances and report upon phenomena experienced. Central to qualitative research is the development of multiple perceptions to understand the complexity of the participants' reality

(Bradley, 1993) and how meaning is constructed (Easterby Smith et al., 2008; Schwandt, 2003). These techniques help marketers explore and gain insights into particular cultural and social categories where consumers make sense of their everyday lives and construct identities (Moisander et al., 2010), proving useful to providing a one-way flow of information (Catterall, 1998). Additionally, qualitative research is more useful when the topic is sensitive (Olagogun and Fatoki, 2009), where the interviewee can talk about the issues in confidence (Soklaridis, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008); this could include the likelihood of supporting of inhumane working conditions (Lee, 2003).

#### **4.3.3: Phenomenological interviews with consumers**

Phenomenological interviews will provide a platform for the interviewee to attach meaning (feeling, knowing, thinking, remembering) and express independent views regarding the topic of fashion, ethics, consumer responsibility and lifestyle constraints set within the context of everyday life (Moisander et al., 2010; Soklaridis, 2009; Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008; Küpers, 2000; Thomson and Haytko, 1997; Thomson et al., 1989). The exchange in dialogue does not define the '*nature of the world*', but accepts the current status subjectively (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Further, it will allow the participant to consider the relevant issues with clarity, free from the researcher's perspective, thereby ensuring a personal response (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008) to explore the participants' understanding and interpretation of their socially constructed world (Soklaridis, 2009; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

The development of meaning, as interpreted or constructed by participants, evolves from the data (Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008) where the research is descriptive in identifying a social phenomena and how it is experienced (Silverman, 2000). This will allow the research to achieve an understanding of social phenomena, through the view of this specific social groups (Moisander et al., 2010) to develop '*a conceptual framework through which the world is described and explained*' (Schwandt, 2003: 306). Thereby engaging with

participants through dialogue using the unstructured format of a phenomenological interview, will enable the phenomenon to be explored, whilst also considering the external influences (Hines and Quinn, 2007).

#### 4.3.4: Primers to guide the interviews

Exploration, understanding and reflection sit in tangent with phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009a). This naturally leads to the research design of dialogue and observations (Smith et al., 2009a) exploring meaning applied to everyday practices (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Schwandt, 2003; Layder, 1998). Thomson et al. (1989: 137) give an example of a consumer considering the purchase of a skirt:

*It was almost like I was being too practical. It's on sale, you need a summer skirt, and it fits you. There are practical reasons. What I would have enjoyed more is if I had not been looking for something at the time, and something caught my eye and okay, maybe it wouldn't be on sale and maybe I didn't need a skirt but I truly loved the skirt and I would wear it a lot and I would feel good every time I wear it, that would have been a better purchase.*

It is clear from this narrative that the participant is defining the reasons for making the purchase, along with post purchase considerations. Such a rich and descriptive insight would not be achieved from a structured approach, as the emerging pattern results from the participant describing, explaining and analysing their actions. However, allowing the interviewee to talk without interference could be problematic and therefore it is proposed that primers are introduced as a vehicle for discussion, as directed from the reviewed literature (Warren, 2001; Thompson and Haytko, 1997).

Increasingly, visual images are deployed within academic research to 'accommodate embodiment and the senses', particularly when seeking a rich understanding of complex phenomenon reliant on social structures (Pink, 2005: 4). The primers comprised of labels obtained from current high street fashion retailers, denoting ethical criteria, for example organic cotton. This was considered beneficial to determine meaning applied to the terms used and how

the participants subjectively evaluated the content, including text and images (Pink, 2005). The labels were obtained from known retailers, thus encouraging discourse from familiar cultural imagery to understand the context as experienced (Pink, 2005). The primers utilised in the research are listed below, alongside the rationale for discussion and the images of the labels can be found in Appendix 6.

**Table 4.2: Primers used as a vehicle for discussion**

| <b>Label</b>   | <b>Anticipated discussion</b>  |
|--|--|
| M&S child’s fleece made from recycled plastic bottles  | To encourage discussions of recycling  |
| M&S eco-factory label                                  | The label describes carbon neutral production and may inspire consideration for reducing carbon emissions in fashion production            |
| M&S organic cotton school shirts                       | To encourage consideration for organic cotton production   |
| John Lewis enzyme washed child’s top                   | To stimulate discussions for chemical applications   |
| Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF) charity t-shirt | The label describes child exploitation within the cotton industry and may lead to reflections on child labour                              |
| Global Girlfriend woman’s top (Fairtrade and organic)  | Presented information about the woman workers non-profit, fair trade organisation in Nepal and may encourage discussion of garment-workers |

#### **4.3.5: Sample**

As participants are central to the evolving exploration in seeking contextual understanding of real-life experiences (McGregor and Murnane, 2010), purposive sampling enabled the researcher to concentrate data collection within specific segment relevant to the research in order to answer the research question and obtain rich data (Saunders, 2010; Smith et al., 2009a; Soklaridis, 2009; Bradley, 1993; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). It is recognised that the sample dictates the research agenda, impacting on the findings (Warren, 2001; Bradley, 1993), particularly when reference groups and social classes define societal norms (Berry and Kunkel, 2002). Consumers have been found to be increasingly complex in their choices, influenced by lifestyles including age,



income, lifestyle stage and reference groups (Webb, 2007). Baker (2001: 783) refers to this as '*membership categories*' where certain circumstances are understood by those within the categories and meaning is applied. As in keeping with qualitative research, the sample size is smaller, seeking to reveal the particular within the experience, rather than generalisations typical of a population (Smith et al., 2009a). This reflects a greater involvement and connection with the participants and the data, activated by the role of the researcher (Kohler Reissman, 2001).

Sample criteria were derived from the previous literature, based in what is already known of the relevant characteristics specific to the phenomena (Smith et al., 2009a; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Much of the previous literature has established that women are both more interested in sustainability and adopt sustainable behaviours, such as purchasing ethical products and recycling (do Paço and Raposo, 2010; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; McDonagh, 2002; McEachern and McClean, 2002; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001). Additionally, women are also more interested and involved in fashion, thus more likely to browse for fashion (Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003) and purchase fashion more frequently (Goldsmith and Clark, 2008; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; Gutman and Mills, 1982).

Similarly, motherhood is thought to stimulate an interest in sustainability (Ha and Stoel, 2004). For example, Prothero (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) refers to her role as a mother as influencing her view on global issues, co-current to providing for her child, resulting in the decision to purchase organic food for the first time. This is consonant with other research where having children in the household encouraged organic consumption due to the perception that this is a healthier option (Gam et al., 2010; Carey et al., 2008; Hustvedt and Bernard, 2008; Tsakiridou et al., 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Memery et al., 2005) and to avoid pesticidal use in production (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Shaw et al., 2006). Some food producers market specifically to mothers, having identified growing concern for natural food products. It could

also be argued that mothers may be more concerned about environmental and sustainable issues out of concern for the world their children will inhabit as adults. As children are educated and encouraged to adopt environmentally friendly behaviours at school, they often take this information home to share with the family (Davies and Crane, 2003).

Further, mothers are most likely to act as the main shopper for a household (Johnston and Attaman, 2009; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Carey et al., 2008; Tsakiridou et al., 2008; McEachern et al., 2007; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Park and Burns, 2005; Yurchison and Johnson, 2004; O’Cass, 2004; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Dittmar et al., 1996; Strong, 1996; Dobscha, 1993; Faber et al., 1987). Furthermore, women are more commonly caregivers and therefore prone to consider others, which could just as equally be concern for ensuring the family budget and reducing costs where possible (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Pole et al., 2006), as well as concern for those involved within the production process.

Parents’ consumption is also dictated by children through *‘pester power’* to choose certain brands or products (Wilson and Wood, 2004). Therefore, children are increasingly likely to be involved within the family decision-making process. This is said to be a reflection of smaller family size and media influence encouraging childrens’ opinions as important (Schiffman and Kanuk, 2010). Further, children are influenced by fashion and sports brands through peer pressure and popular cultural icons (Pole et al., 2006; Boden, 2006). Moreover, children adopt social norms as influenced by family, and often are dressed to reflect the families status (Pole et al., 2006). The integration of external influences, for example children, allows for the development of data which is both set in context and suited to the constructionist paradigm (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). To ensure the sample is still involved in consumption for the family, the children will be pre or primary school aged.

A final criteria was that of working in a professional occupation, as Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) noted specifically that it was difficult to source sustainably-

produced work-wear. Paradoxically, higher levels of education has been identified as increasing the likelihood of absorbing information on environmental issues (Ma and Lee, 2012; do Paço and Raposo, 2010; Hustevdt and Bernard, 2008). The requirement of smarter clothing for work purposes was described in Chapter Three. As 70 per cent of women in the UK work, half working part time, this constitutes a significant number (BBC News, 2008). The daily duties and responsibilities increases for working mothers, resulting in a '*juggling lifestyle*' of contrasting desire to spend time with the children, fulfilling employment commitments and guilt that not enough time is spent with either (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009: 403; Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006).

As lifestyles become increasingly chaotic, consumers may seek commodities to provide solutions and alleviate stress incurred through conflicting pressures of modern life (Celuch and Showers, 1991). Often mothers seek to buy time through making use of convenience products and services and this often incurs conflict or guilt, where mothers want to be perceived as '*nurturing*' through '*self sacrifice*'; however, this is juxtaposed with a perception of being considered '*savvy and [a] conscious convenience seeker*' (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006: 1128). Previous ethical knowledge or involvement was not be sought to attempt to gather a typical response. Therefore, based on what is already known, the sample was considered likely to be early innovators in the consumption of ethical fashion, juxtaposed among conflict imposed by lifestyle restrictions.

Once the sample criteria had been formulated, purposive sampling was utilised for the purpose of the pilot study; however for the main body of the research, snowball sampling was employed through asking the pilot sample to recommend five potential participants who fitted the sample criteria, as recommended by Szmigin et al. (2009) and Smith et al. (2009a). Snowball sampling is indicative of subjective research (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005; Olsen, 1995; Carey et al., 2008; Bradley, 1993), enabling access to participants with similar lifestyles and ideology (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) and has been used by other similar studies exploring ethical consumption (McDonald et al., 2009;

Szmigin et al., 2009; Oates et al., 2008; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Dittmar and Drury, 2000). Further, non-random samples are utilised when generalisation is not an aim (Collis and Hussey, 2009), the significance is that the participants are involved in framing the research.

Through asking respondents to recommend future participants, there will be some consistency of participants' lifestyles as well as establishing a degree of rapport, considered a precursor to trust (Fontana and Frey, 2005). This will be of benefit, as discomfort, nerves or fear could affect the interview process. However, familiarity is more likely through recommendation (Appleton, 1995), especially when the rapport established between the researcher and participant can influence the data collection (Stenbacka, 2001). Moreover, it is essential the sample can communicate clearly their experience and perception of the topic (Appleton, 1995) and it was considered this would be enhanced by snowball sampling, through targeting a particular network of participants with similar lifestyles, outlooks and professions and therefore a mutual perspective (Küpers, 2000). An attempt to broaden the sample to achieve this would affect the validity (Olsen, 1995). Finally, the researcher must assume that the information given by the participant within the interview is accurate (Appleton, 1995).

#### **4.3.6: Research Ethics**

An application for ethical approval was made according to approved QMU procedures prior to the pilot interviews and the researcher has protected the participants' identity through anonymity. Participants were advised of the option to withdraw from participation at any stage (Johnson, 2001). Ethical approval was granted in March 2010.

#### **4.4: The research journey**

This section will delineate the research journey undertaken by the author, from gathering the data and through to the analysis. The aim within this section is to

describe the research process and enable transparency of the data analysis to ensure accuracy through providing an insight of how the analytic processing transpired.

#### **4.4.1: Collecting the data**

Data were collected through phenomenological interviews, where lifestyle, ethical awareness, fashion interest and involvement, consumption and knowledge offered a holistic perspective through understanding the formation of beliefs and practice within value and desire (Soklaridis, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). An initial pilot of five interviews were carried out in March 2010 to determine the success of phenomenological interviews, as advised by Appleton (1995). The main body of the data collection was obtained between September and December 2010 and the sample were obtained through snowballing (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005; Olsen, 1995; Carey et al., 2008; Bradley, 1993): pilot participants were requested to nominate five potential participants each for interview, however data collection was discontinued when 28 interviews were completed and data saturation was satisfied.

Many interviews were rescheduled due to either the participant or the researcher's other commitments, and finding mutually satisfactory times ensured that often dates were set weeks in advance. Further, it was preferable to hold the interviews without children around, so times were often scheduled around children's naps, work commitments and collecting children. The unexpected adverse weather conditions, which hampered travel and closed QMU, also affected the data collection process. The interviews were predominantly held in the participants' homes (often with the sound of the washing machine in the background), QMU, the researcher's home, pubs or cafes. The interviews began with attempting to establish a rapport, mainly through discussions around our respective children to encourage trust, prior to discussing their experience of fashion consumption for themselves and their children (Johnson, 2001).

The participants were selected via purposive methods, the interviews were audio digitally recorded and interpreted by the researcher to gauge whether the correct methods were selected (Ogle and Damhorst 2005). The initial question posed by the researcher included asking how fashion was selected, which retailers were preferred and why, and how interested the participants were in fashion. The second half of the question asked whether the participants had any ethical concerns when purchasing fashion. It was interesting to note that almost immediately the participants either focused upon fashion or ethical concerns related to fashion; these two positions seemed indicative of the participants orientation and interest. A further interesting anecdote was that some of the snowball participants referred to the research from a pilot participant were unaware of the inclusion of sustainability, perceiving the research was solely focusing upon fashion consumption behaviours. From this perspective, those participants responses were unassuming and reflective.

The participants controlled the direction of the interview in the initial stages, where the researcher questioned to clarify comments and probed further when necessary (Soklaridis, 2009; Ogle and Damhorst, 2005). This holistic approach was considered necessary, as ethics and sustainability are just one concern for the consumer to be considered alongside fashion orientation and financial constraints, as well as other potential concerns. Further, this allowed other modes of communication to be considered, for example body language and physical presentation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). When the participants indicated that they had little more to say on the topic, primers were introduced to introduce concepts, such as organic cotton and information on garment-workers.

The pilot interviews offered an opportunity to consider the data collected and make adjustments as required, it was considered that the primers should be reduced. Initially, the pilot interviews included the six labels as well as visual images of landfill sites, canvas shopping bags and information by an organisation which monitored garment-workers conditions. This organisation,

Made-By, is based in the Netherlands and offers retailers and brands the opportunity to allow consumers to access details of the factory in which the clothing is made. Consumers receive a code when purchasing garments authorised by Made-By, to access details of the factory and see images of the garment-workers and offer assurance that the garment-workers conditions are not exploitative (Made-By, 2007).

However, the number of primers seemed repetitive and extended the interviews substantially and it was decided to focus solely on the five garment labels which can be found in Appendix 6. The reasons for this were twofold: much of the initial conversations derived from the labels, the visual images resulted in similar conversations. Secondly, the visual images resulted in a deviation from fashion consumption to general sustainable concerns. The participants began to lose interest in the interview and seemed disinterested in tracing fashion production; this was perceived as an additional chore, particularly as only one UK retailer was affiliated with Made-By (Edun). This ethical brand (Edun) was known to some of the participants who considered the garments were expensive and outwith their price range for fashion.

The primers were successful as a vehicle for discussion and offered the opportunity to observe the participants evaluate the sustainable claims in relation to fashion criteria. Each contained information of sustainability that initiated a discussion in other contexts, such as food. The inclusion of the John Lewis enzyme washed label was less successful; the participants were mainly unaware of the use of chemicals in fashion production and therefore unaware of the implications. Within the context of the interview, many thought enzyme washing was a positive sustainable status. However, it remained as an interview primer to maintain continuity and also as it inspired a few participants to discuss the chemical application of Teflon.

Each interview lasted approximately between 50 and 90 minutes. Prior to starting all the interviews, the participants read and signed a consent form, were provided with additional information about the study and completed the

demographic information sheet (Warren, 2001; Brownlie and Horne, 2000), at which point they were allocated a participant number to ensure anonymity (Smith et al., 2009a; Soklaridis, 2009). Although participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw at any stage, this fortunately did not occur. The sample were found to be consistent with previous research, for example many purchased organic food, especially when the children were weaning and almost all participated in recycling behaviours. This is consistent with phenomenological research, acknowledging the boundaries of the sample as well as identifying participants who are affected by the phenomena (Smith et al., 2009a). Furthermore, the phenomenological interviews provided rich and comprehensive data in response to the research question.

Olaogun and Fatoki (2009) recommend that interview and interpretation process occur simultaneously, as it is the interpretation which determines the collection of data. Therefore, the interviews continued until no new emerging themes were introduced and the research reached data saturation (Hiller-Connell, 2010; Mason, 2010; Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Richards, 2005; Johnson, 2001; Bradley, 1993). At this stage a total of 28 interviews had been completed and details of the participants can be found in Appendix 7. However, efforts to manage the data through the analysis found the data collected was unwieldy. It is acknowledged in the literature (Hines and Quinn, 2007) that the generation of data requires careful consideration to control the number of emerging categories. Therefore, it was decided that two of the participants (P-10 and P-20) should be subject to an in-depth analysis and the remaining participants would contribute as supporting data, an approach typical of IPA (Smith et al., 2009a). The justification for the selection of two participants for case study analysis is offered in Chapter Five.

Although in retrospect it could be recognised that the data collection had reached saturation far before interviewing 28 participants; typically phenomenological research would include 3-6 participants (Smith et al., 2009a) or 5-25 participants (Creswell, 2007). The lack of clarification reflects



adaptation depending on the research question and quality of the data, especially as a large collection of data is not indicative of superior studies. Rather, it is the reflection of the data analysis which is evidence of quality. Therefore, stopping data collection earlier would have resulted in missing the contribution by P-20, who was selected as a case study. In fact, P-20 was unique in her approach to integrating sustainability into her everyday lifeworld, where ethical consumption behaviours were considered as more convenient. The inclusion of P-20 has resulted in obtaining an enhanced richness to the data and facilitated interesting theme development, enabling distinctive contributions. Similarly, the subsequent participants further enhance the theme development, albeit with less of an impact. Nevertheless, the research journey would have been less illuminating without the experience of learning to manage the data creatively and also the depth and magnitude of the data collected has the potential to contribute to a variety of research fields and theoretical frameworks.

#### **4.4.2: Interpreting the data**

The data were recorded digitally and transcribed verbatim prior to the interpretation process (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Kakkuri-Knuuttila et al., 2008). The recordings were stored sensitively to ensure data protection (Smith et al., 2009a) and the transcripts were rechecked for accuracy (Smith et al., 2009a; Llewellyn, 2003; Silverman, 2000). The interpretation phase followed Smith et al.'s (2009a) Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which explores the experience within the context it occurs. This approach is suitable when focusing on '*meaning and sense making*' within a specific context to understand the lived experience (Smith et al., 2009a: 45). As the interpretation is related to the '*lived experience*' (Thomson et al., 1989: 141), continual interpretation alongside the gathering of the data ensured the hermeneutic process of constant re-evaluation and continuous modification (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006; Thomson, 1991). This was aided by familiarity of the data, enabling the hermeneutic circle of interpreting pre-conceptions to developing meaning and enhancing understanding (Smith et al., 2009a; Richards, 2005; Hirshman and Holbrook,

1992). Smith et al. (2009a: 3) refer to exploring '*in detail what the experience is like*' as an iterative process. Furthermore, the process of data collection and interpretation could potentially deviate from initial pre-understanding and it may be relevant to revisit previous literature, as was evident in establishing the theoretical framework in Chapter Three; this is a typical characteristic of qualitative data (Bradley, 1993).

Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009: 580) believe the interpretation should '*be easily understood*', set in context and illustrated by relevant quotes. Similarly, the aim of IPA accumulates in detailed descriptions of the '*perceptions and understanding of the participants*' through establishing the phenomena that exists within a cohort (Smith et al., 2009a: 49). However, the quotes will require editing to ensure better understanding and impact, as often the spoken and written word can result in disjointedness (Poland, 2001). Poland (2001) recommends remaining true to the '*gist*' or significance of the underlying meaning through revealing the statements within context of the phenomena. Easterby-Smith et al. (2008: 183) suggest that dialogue can '*enable a researcher to build a complex picture of social situations in order to examine the actions of various actors in a story, and explore their own values, ideas and beliefs*'. Therefore, the interpretation will include analysis, set in the constructed '*real*' life social context within the account offered by the participants (Schwandt, 2003; Baker, 2001), relating to what is known objectively and subjectively both from the previous literature and information widely available.

IPA is interpretative, employing double hermeneutics, as the researcher interprets the participants interpretation to identify respondent-determined themes. Thus, the hermeneutic turn, will facilitate greater depth of the narrative, to offer phenomenological insights (Smith et al., 2009a). Therefore, an idiographic approach identifies similarities within the participants experiences as well as variations within the homogenous sample. Consequently, the interpretation is: hermeneutic, idiographic and contextual (Smith et al., 2009a). Utilising IPA will build upon existential phenomenology to enable meaning to derive from the data

as the participants engage with their environment and apply consciousness and awareness. The data were interpreted to develop theory, as a means of explaining the phenomenon and have the potential to guide future adoption of sustainable consumers' behaviours (Olaogun and Fatoki, 2009).

#### 4.4.3: Application of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The analysis of this data unfolded over several months. The two selected case studies (P-10 and P-20) were subjected to manual in-depth analysis, as directed by Smith et al. (2009a). This approach is consistent with IPA as it looks for supporting data for '*convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance*' (Smith et al., 2009: 79a) from a single case to multiple case. Initially, this began with a word document where each transcript was added centrally to a table of three columns (the analysed transcripts can be found in Appendices 9 and 10). The selected case studies analysis were examined singly, using the framework illustrated in Figure 4.1, then compared through iterative consideration by moving between the two narratives.

**Figure 4.1: The analysis framework**

| Broad Themes | Participants narrative | Descriptive, <i>linguistic</i> and <u>conceptual analysis</u> |
|--------------|------------------------|---|
|              |                        |   |

Smith et al. (2009a) advise that the right hand column will consider the semantic content, moving from the descriptive, linguistic to the conceptual and the right hand column should indicate the different forms of analysis. Therefore, the descriptive notes are displayed in purple ink with normal font, the linguistic notes are in orange with italic font and the conceptual interpretation indicated in blue ink and underlined. This meant that the narratives were read and re-read to determine the descriptive and linguistic content, what was said and how, for example with a sigh, a reduction in confidence, or laughter. This was followed by interpreting the narrative at a conceptual level, which took an interrogative form by attempting to apply meaning to the narrative, through understanding the underlying concepts. For example, some interviewees spoke

confidently about the topics in sentences which were clearly articulated and expressed, whereas others paused in between words, thought before speaking, or displayed little engagement with the topics. Further, laughter often occurred when discussing sensitive topics.

The main themes were inserted into the left hand column of the word document. This again resulted in another effort to make sense of the meaning, through grouping themes together and developing a structure. This process was continuously questioned and developed, through writing a descriptive paragraph as an introduction to the theme to ensure that the theme related to the participants narrative, a process that continued until it was considered that the theme represented the participants meaning. After this process was repeated a number of times, moving in between the two selected case studies, an effort was made to begin to consider broad themes. Initial themes were reconsidered and an effort was made to transfer those themes to the remaining participants.

The difficulty stemmed from having been imbued within the lifeworlds of P-10 and P-20, therefore, moving to the other participants lifeworlds and attempting to find commonality was not straightforward. The uniqueness of each participants lifeworld resulted in a different focus, for example P-1 was frustrated by finances which she believed reduced choice, whereas P-2 was very fashion-orientated and viewed ethics as separate to fashion selection. Further, P-4 was very focused on trying to determine if value was depicted in the pricing strategy, examining a metaphor of sofa retailers to understand the implications. This meant that the initial themes had to be viewed through various lens which were continuously questioned (Richards, 2005). Moving through the lifeworlds of the participants, it became clear that they were expressing value types, each focusing upon the value most important to them or adapting value to fit the specific requirement.

Once the broad themes were established, the remaining participants narratives were considered in relation to these themes and quotes were applied in

individual word documents for each participant (an example can be found in Appendix 11). The interpretations and quotes were pasted into individual word documents for each participant with the theme description as a heading. Writing up the findings and discussion began once this was completed. Simultaneously, a diary of evolving thoughts and key points made these concepts available outwith the formal process for consideration (Smith et al. 2009a). This is typical of qualitative research, where themes and ideas continually evolve through analysis as the project unfolds.

A brief descriptive overview of each participant was developed to provide better understanding of the diversity of each (Richards, 2005), as well as offering a description of their lifeworld, and can be found in Appendix 8. The analysis of this data has been written with rich description to indicate patterns and evolving themes, particularly to express the data as *'live'*, reflecting the lived experience (Richards, 2005: 128; Smith et al., 2009a). The purpose is to ensure the data is understandable and transparent from the emergence of conceptual to constructed theory, incorporating previous and external literature (Richards, 2005). The analysis will provide two outcomes; a model displaying the *'interplay of factors'* expressing the complexity of applying morals and values to fashion consumption as discussed by participants (Richards, 2005: 133; Olaogun and Fatoki, 2009), as well as formatting the results into a conceptual framework (Gray, 2004).

#### **4.5: Assuring quality within the sample fame**

Within the paradigm there are four accepted concepts of quality; *'validity, reliability, generalisability and carefulness'* (Stenbacka, 2001: 551). As it is not the purpose of this research to *'challenge theories'*, the purpose is to explore consumer perception of the data conceptualised from previous literature, incorporating both fashion and ethical consumption to define existing barriers and potential solutions (Thomson, 1991: 65). This will provide an understanding of motives and behaviours reflecting current lifestyles and

availability of current products and services on UK high streets; thereby, allowing for the development of greater depth, as the experience is particular, rather than general (Smith et al., 2009a; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). To provide assurance of accuracy and confidence in the chosen methodology, the paradigm and actual methods used in acquiring and interpreting the data (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Appleton, 1995), the procedures implemented will be detailed within this section.

#### **4.5.1: Reliability**

Reliability is concerned with the replication of the research, ensuring the same results from the same procedure, to ensure the methods applied were vigorous (Collis and Hussey, 2009). However, in qualitative research this is an impossible task, as each participant is distinct and their lived experience cannot be replicated, nor should this be attempted (Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Richards, 2005; Stenbacka, 2001). Therefore, the research process should be transparent to enable a judgement to be made (Richards, 2005). To ensure the reliability of the research methods, the phenomenological interviews were recorded, transcribed and checked by the researcher against the recordings to reduce the likelihood of error prior to analysing the transcripts. Reliability is also addressed in Section 3.4, where the research journey is described and transparency is offered within the Appendices, where the analytical process has been included. Therefore reliability can be deduced through transparency (Richards, 2005).

#### **4.5.2: Validity**

The validity of the data is based upon '*trustworthiness, authenticity and credibility*' (Creswell, 2009: 191). This can include triangulating the data with subsequent data or quantitative data (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Richards, 2005). Richards (2005) warns against triangulation in certain circumstances, believing this can divert attention from the findings. Further, trustworthiness, rather than credibility, can be established through transparency of the theoretical framework, paradigm and research methods (McGregor and

Murnane, 2010; Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Richards, 2005). Transparency refers to the description of the research process to allow for a comprehensive judgement, including reflective acknowledgement of subjectivity (McGregor and Murnane, 2010; Soklaridis, 2009). Validity of phenomenological interpretation will offer a clarification of the phenomena through participants '*beliefs and values*' (Hirshman and Holbrook, 1992: 95). This can be strengthened by pursuing data collection until saturation is reached (Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Richards, 2005; Lincoln and Guba, 2003; Bradley, 1993). Validity is reliant upon gathering data from '*well chosen*' participants who live within the context of the phenomena and report on their experience '*freely*' (Stenbacka, 2001). Accuracy and transparency can be clarified by the participants who can validate the findings within the context of categorisation of descriptive themes. Therefore three participants were re-interviewed after the interpretation phase was completed and asked to comment upon the results (Creswell, 2009; Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Richards, 2005) to enhance the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2009).

The role of the researcher is vital within qualitative research as the researcher's interest in the topic can affect the validity of the research. Olaogun and Fatoki (2009) suggest this can be controlled by comparing the collected data against previous literature looking at a similar phenomenon (for example, Hiller Connell, 2010; Fisher et al., 2008; Joergens, 2006; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). While efforts were made to exclude researcher bias, it should still be acknowledged the interpretation of the data was influenced by the researcher's stance including gender, socioeconomic standing, experience and engagement with the topic. Reporting reflection (Section 4.5.6) will add to the transparency of the research results (Creswell, 2009; Pink, 2005), through addressing the issue subjectively, where the researcher has an understanding of the context within which the phenomenon is situated (Olsen, 1995; Appleton, 1995). If validity can be assured, then the results may be of more interest to fashion retailers, through capturing the dilemma of fashion consumption juxtaposed within a moral framework reflecting the lived experience.

### 4.5.3: Generalisability

*Generalisation is concerned with the application of research result to cases or situations beyond those examined in the study.*

(Collis and Hussey, 2009: 65)

The aim within a positivist paradigm is to identify variables which can be applied generally to a population (Ehrenberg, 2002; Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Although it is necessary to ensure the approach in conducting research is reliable, valid and generalisable (Appleton, 1995), qualitative research is less reliant upon determining generalisability (Creswell, 2009; Collis and Hussey, 2009). Therefore, the findings of this research report upon the phenomena as perceived by those who experience the phenomena, through the provision of sufficient data to allow a judgement on the results (Creswell, 2009; Sloan, 2009; Soklaridis, 2009; Bradley, 1993). The data generated are particular to the sample in response to the phenomena being explored (Smith et al., 2009a). This causes conflict, as without generalisability, validity can be affected (Stenbacka, 2001).

Some researchers attempt to develop theory through grounded research which can then be developed into a generalisable framework (Saunders, 2010). However, this is not the purpose of this research. Therefore the study will not develop characteristics of the type of person likely to seek ethical fashion, nor hypothesise how many are likely to do so. Instead the research will explore how the participants view their role in consuming fashion ethically and how this impacts upon purchase criteria (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). Creswell (2009) believes that '*particularity*' as opposed to generalisability is the purpose of qualitative research. Similarly, Bradley (1993: 438) proposes the purpose as '*broaden[ing] the scope*' of the research agenda and Szmigin et al. (2009: 229) refer to '*advance[ing] theoretical arguments*'. The findings may propose some generalisability to concurrent themes discussed by participants, similar to '*replication logic*' found within experiential research (Creswell, 2009: 193) or '*analytical generalisation*' where consumer behaviour can be analysed to



develop emerging themes or motivation or barriers (Stenbacka, 2001). As Collis and Hussey (2009: 65) suggest, even a single case can be representative if the analysis '*capture[s] the interactions and characteristics of the phenomenon*'. This is supported by Smith et al. (2009a: 29) who describe one influence of IPA as ideography identifying the experience as '*embodied, situated and perceptual*'.

#### **4.5.4: Limitations**

Limitations are assumed, as the sample is not representative of the population (Carey et al., 2008). The research will have criticism regarding the anecdotal nature of qualitative data and the researcher considered the application of triangulation to access a larger sample and ensure credibility (Nutt Williams and Morrow, 2009; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). However, Stenbacka (2001) believes that no apology should be made regarding the small sample size, as dissemination of the research purpose and methodology will justify the strategy and the transparency of the process. This is especially true when a larger sample would not benefit from such depth. Further, Lincoln and Guba (2003: 285) argue that post-positive enquiries struggle for recognition, due to under-representation in academia and phenomenological research develops '*unique perspective[s] to understanding*'. Even small samples present empirical findings, which can at some level be generalised analytically within the chosen sample and careful application of the methods should result in securing the purpose of the research (Richards, 2005; Stenbacka, 2001).

The sample was restricted geographically to Edinburgh and the Lothians, resulting in responses which are regionally specific, where data from a different city or country could alter the findings, allowing a greater insight into consumer behaviour (Jones and Kim, 2010). Moreover, the findings were interpreted by one researcher and were not subject to collaborative deliberation (Spriggle, 1994). Finally, the research topic would benefit from a longitudinal approach. Fisher et al. (2008) suggest understanding of how consumption will change through greater dissemination of knowledge and currently fashion retailers are introducing ethical collections, examples include M&S development of the Plan A

campaign, H&M's Conscious Collection (Howells, 2011). However, this research is limited in time, requiring completion within three years. Despite these limitations, the research will be useful as a comparative study or a foundation for future research development. Ideas for future research are offered in Chapter Eight.

#### **4.5.5: Outcomes**

As established in Chapter Two, ethical consumption is complex, as is fashion consumption, and combining the two concepts is viewed as an oxymoron. However, this research seeks to understand the cognitive processing undertaken by consumers to deliberate their ability to adopt sustainability in the context of fashion consumption. The outcome of the research will include the development of a conceptual framework (Schwandt, 2003) based upon the participants' particular experience. Hansen (2005) proposes a conceptual framework to understand and integrate aspects of various (cognitive and affective) perspectives of decision-making. The results extend previous theories and demonstrate consumers' experiences of incorporating sustainable behaviours with fashion consumption within their lifeworlds. This will explicitly offer marketers a framework for developing future marketing strategies and retailers can implement consumer value into product and service development.

Basic marketing principles include providing consumers with products that fulfil needs and desires in order to meet organisational strategies, increase market share, encourage customer loyalty and maximise profits and this is normally achieved through customer satisfaction (Jobber and Fahy, 2009). Fashion consumption research has mainly been concerned with conspicuous and hedonistic consumption, as marketers and retailers seek to understand what drives consumption (McEachern et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2007). Paradoxically, choosing ethical products and services indicates consideration for those in production (Aspers, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2007; Schröder and McEachern, 2004), expressing a dislike for exploitation of those in a weaker position and as such, it can be an emotive process (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005; Park

and Stoel, 2005; Smith, 1999). This is an important barrier to sustainable fashion, consumers reject ethical fashion when it does not allow for an expression of self (Hiller Connell, 2010; Valor, 2007; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). However, the potential exists to expand upon sustainable options, such as Fairtrade and recycling initiatives, in a similar mass-market context to that of food and building upon the success of the Fairtrade logo and free-range options.

#### 4.5.6: Reflections

Reflection is increasingly recognised as an important component of learning, through making sense of the experience (Bolton, 2005). Therefore, the shift between objectivity and subjectivity determines the perspective. This section seeks to reflect on the research approach subjectively and is described in first person narrative to delineate the experience (Bolton, 2005).

The phenomenological interviews were considered retrospectively to have provided insightful and honest responses. This is consistent with the literature, where an informal manner and a conversational interview is thought beneficial for generating honest responses, particularly when the topic is sensitive (Warren, 2001). Some of the participants were concerned that they would seem uncaring or unsympathetic in their response and were keen to establish the practice of other working mothers for assurance. When the interview was held in the participant's home, they were keen to be hospitable and whilst making refreshments small conversations offered this opportunity as well as enabling the participants to ask some questions about the direction and stage of the research. Upon reflection, perhaps more time should have been spent conversing prior to the interviews to encourage the participants to feel more relaxed.

When meeting a participant for the first time, such a rapport has to be developed immediately. Nevertheless, there was a connection, in that they had consented participation after being referred via a pilot participant, and there was a mutual bond through motherhood and multitasking work. As the

interviews progressed, it was thought that taking the opportunity to establish a rapport was beneficial overall. I attempted to make small talk initially, asking about their children and speaking about mine, feeling that human nature dictates that sharing experiences reduces inhibitions and certainly found that each time, after the interview had ended, each participant asked questions in greater depth about my research, and my behaviours within the context of the interview, and spoke more freely. And every time, I wished that I had left the recorder on to capture this additional data! However, perhaps as the recorder was not running, this enabled the participant to speak more freely. Only once did a participant ask me to switch the recorder back on, as she wanted to make another contribution to the data collection. This may have been because rather than my role as being passive and listening (as I was during the interview), the discussion was more of a flow of conversation and the participant felt more involved through listening and absorbing new information. During the interviews, I answered questions which were asked of me, but I did not really offer any information, opinion or contribute to the conversation, and this may have made the participants feel uncomfortable.

After the interviews, I sometimes received emails from the participants, who had started to notice ethical initiatives within high street fashion retailers and they were surprised to have seen it after the interview, but discussing their opinions had clearly opened their consciousness to the issues concerned. This was something described by Soklaridis (2009) that can be taken as evidence to the participants' involvement and interest in the study. Many of the participants expressed disinterest in their appearance or engagement with fashion, however, this was not obvious from their appearance. I wondered if I should have taken photographs of the participants, to determine the participants fashion involvement. However, I considered that it was quite intrusive and I was worried it may jeopardise their willingness to participate, nor sure whether it would add to the research. Therefore, I relied upon their description and perspective.

During the interview, some participants did not particularly engage with the labels, did not pick them up or look at the back, just glanced at them; whereas others held them, turned them over and read fully, often out loud and discussed the content. The questions asked were open, unless clarifying comments made by the participant. Not all participants were comfortable with the unstructured format, or the lack of questions from the researcher. Smith et al. (2009a) recommend in this instance to have some questions for participants who are uncomfortable with unstructured interviews. Two of the participants answered the questions instantly without elaboration, and although an effort was made to draw an additional response, this was fruitless. Confidence of executing the methods ensured that silences were not required to be filled and allowed the participant to think and respond and although this development was useful overall, it did not suit all participants. It was deemed most relevant when the participant was comfortable, relaxed and confident about their sense of reasoning, for example less concerned with giving the '*right answer*' (Smith et al., 2009a).

#### **4.6: Conclusion**

This chapter described the methodology selected for the research to establish the philosophical and theoretical underpinning depicting the principle beliefs. The paradigm determines the crucial aspect of replicating the consumers' perspective to understand the potential for sustainable fashion within the mass-market. As such, the research follows post-positivism, in particular social constructionism enables the understanding of the consumer in an environment which is socially influenced, therefore informed objectively and interpreted subjectively. To understand the context within which consumption is situated, existential phenomenology offers an opportunity to view the experience holistically, for example situational factors which impinge upon consumption. Consequently, the research methods are qualitative and phenomenological interviews offered a platform for exploration. This indicates that the role of the researcher is paramount, to ensure dominance does not affect the data

collection and as such, the researcher adopts an emphatic role, based on shared experience and understanding.

Primers were utilised as a vehicle for discussion and offered an opportunity to observe the criteria evaluated within decision-making. The criteria for the sample were introduced and justified, influenced by previous literature as a basis to build upon what is already known. This is an important component to the research, impacting upon the data collection. An initial pilot of five purposively selected participants were followed by 23 participants obtained through snowball sampling (totalling 28 participants). The data were transcribed and interpreted using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, enabling the themes to emerge from the narratives, as will be explored in the following three chapters.

# Chapter Five: Presenting the findings and discussion

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## 5.1: Introduction

The following three chapters present the empirical findings exploring the participants' experience as they select fashion for themselves and their children and the analysis in relation to the literature where it is relevant. This chapter, the first of the three chapters, presents an idiographic analysis of two selected case study participants to explore their lived experience (Thomson et al., 1989) and to understand the discourse within the observed phenomenon: perceptions of sustainable fashion consumption. The chapter begins by outlining the rationale for selecting the particular participants' narratives before exploring their lifeworld and establishing the themes developed from their narratives. Chapters Six and Seven will further explore the themes developed from the case study participants and the remaining data (all 28 of the participants) will be utilised as supporting the themes, alongside the related theory.

## 5.2: Contextualising the data

The prevailing characteristic of phenomenological research is that the research themes derive entirely from the data. The themes selected were considered to be the key accounts described by the participants' as they recalled their experiences of the fashion consumption and perceptions of sustainability. Typical of qualitative research, the literature underpinning the research was not identified prior to the data analysis stage (Bansal and Corley, 2012) and was subsequently sought to explain the data. The data is underpinned by a number of theoretical lenses, such as constructing a sense of self, and an interplay of internal and external influences from which developed perceptions of value. The themes evolved though looking at the case study narratives as a whole (a view into the participants' lifeworld) to understand the components of their

everyday behaviours, in an effort to understand the structure of *'things themselves'* (Husserl, cited in Smith et al., 2009a: 12).

Such an approach is typical of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), where the emphasis is to determine the foundation of meaning making embedded within involvement and experience, reflecting both the internal conditions of the participants' lifeworld and external social influences. To manage the data and gain better understanding of their lived experience (Thompson et al., 1989), the focus centred on two participants to develop the main themes (Fournier, 1998). The rationale for selecting those two participants is explained below and is followed by an overview of the selected participants' lived experience. However, it must be noted that themes developed were influenced by the selected case studies and had other participants been chosen, divergent themes would have been emerged.

### **5.3: The selected case studies: participants 10 and 20**

Participants 10 (P-10) and 20 (P-20) were selected as case studies due to the evidential impact motherhood had upon their conceptualisation of and perceived ability to integrate sustainability within consumption behaviours. Although it was acknowledged that the literature depicted motherhood as influencing sustainable choices through consideration of the environment for future generations (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) and as motivating organic food consumption to avoid their children from ingesting pesticides (Shaw et al., 2006), the impact that motherhood had upon the proclivity for sustainability in everyday experiences was not anticipated within the research design. The findings identify a much broader discourse of sustainability influencing a number of values concerning perceptions of being a good mother, educating children to be good citizens and obtaining pleasure from observing the children's emerging socialisation. Further, motherhood altered the participants' discourse through recognition that, although they retained the same persona, post-motherhood involved reconstruction to incorporate their new role as



mothers and this manifested itself in both their portrayal of identity and their attitudes and beliefs. This notion of reconstruction was ongoing as the children matured.

Although other participants noted that motherhood influenced both their moral sentiment and their ability to align this to behaviours, for P-10 and P-20 this was more pronounced. P-10 identified herself as morally engaged, which manifested itself in behaviours prior to becoming a mother. Motherhood was perceived to have restricted her participation in sustainability, primarily through an appeal to a higher loyalty of familial provisioning:

*I wholeheartedly would say that my philosophy, certainly about food and possibly about clothes as well changed. A lot of my morals went out of the window. I was vegetarian, I was, kind of quite right-on ... [and] there I was in Tesco's buying a battery farmed chicken at £2.00. Before I had children, I would never have dreamt that I would have done that. (P-10)*

Prior to becoming a mother, P-10 felt able to consider the moral consequences of her behaviours. This was especially notable in her choice of food, such as being a vegetarian. She describes her approach a 'right-on', a liberal approach to describe a desire for equitable societal well-being. However, the strain on the family budget and the need to provide her children with nourishing food led to purchasing inexpensive animal products, where the lower price was most likely indicative of inhumane conditions (i.e. caged chickens). This contrast seems astounding to P-10, due to the contradiction of her moral philosophy and her actual behaviours. Therefore, it can be seen that motherhood had altered P10's ability to prioritise her moral philosophy. In contrast, it was motherhood which resulted in P-20 reconsidering her consumption behaviours and sustainability, coinciding with weaning her first child.

*We switched to all organic, food-wise when, [first child] was weaning, we read a book on it and ... I suppose you are a bit precious about it, you do breast milk and they have never had anything and then all of a sudden you are giving them food and then ... you are like, what's the best possible thing you could give them. (P- 20)*

Organic produce was considered by P-20 to be the best food she could offer her child. Initially, the child was fed solely on breast milk, which is positioned socially as giving the child the best start in life (Catteneo, 2004). P-20 further explains:

*It is because of the children ... before we had children we used to eat food in boxes from supermarkets, ready-made food, we didn't care ... we were rushing out and doing other things. (P-20)*

The quotes illustrate the reflexivity incurred by motherhood for P-20; motherhood has provided an opportunity to stop and reassess her behaviours and question the wider impact. The quotes illustrate the impact motherhood has had on both P-10 and P-20, albeit from polarised perspectives; nevertheless, motherhood altered their discourse and their lifeworlds. The analysis also revealed that motherhood had altered their perception of identity due to the significance of their role. Bailey (1999) posits that high and late modernity, as developed by Giddens (1992; 1991), enables women to reconceptualise themselves within the boundaries of subjectification. For example, Bailey (1999) identified that pregnancy provided an opportunity for her participants to be excused temporarily from their previous notions of self. The similarity between Bailey's research and this research is that motherhood extends from post-pregnancy, resulting in the participants reconceptualising their previous notions of self within a competing discourse of moral sentiment, self-identity and familial provisioning, as evident within their existential lifeworlds. This ethos is referred to within this thesis as renegotiating self-identity through recognising the tensions which exist in a multi-faceted lifeworld, where egocentricity is compromised through merging the needs and wants of others in the family structure.

The next section will further explore the lifeworlds of P-10 and P20 in-depth to illustrate the development of the emergent themes in conjunction with the overall aim and objectives of the research. To progress with further discussion of the case study participants at this stage would result in repetition further in the chapter. Starting with P-10, the in-depth descriptions of both participants'

lifeworlds will be followed by establishing the main themes of the research. The case study participant's discourse included: self, as depicted through self-identity and self-conviction as motivating behaviours, particularly optimum mothering; lifeworld management; understanding sustainable implications; and transferring sustainable principles from the context of food to fashion. The full transcripts of both interviews, including the analysis and development of themes can be found in Appendices 9 and 10. Chapters Six and Seven will provide evidence of the relevant supporting comments from the other participants to further develop the themes.

#### **5.4: Lifeworld of P-10**

P-10 was in her late forties and lived with her partner and their two daughters, aged eight and six. P-10's narrative incorporated each of the roles she experienced within her multi-faceted lifeworld, and interacting within each role contributed to her identity formation. For example, she was actively pursuing an MSc to improve her employment prospects (as discussed during the casual conversation that preceded the interview) alongside her part-time job in the tourist industry. Consequently, P-10's lifeworld consisted of part-time work, attending university and her family. This multifaceted lifeworld illustrates that P-10 participated in the external world outside the family, alongside her internal family world. This approach was identified by Bailey (1999), where the dissolution of traditional familial roles is actively renegotiated and anachronistic social rules are reinvented. P-10 was not following traditional expectations of either a stay-at-home mum or student, but her lifeworld was under reconstruction and this influenced her value systems.

When presented with the labels utilised as primers, the participants elicited decision-making. P-10 reiterated each time that it would be the style of the garment that would invoke her attention and draw her to seek further information from the label. However, it should be acknowledged that prior to browsing fashion, retailers were selected based upon a style alignment and

acceptable price points. Once attracted by style, P-10 would consider the price in relation to the composition which reflected perceptions of quality: product, price, quality.

Consistent with the majority of the participants, P-10 began with expressing her approach to fashion consumption, with the initial focus on selecting fashion for herself. She attempts to describe her involvement with fashion when asked to describe fashion consumption experiences for both herself and her children, and what factors are considered, including ethical concerns.

*Firstly, I consider image, definitely, I'm a lady of a certain age [laughs]! There's an image I feel I want to, no, not that I want to portray ... I'm conscious of fashion, I like fashion, I like to keep up with trends, but I am also aware of my age so I'm not going to get the latest thing out of Topshop, for instance. But then looking back at when I was younger, I have never been a dedicated follower of fashion! I like things that are on trend but things that are very suited to both my age and my body-shape as well. I don't know [if] I would really consider ethical implications, I'm aware of them, I feel I'm educated in them but, ... the financial, [sighs] constraints might, because I have a young family, .. outweigh ... my morals.*

P-10 recognises that her image is representative of her concept of self that she presents socially and this defines her involvement with fashion as indicative of her active participation in an external world. She recognises that her image is a 'portrayal' which represents her identity, and this is a visual communication. Through expressing an awareness of new trends and the desire to maintain an up-to-date style, P-10 offers evidence of her participation in external world. P-10 also mentions her age as something to incorporate when selecting fashion. This reflects that much of fashion marketing is targeted to younger consumers and aging requires adaptation to continue to be relevant for reconstructing notions of self. However, there is also an awareness of identity under reconstruction, since P-10 has to fit in with a number of peer groups and her re-assessment of self includes exploring new career options in academia, whilst juggling her current work and child responsibilities. Age and pregnancy both affect body-shape, and fashion retailers, of which Topshop is an example, primarily produce fashion that suits a younger body-shape. Similarly, Topshop

closely follows rapid trend changes following the fast fashion model of new garments being available every six weeks (Jackson, 2007; Christopher et al., 2004); therefore, P-10 is expressing that she is aware of new fashion trends, however the styles are not always applicable and she incorporates new trends into her individual approach.

P-10 was also morally aware, an ethos which had previously transformed her behaviours. As previously stated, she had chosen to be vegetarian prior to having her children and had also been involved in wildlife conservation, which reflected an awareness of consumer behaviour impacting on the environment. Although P-10 has an awareness of ethical implications of fashion consumption '*I'm aware of them, I feel I'm educated in them*', this is not something that is considered when evaluating fashion consumption. This is attributed to an assumption that to purchase sustainably-produced fashion would incur a price premium, whereby having a young family '*outweighs*' participation in sustainable consumption, as an appeal to a higher loyalty.

Reflecting back upon the interview as a whole, it is clear that she perceived herself as ethical before becoming a mother. However, she explains that '*a lot of my morals went out of the window*' as the ability to continue actively pursuing her moral agenda had deteriorated post-motherhood. She seems to have '*suspended*' her ethical self, citing the financial constraints incurred from having a young family as restricting her continuation to be ethical. She sighs and carefully crafts the words to explain her approach, illustrating her sense of loss that her behaviours are out of sync with her moral sentiment, despite an awareness of the issues which would once have been important as depicting her sense of self as a moral agent. Furthermore, despite previously adopting a humorous approach to describing her sense of identity, using the clichéd song-words: '*I was never a dedicated follower of fashion*', during this next part of the interview, discussing ethics; her voice is more serious and focused.

P-10 began by describing her last fashion consumption experience, which centred on familial provisioning and occurred in Primark. Stating this up front

feels almost like a confession, perhaps a reflection that Primark has received allegations of worker exploitation on numerous occasions (McDougal, 2009; Learner-Kinglake, 2009; Wylie, 2007), including child labour.

*Yes well I've just had a large splurge in Primark. I'm in two minds about that, I've ... spent one hundred pounds in Primark for my two girls for this season. Hopefully I won't have to buy them clothes again. Obviously they got a lot of clothes for that, I didn't think it was excessive, I felt it was things that they needed, that they have grown out of, they grow so quickly. One of them has come to bits already [and] I had to sew back on a ruffle on the back of a t-shirt.*

Expressing that she is in two minds implies that she had second thoughts about whether shopping in Primark was an acceptable option. However, she stresses that her children 'needed' the clothing due to their continuous growth, and this made the consumption behaviour different to 'excessive' consumption, borne out of desire. This quote is apologetic, particularly acknowledging that the quality is poor purports to a self-sacrifice; this was not a self-indulgent luxury shop, the consumption experience was necessitated by familial provisioning as an appeal to a higher loyalty, that of the children. Within P-10's lifeworld, the children's need for provisioning is the current pressing concern. However, within this consumption experience are underlying tensions yet to be acknowledged, as P-10 feels obligated to defend shopping in Primark.

*They will not need any other clothes now, till possibly the spring. That is my defence for my big shop at Primark.*

Indicating that the clothing she purchased would last the children for the season reflects her discomfort of shopping in Primark and P-10 implies this is an isolated behaviour. P-10 did not discuss allegations that Primark utilises exploitation to facilitate low price points initially, although the underlying assumption is that she recognises that shopping in Primark is contentious. She notes the fashion was inexpensive and expresses that she understands the low price is indicative of low quality garments.

P-10 then focuses on the functions of Primark as a fashion retailer. This is both an appeal to her fashion-conscious self and reflective of fashion marketing, where strategies communicate fashion and price as the salient message to attract consumers.

*I do like Primark ... for children, I think there is a fabulous choice and I think it is very on trend ... for young girls.*

It is important to note that P-10 distances her own fashion consumption from Primark and she is focusing solely on her daughters and facilitating their needs. Consequently, shopping in Primark enables her to align with a number of other values, such as aesthetic value through enabling her children to have access to fashionable clothing, efficiency through purchasing all the clothing required for the forthcoming season in one shopping experience, all which was made possible through inexpensive price points. The trade-off for the low price was an inferior quality, which was overcome by P-10 repairing clothing to ensure it lasted longer. Furthermore, not only was P-10 able to satisfy her children's needs, but exceeded them through providing them with fashionable clothes, thus contributing to their self-esteem. Simultaneously, P-10 experienced feelings of esteem by providing fashion for her children which made them happy. The pleasure gained from this was evident in the following quote:

*I do like to be on trend and I like my girls have all the stuff that they like. And they gave me a huge big fashion show after going to Primark and we had such, such a good time.*

The 'fashion show' evidently inspired belonging through this shared experience between a mother and her daughters. When considering the nearness of this experience, the pleasure gained and the instinct for a mother to act as a caregiver, the prevalence to prioritise familial provisioning is relevant within the context of P-10's day-to-day life. This is reiterated she says: 'I like my girls [to] have all the stuff that they like', whereby the pleasure experienced by the children is a tangible marker of the shopping experience.

The strong sense of style expressed by P-10 was echoed by her daughters, who had preferences of style that their mother adhered to. When evaluating the children's clothing, she reiterated that she would only consider styles which were accepted by her daughters, stating that '*my girls are quite picky*' and prefer clothes that are symbolic of their gender: '*if it was a boys fit of shirt, not a chance*'. As a result of this established style preference, if P-10 purchases clothing disliked by her daughters, they refuse to wear it. Thus, P-10 is avoiding a potential source of argument and protecting the family income by insuring the clothing is accepted by her daughters and avoids wasted consumption (Boden, 2006). P-10's daughters are also participating in an external world where peer acceptance enhances their sense of self. Giddens (1992: 96) refers to this mediation as a '*negotiated commitment*' where an egalitarian relationship is developed. P-10, for both her own and her daughters' fashion selection, prioritises style; although she likes the sustainable status conveyed in the labels, without complying with the desired style preference, sustainably-produced fashion is insufficient.

*I wouldn't think differently about it, ... it would make me feel better about buying it, but if it didn't look right ... I wouldn't say, well I'll let that go and just buy it because of that [meaning sustainable production].*

P-10 suggests that to think differently, she would have to substitute style for sustainability. This quote is a reflection that sustainable fashion consumption requires a sacrifice, such as style, price or accessibility. P-10 believes sustainable fashion is unfashionable, more expensive and not available on the high street. Hudson and Hudson (2003) believe that within capitalist societies, production is obscured by the distance between production and consumption, as marketing focuses consumers to evaluate attributes from a personal perspective based on the garments characteristics. From this perspective, needs and values are positioned from ownership and personal satisfaction (Workman and Studak, 2006; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989), consumers are not primed to consider production. Thus, fashion marketing intermediaries centre upon attracting consumers through fashion orientation and price. Nevertheless, as P-



10 illustrates in the above quote, the inclusion of sustainable production leads to altruistic feelings.

Although P-10 alludes that shopping from Primark may not align with her moral perspective, she does not acknowledge worker exploitation until prompted (by the EJF label). As a response to this shopping experience which may constitute unethical behaviour, P-10 begins to focus her narrative on behaviours where she feels confident that her behaviour is ethical:

*I do recycle most things in my life, I recycle clothes, ... I take the clothes that my girls have outgrown to a colleague at work, you know, I take them on my bike.*

P-10 passes on children's clothes which her daughters have outgrown for further wear, which according to Allwood et al. (2006) constitutes as sustainable fashion behaviour. Not only does P-10 recycle, but she travels by bicycle, another sustainable behaviour, which is included in this quote as to further endorse the sustainable behaviours adopted. P-10 is suggesting that, although the approach to actual consumption may not be sustainable, once owned and in her control, behaviours are sustainable. This is evident through ensuring the garment is wearable through repairing when necessary (another of Allwood et al.'s sustainable fashion behaviours) and recycling at the end of life. This appears to be a reflection of diluting negative practice by contextualising the range of sustainable behaviours she contributes to, suggesting that in the context of her everyday behaviours, shopping in Primark is insignificant. Consequently, this could be recognised as a trade-off or adopting a flexible approach (Szmigin et al., 2009; Parsons et al., 2009), whereby participation in sustainability occurs when possible through recognition that exclusive sustainable behaviours are complex within modern family lifeworlds.

The other area in which P-10 felt confident in her moral approach was through the reuse of shopping bags to avoid the need for a plastic bag. She had adopted what she referred to as a '*militant*' approach, whereby her awareness of the

negative consequences of plastic bag waste was inspired by her conservational work.

*Yes, I always use them and I have got loads of them, I've got a Bodyshop one and Primark and, loads of different ones, ... I always take bags with me. And I shop in Lidl, purely because I like the fact that you have to pay for bags. I've always liked that. I've shopped in Lidl for years, and everybody moans about the plastic bags and I think it's great. Lidl were the forerunners of that. But now other, other supermarkets are, are changing. I'm all for that and I just **hate** plastic bags, I really love, I have done a lot of conservation work, I've been very much into wildlife and I, you ... hear horror stories about ... whales, crustaceans, ... mistaking plastic bags for jellyfish ... I just hate all that, and the fact that they don't break down, ... it's so unnecessary. You do not need plastic bags, but I think it has to come from the shops. I say, I don't need a bag [but] they do it automatically and then I will maybe have another couple of things and they will say, are you sure you don't want a bag, and I will say no I don't want a bag. I don't go in with a bag because I think I am only going in for milk, ... then I'm annoyed with myself, thinking God, I should have brought my canvas bag, but I am so determined not to take a bag, and I always say, I don't want a bag and sometimes I have been asked three times and I say, I **don't** want a bag.*

This quote illustrates that P-10 is very involved with the movement to reduce plastic bag use through the inclusion of emotive language such as 'love' for the environment and 'hate' for plastic bags. She has a number of canvas bags purchased from shops to avoid plastic bag use. This extends from her own behaviours to making a judgement on a retailer due to their policy, and aligning with a retailer due to a shared preference to encourage consumers to reduce plastic bag use, where it was viewed that retailer employees should not automatically put goods in a bag, but to ask consumers and act as a prompt or nudge for sustainability.

From the quote, it can also be deduced that her behaviour has been motivated through understanding the negative consequences of plastic bags discarded into the environment. P-10 states the detrimental consequences of plastic bags in the ocean, whereby animals eat plastic bags mistaking them for food, as highlighted by environmental campaigners (Barry, 2009). These 'horror stories' are often represented visually by pictures, increasing the impact: the detrimental cause and effect can be assessed, reducing ambiguity and the ability

to recall the important issues (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a; Nisbett et al., 1982b). This resulted in P-10 questioning her use of plastic bags which constitute litter after a limited lifespan and resulted in her concluding that avoiding taking a plastic bag reduces waste in the environment. Her own individual behaviour contributes to this reduction. Consequently, P-10 views plastic bags as '*unnecessary*', implying that avoiding plastic bags altogether is possible. From this we can deduce that when P-10 understands the consequences, she feels motivated to belong to the movement to bring about change.

This contrast against the norms of society, whereby P-10 states that '*everybody moans about plastic bags*'; however, the charge, no matter how small, still '*forces*' consumers to think whether they need to take a plastic bag. This links into behaviour economics, whereby a loss is perceived greater than a gain (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000). Perhaps consumers believe they have experienced a loss by not receiving a bag or paying for a bag when they used to be free. P-10 has also noticed a social change toward plastic bags, whereby retailers like Lidl began the movement to reduce plastic bags (whether this was motivated through environmental concern or finances is unknown by consumers). Further, other supermarkets are responding to consumer engagement with sustainability, through encouraging reuse of plastic bags with green points (Yates, 2009). P-10 believes this movement is evolving slowly and that retailers could do more to encourage consumers, particularly by not '*automatically*' assuming that consumers require a plastic bag. In her own lifeworld, P-10 is educating her children about the environmental consequences through rejecting plastic bags, an effort that she has attempted to transfer to her partner without much success. Dobscha and Ozanne (2001) likened socialisation of children as developing awareness for the world and more likely to implement sustainable behaviours as adults. This view can be extended to P-10 educating her children to be citizens of a global world through minimising detrimental consequences of consumption.

The militant approach of P-10 to avoid taking a plastic bag was not adopted by her partner, who passively continued to take a bag; she states '*that sums it up*' as he '*couldn't be bothered*' to actively engage and say no. Without the conviction that plastic bags are detrimental, motivation is reduced. Further, P-10 was one of the few participants who took a bag when fashion shopping, an example of transferring sustainable principles from the context of food to fashion. Taking a bag when shopping is a visual representation of sustainable engagement (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Cherrier, 2006) and P-10 was aware that this choice was a visual statement in wider society:

*I took my Primark bag to [laughing] university the other day! I was actually thinking, ... it is ridiculous at my age [laughing]! Because the last time I studied was, I think I graduated in 1982 ... I am not really in that realm and I am obviously a lot older and I was thinking, [laughing] what will people think I am like [laughing]! Schemey, ... university person with this, Primark bag! But, ... it's actually a good size and, to be honest, I don't really have the ego. I am not really bothered about that kind of thing and stuff, but it did kind of cross my mind, about, walking about a university with a Primark bag. I think that they are, ... quite a stylish, thing ... it's actually better quality than their clothes, ... [laughing]! It doesn't actually fall to bits, ... and I quite like the way they are designed, ... it sort of tucks under you, [motions to her arm].*

This quote explores visual representation: although P-10 is demonstrating her ethos towards sustainability, this is intertwined with recognition that she is also promoting the retailer Primark, an inexpensive fashion retailer alleged of garment-worker exploitation. She is questioning the social convention of her patronage of Primark, but also expressing uncertainty within her situational lifeworld. As a mature student, she feels out of her depth in the university environment, and acknowledging uncertainty of what constitutes acceptable behaviours. Coupled with the gap in her education, where she has been working and focusing on being a mother, she feels different to the other students and is aware she may be judged by them. Using the word '*schemey*', she suggests that her behaviour is indicative of class, Primark shoppers being of a lower class than university students. Willems et al. (2011) identify that shopping bags depicting a retailers' patronage contribute to forming an impression of the user.

Nevertheless, she doesn't *'have the ego'* to let this worry her; most likely a reflection that in her lifeworld, she is already juggling a number of commitments which are of greater importance. Her life at university is supplementary to her lifeworld, whereas the children are at the core. Further, she jokes that the quality of the bag is superior to the clothing, and this ensures that the bag's practical attributes are more appreciated, particularly when the style of the bag is more comfortable for carrying the quantity of content required by both students and mothers.

From the quote, it is apparent that P-10 is reconceptualising her notions of self-identity and questioning whether her self-conviction is compromised: she may be viewed as supporting a retailer who pertains to socially reprehensible business practices. Yet, she has previously defended this behaviour as an appeal to familial provisioning focused on lifeworld management, albeit this would be unknown to others who saw her simply as a post-graduate student. The quote illustrates the tensions embedded within the nuances of using the Primark bag, yet this is reflectively processed and the personal benefits of the style and size of the bag with its utilitarian purposes outweigh any potential negative connotations.

Thus, P-10 is expressing a number of values in this consumption experience. Efficiency is represented through the bag's effective carrying content and excellence is evident through the bag being of a satisfactory quality. Status was questioned due to the Primark logo, but the bag is also indicative of sustainable behaviours and this facilitates esteem through knowing that taking a plastic bag avoids contributing to litter and potentially damaging sea life. Aesthetic preference was illustrated through the style of the bag, and P-10 expressed that she thought others carrying shoulder bags also looked stylish. Finally, ethics and spirituality are addressed as the behaviour has ethical overtones of reuse, maximising lifespan and reducing waste and contributing to a movement that is beneficial to the wider environment.

P-10 illustrates that the adoption of sustainable behaviours depends on understanding the impact and how her own behaviours play a role in sustainability. Further, P-10 feels able to participate in sustainability when there are no financial implications, despite some sustainable behaviours requiring forethought and organisation. Feeling that her contribution can make a difference, coupled with the desire not to contribute negatively, motivates P-10's adoption of sustainable behaviours. The rejection of plastic bags illustrates pro-social behaviour (Griskevicius et al., 2010), contrasting with shopping in Primark which was self-motivated, albeit with her children as the main beneficiaries. Nevertheless, rejecting plastic bags can also be viewed as indicating socially an engagement with sustainability, as Cherrier (2006) identified in her study. This was true of other participants who criticised other consumers' continuation to take plastic bags rather than reuse bags.

Having established the areas where she felt confident to adopt sustainable behaviours (that is, understanding the negative consequences and how her own behaviours contribute to the wider sustainable agenda), P-10 began to reflect upon her inability to transfer her unequivocal approach for waste management and maximising resources to allegations of garment-worker exploitation.

*I do have scruples and morals about [clothes] shopping. I mentioned earlier about somebody's comment about how maybe we in the West think that it is such a terrible thing to exploit workers, whereas in this country ... you can't imagine our children aged eight, for instance, ... being employed. But I haven't travelled to these countries, you haven't seen them. There's an argument that, that is woven in, nobody is actually being abused. I'm not saying that is the case, but I am saying that possibly, might be the case. I am aware of it all. I'm also aware that Primark don't have a website or do any advertising, so they do save money in that instance and it is very cheap, as I say and I think, well they do cut corners, I bought this lovely t-shirt, it's [my eldest daughter's] favourite t-shirt ... with little ruffles on the back and it came off in one [laughing]!*

Without certainty of the actual conditions, P-10 is expressing ambiguity as to what constitutes exploitation. This means that transferring her 'scruples and morals' is more complex; whereas, her children's basic need for clothing, desire for fashionable clothing to be socially accepted and inexpensive pricing enables

P-10 to satisfy those needs which affect her daily lifeworld. This sentiment supersedes the implications she may have contributed to production practice which misaligns with her moral perspective. Although what P-10 expresses, may not be her view, as she states through mentioning 'somebody's comment' about the ambiguity of alleging garment-worker exploitation, she cannot assume certainty as she has not 'travelled to these countries'. Further, incorporating another opinion postulates distance from the premise of the argument. From this comment, it can be seen that P-10 acknowledges that there is a debate regarding the treatment of workers in developed countries, however she feels that she has insufficient information to make a judgement on whether this constitutes exploitation.

Further, motherhood had inspired another consequence of evaluating garment-worker exploitation, which again was noted by other participants, whereby the inclusion of allegations that children had been involved in production.

*Yeah [sighs] I don't know, it's one of these things that you ... almost don't want to think about, having children yourself. It's not something I know a huge amount about, I know it goes on ... but then I am playing devil's advocate, ... is it so bad, you don't know. My children are six and eight, I wouldn't like them to be ... working in a factory. But then, if all their friends were and they were all treated quite well and paid in sweeties or something [laughing] I think they probably would be quite happy! What are our kids doing? Sitting watching cbeebies and playing on Nintendos ... we are scared to let them go out on the streets. I just don't know if our children are possibly any better off in a relative way. I think it's like anything, it's portrayed in different ways, depending on whose reporting it, ... we can't comprehend our children going out to work, ... but then we are in a very different situation. I don't know enough about it, I'm not saying it's good and I'm not saying it's bad, I'm saying I'm sure that there are ... terrible, terrible examples and probably some very positive examples, where it actually helps economies and where it is actually woven into the fabric of the economy and .. they have a very loving environment ... and I actually feel that they are doing something positive and actually earning some keep for them and ... their families tend to stay together a lot more, I think.*

This quote is another example of the complexity of understanding the cultural context. P-10 was not the only participant who felt uncomfortable with the

connotations of child labour, seeing the practice through the eyes of a mother wanting to protect her children. Much of P-10's everyday thoughts centred on meeting the needs of her children, through nurturing and protecting their well-being. In contrast, concern for workers conditions, including child labour, were passively absorbed. P-10 states that she has awareness of child labour, but neither confronts the issue nor incorporates concern into behaviours. By '*playing devil's advocate*', she is neither endorsing the inclusion of child labour, nor condemning it; rather, it is an effort to distance herself from the allegations.

In developed countries, children's lives centre around play (Bachman, 2000), as acknowledged by P-10 who mentions cbeebies and Nintendos. Children are protected from work and exploitation, due to the discourse around child well-being. Although, the inclusion of child labour is unthinkable, P-10 expresses a romantic assumption that family cohesiveness is preferential. She focuses this quote on criticisms of child welfare in the UK, suggesting that children's lives are not perfect through the transferral of fear and overindulgence. Further, this is a response of recognising that in the UK families are more fractured, which has an impact on family cohesion. For example families are said to no longer eat together or share experiences (UNICEF, 2011); similarly, there are concerns that children play computer games too frequently and this is damaging social skills as it is a solitary pastime (UNICEF, 2011). Furthermore, she questions whether the claims of allegations are exaggerated, suggesting that although it is not ideal, working together for the benefit of the family with peer groups in a socialised environment is a cultural way of life and not detrimental to the child. The inclusion of the flippant comment: '*paid in sweeties*', is both an effort to make light of the issue and add some positivity to concerns that child labour is exploitative. P-10 perceives that the wider benefit of child labour in fashion production contributes overall to growing the economies of developing countries.

The premise of this quote is that neutralisation techniques are utilised, particularly as allegations are unsubstantiated and ambiguous. Further, as P-10



recognises, NGOs may frame information to suit their agenda and this plays to a number of ethical concerns, such as anti-globalisation and a dislike for global corporations (Thompson and Arsel, 2004). This implicates that the topic is complex, as overall it is difficult for consumers in developed countries to understand the cultural context and meaningfully apply a moral judgement, due to uncertainty of what constitutes the best outcome. This view was expressed in Chapter Two, where research identified notions that employment, albeit with low salaries, is better than no job at all (Devinney et al., 2007; Adams, 2002; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001).

The debate regarding exploitation includes cultural ambiguity, where the distance between production and consumption is not only physical, but understanding the garment-workers lifeworld and making a judgement on the best outcome is also complex. Uncertainty is imbued within the quote, as P-10 attempting to make sense of the allegations and understand the cultural context. She states '*I'm not saying that is the case, but I am saying that possibly is, might be the case*', she is unable to make a judgement that the inexpensive prices are a result of worker exploitation. As P-10 points out, she knows that Primark do not advertise, thus saving money on advertising; further, she expresses on a number of occasions that Primark clothing is of such an inferior quality that she had to repair the clothing, often before it was even worn, thus recognising that Primark '*cut corners*' through the quality of the fabric and the garment's construction. Therefore, P-10 focuses on where she can act with certainty, providing her children with much desired and needed clothing while fashion needs are also evident in her final emotive comment that the '*lovely*' top is her daughter's favourite t-shirt. The pleasure her daughters gain from the clothing purchased in Primark is mentioned a number of times:

*I think [Primark is] quite trendy, [my girls] absolutely love it. It is what it is, in our house it will last maybe six months and then it will be [used] as a rag because it will probably be too trashy to give to somebody else, but ... I think that's the way society is.*

Although P-10 acknowledges that production may not have been ethical, she values the garments for as long as required and then uses them as cleaning cloths. However, P-10 links the lower quality as implying additional unethical connotations, that of a disposable society where planned obsolescence does not reflect the environmental consequences, nor inspires value for the garment. P-10 states that she believes '*that's the way society is*', whereby the societal acceptance of inexpensive fashion further conflicts her behaviours. Chapter two established that the price of fashion had decreased by a third in the last decade (DEFRA 2007; Waste Online 2006) a result of relocating fashion production to developing countries (Jones, 2006; Pollin et al., 2001). Therefore, P-10 does not perceive her behaviour of shopping in Primark as unusual, particularly when her choices are reduced by market systems.

This ethos of not valuing inexpensive clothing and the ease of which new fashions can be purchased was indicative of a number of the participants' discourse. However, this may be explained by the reconstruction of notions of self, whereby self-conviction is stronger in the participants due to their age (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005). Although the participants were less inclined to shop for fashion regularly, partially due to their lifeworld management including careering for children who disliked shopping (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006) they had also accumulated fashions over the years. As P-10 stated at the beginning of the interview, she was less concerned with following evolving trends due to having established a personalised style. Further, it was also noted that inexpensive fashion contributed to perceptions of disposability (Friedman, 2010; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Majima, 2008) and P-10 was not confident this was a positive contribution to society as a whole.

P-10 acknowledged that the lower price was indicative of inferior quality and this reduced the potential to pass the clothing on for further use, either within her network or donating to charity shops. She notes that the skills to repair garments are not prevalent in modern societies.

*I was brought up to sew and ... younger mums ... they don't sew and I think it is a lot more disposable. There's these ... black trousers, for kids for school, they are £3.00. [My eldest daughter] must have been ... doing some craft at school ... because there was a proper sort of slash, so she had obviously just been cutting something. I thought about chucking them, but I thought no, so I sewed them, ... but I am quite thrifty. It doesn't matter what things cost, ... I don't feel that I am wasteful.*

Although P-10 is confident in her skills to mend fashion, she also does so to maximise the lifespan of the trousers and minimise waste, despite the low price. This '*thrifty*' behaviour contributes to sustainability, through valuing ownership of garments and making the most of this resource (Allwood et al., 2006). Nevertheless, the competitive fashion market has resulted in retailers competing over reducing price points, particularly for children's clothing, as evident in Asda selling complete school uniforms for under £10 (Rosselson, 2008; Smithers, 2008). Despite allegations of garment-worker exploitation (War on Want, 2008; Action Aid, 2007; Hearson, 2007), value fashion retailers and supermarket fashion is considered a viable option by a large number of consumers (Ross and Harradine, 2009; Orbach and Macleod, 2008; Bader, 2005). Inexpensive fashion transfers the onus onto the consumer to expand the lifespan.

In the earlier quote P-10 had purchased school trousers for £3.00 and she felt this reduced perceptions of value, particularly as new trousers are easily affordable. It is important to note that P-10 chose to mend, rather than needed to, due to finances. She suggests that this would result in other consumers disposing of garments to landfill, particularly if clothing requires repairing to ensure continued use, the low price makes consumption less risky (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982b). As inexpensive fashion is constructed to last only for a limited number of wears (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009) this may influence consumption, as children are less careful with their clothing than adults and often damage clothing through play. P-10 indicates this is a bigger problem, one of which is of concern to her through waste management; she has mentioned a number of times that she does not feel that she contributes to the '*disposable society*'.

*I know it's cheap, but to be honest, whether I agree with it or not, and ... in my heart of hearts, I don't agree with it, but I think it's just one of these things, ... I think, we are in a disposable society.*

The 'disposable society' is a reflection that current consumer behaviour involves increased consumption, whereby the resources involved (fibres, production, finishing; further explanation of the impact can be found in Appendix 1) are not reflected in the retail price. Consequently, lower price does not inspire value or the desire to retain the clothing and maximise the lifespan, as was evident in the studies by Fisher et al. (2008) and Joy et al. (2012). P-10, along with a number of participants, would only pass clothing onto friends or donate the garments to a charity if they were in a wearable condition; thus, there was limited awareness of the ability to down-cycle fibres for manufacturing purposes (DEFRA, 2008).

Further, this overarching ethos of P-10's approach is noted throughout the interview: making the most of resources and limiting landfill through recycling. For example, she was attracted by the fleece made from recycled plastic bottles, exclaiming '*I remember being totally, amazed when I first heard that many years ago and thinking how, brilliant that is*'. The underlying concept of redirecting waste into something desirable and useful, whilst at the same time reducing reliance upon scarce resources, was understood as a positive advancement with the potential to address concerns for sustainability. P-10 may not agree that inexpensive fashion is acceptable, in fact it contrasts with her value of garments whereby she ensures longevity and disposes through recycling, but she has little option if she wants to provide her daughters with fashionable clothing. As an individual, she feels little ability to make a difference against mass-society, particularly when children outgrow clothing regularly.

*I do think about it, I don't know how you would do it differently. I could go and spend, thirty pounds for a top in Gap ... made with the finest organic cotton, or ... send away to some, very right-on company, but to be honest for an eight year old, it is not going to last any longer. And ... I'm a full time student [laughs] I work one day a week, I have a partner that earns no money, so, ... all of the above is a contributing factor to that!*

It is interesting that in this quote P-10 makes a number of assumptions. Firstly, she considers Gap as an ethical retailer, despite Gap previously being implicated with garment-worker exploitation. Secondly, she assumes that organic status equates to a superior garment, as suggested when stating '*the finest organic cotton*'. Further, P-10 assumes that she would need to '*send away*' for sustainably-produced fashion, suggesting that it is not available on the high street. This lack of efficiency in being able to obtain children's fashion on the high street, coupled with properties of excellence (quality is not as important as price, due to the limited lifespan due to growth), results in P-10 believing there is no personal advantage to purchasing sustainably-produced children's fashion and applies a defence of a reduced family income.

Within the discussions of the labels presented, although it was acknowledged that the price was not overly expensive, price was still compared to supermarket fashion prices and found to be greater. P-10 acknowledged that although the PET school fleece is '*possibly not that expensive*', she did usually purchase school clothing from the supermarket. Further, she considered M&S to be too expensive for school clothes. Consequently, the prevalence of value and supermarket fashion has contributed to the reassessment of pricing and reduced the benchmark of what is viewed as an acceptable price to pay, particularly for children's clothing.

Evidently P-10 is transferring organic status from the context of food to fashion as constituting to sustainably-produced fashion, illustrating the potential to infuse sustainability within fashion consumption. Nevertheless, sustainability is evaluated through contextualising the day-to-day experience of which acquisition of children's clothing is the most pressing. Therefore, the increase in price for sustainably-produced fashion would not satisfy the values which are considered foremost, that of price being relative to the lifespan required for children's clothing which is transient due to growth.

Confusion arose when P-10 attempted to transfer sustainable concepts, such as organic status. When evaluating the organically produced school blouses she is

attracted by the accessibility enabled through acceptable pricing, but is unable to explain why organic would be desired, focusing more on a preference for cotton. When pressed, P-10 describes organic status as *'it just feeds my soul'* and *'an all-round good product'*. From this, P-10 is alluding to increased quality which a number of participants equated with organic status. This aligns with a number of values, such as excellence due to perceptions that cotton is a superior fibre, linking to esteem and status through providing her children with quality clothing; further, she perceives cotton as an ethical choice and spirituality is perceived through intrinsically linking with natural connotations. Unlike the food industry, consumers are less aware of the negative environmental consequences of cotton production of pesticide use and pollution, and there are no perceived benefits for an individual from wearing organically produced fibres.

Another sustainable concept that P-10 struggled to transfer to fashion production was the reduction of carbon emissions. Although acknowledged in other contexts, such as food, P-10 did not view carbon neutrality as relevant for fashion consumption decision-making. Therefore, there was much confusion regarding the label Plan A, and P-10 disengaged immediately.

*Not a clue what that means, ... that again, would depend on the garment.*

Due to the ability to understand the implications of the label, P-10 retreats back to her established criteria for selecting fashion, the style of the garment. Through reading the label, P-10 established that the Plan A factory was designed to cut carbon emissions in production and use renewable energy, terms familiar to her, but not in the context of fashion production. Again, she draws back to style preference, the implication which can be drawn being that integrating sustainable concepts into fashion evaluation requires awareness of the sustainable issues. As P-10 absorbs the information, she attempts to apply carbon neutrality to fashion production.

*I equate carbon emissions more with, transportation, maybe because I work for a tour company ... we have won awards for our sustainability, and*

*we are all about cutting our carbon emissions and ... fuel efficiency. So I know quite a bit about that, but ... I equate it to transport, and not really to [fashion production].*

The quote illustrates that carbon neutrality is understood in other contexts, mainly transportation and reducing fuel consumption. This may be a reflection of P-10's employment, whereby sustainability is a differentiating factor against competitors in tourism. However, this is also a reflection that consumers have been educated in reducing their carbon footprint through purchasing locally produced food and seasonal fruit and vegetables (McDonald et al., 2009; Vyse, 2005). Without understanding the implications of what constitutes fashion production and the important issues of concern, P-10 is unable to evaluate this sustainable alternative, particularly as knowledge of Plan A factories and similar initiatives are little known.

However, P-10 was not adverse to purchasing sustainably-produced fashion as was evident when she evaluated Global Girlfriend label. P-10 spent some time reading the information, savouring the content and imagery. The sustainable concepts described within the context of the labels are established within the current consumer market, such as eco-friendly (meaning produced with respect for the environment) and Fairtrade (where workers involved in production receive a fair wage). Understanding the context of what she is contributing to and what the terminology means attracts P-10 to this label, resulting in a passionate and emotive response:

*I like the name already [reading] women-made, eco-friendly, Fairtrade. Is that a wee girl sitting cross-legged? With something on her, or something. [reading]. I absolutely love that. Again if the garment was nice, I just think that just adds absolute kudos, and is very cool, and, a good cause. I love the name, ... it explains a lot of stuff, but it is also, ... it's quite arty as well. They have obviously thought about their, ... image. I like the name, Global Girlfriend, it's kind of snappy, ... it's marketing, without a doubt. But you can still be right-on and do marketing, because .. that tells you, we are actually making money to do all these things. I really like that, I would be influenced by that.*

It can be seen that P-10 feels immediate involvement with the label. Although she still states that style would be the overriding factor for consumption, she is

very drawn to the label, due to an affinity with the style and imagery; she assumes that this will transfer to the style of the garment. P-10 can relate to the implications of sympathetic production and wants to support the philosophy behind production. Despite acknowledging the marketing efforts, the framing of the information is still liked as the label positions the garment as responding to both the environmental and societal problems currently imbued within fashion production. Thus, the label is communicating what constitutes production, acknowledging the environmental and societal impacts, enabling P-10 to make an informed choice and contribute to the organisations' ability 'to do all of these things'. Moreover, P-10 is attracted to the ethos of the organisation as a potential for gifts

*I would be drawn to buy that as a gift for somebody. Because you are actually, doing quite a lot. You are not only buying ... the garment, but you are actually buying, into something else, ... an idea and a philosophy ... in a Global Girlfriend kind of way.*

The garment is viewed as having the potential as a gift if the style was suitable. This sentiment is also indicative of the name, Global Girlfriend, transferring a gift from one girlfriend to another, with the added benefit of helping women in developing countries. Thus, the garment offers a transferral of a philosophy as an additional attribute, through making a positive contribution to a charitable cause, implying duality in not only giving a garment that would be appreciated, but through careful selection to source a gift which aligns with the gift receivers preferred philosophy. This is possibly a reflection that sustainable production is more relevant for gift-giving, and paying more transfers the value of the friendship through the gift, rather than something that is considered habitually. This could be a reflection that the value is contained solely within the label, as opposed to intrinsic to the garment itself.

#### **5.4.1: Summary of P-10's lifeworld narrative**

P-10 describes a lifeworld where her identity is expressed through her fashion orientation, and she is attracted to garments through style, as are her daughters within their emerging sense of self and socialisation. P-10 is aware that her



fashion choices for the children may not equate to her moral values and beliefs, however struggles to evaluate sustainability due to a lack of transparency and relevant information. She considers allegations of exploiting garment-workers, however is more conscious of her role as a provider and ensuring that the children feel confident within their peer groups. Because of financial constraints, P-10 believes that she is prohibited from purchasing sustainably-produced fashion and this is applied as a defence for shopping in Primark.

Although she feels that her consumption behaviours may be ethically questionable, other sustainable behaviours are adopted: recycling, and reusing products, such as shopping bags and garments where possible and appropriate. The motivation for this has evolved through her engagement with environmental issues, understanding the negative consequences upon the environment and how her own behaviours contribute overall to sustainability. Further, she encouraged sustainable behaviours within the family as pertaining to good citizenship, through considering the impact upon the environment. However, this does not transfer to reducing the carbon emissions of fashion production, due to a lack of awareness in this context. Despite uncertainty over garment-workers conditions and salaries amid cultural ambiguity, she is attracted to the philosophy of the Global Girlfriend label, particularly in the context of gift-giving. Central to this is the recognition that by purchasing a Global Girlfriend garment, she is contributing positively to garment-workers lifeworlds. Consequently, this reduces ambiguity and increases awareness of fashion production.

### **5.5: Lifeworld of P-20**

P-20 was in her late thirties and lived with her husband and their three daughters, aged six, four and five months. She was currently on maternity leave from her job as a social researcher and had reduced her working hours to part-time since becoming a mother. P-20 avoided discussions about her appearance and her focus was very much on the children. She viewed her role primarily as a

provider and began the interview confidently, expressing an engaged moral discourse of the ethical issues related to consumption. Considering the opening description of the research objectives at the beginning of the interview, it is the mention of ethical implications from fashion consumption that has gained the interest of P-20, as shown below:

*We get a lot of hand-me-down clothes. Is it ok to talk about that? We are very ethical and we do think about where they come from and who makes them and if they are made in China in factories with children, and I love the recycling aspect.*

P-20's immediate response centres upon acquiring clothing for her daughters and describing how clothing enters the home as hand-me-downs, bypassing the preceding components of the question concerning her own fashion consumption behaviours and fashion as expressing her sense of self. P-20 was unique in focusing upon the children's fashion acquisition before her own, as well as establishing that the children's clothing derives primarily from hand-me-downs. Further, she illustrates consideration for production in the quote, including awareness of allegations of garment-worker exploitation in developing countries, like China, that often involve child labour.

Participation in a network of hand-me-downs bypasses the need for production and is viewed as extending recycling, thus contributing to sustainable behaviours (Allwood et al., 2006; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001). This response is typical of the remainder of P-20's narrative, where fashion and identity from a self-perspective are repudiated; the focus centres on the children's provisioning and aligning behaviour with a sense of moral duty. Her own involvement with fashion is portrayed as less appealing and, when asked about how she assesses clothing for herself, there is much laughter amid a reluctance to expand further. She explains that she neither has '*the inclination nor do I have the time*' for fashion shopping.

P-20 states unequivocally in the quote that '*we are very ethical and we do think about*' the origins of household consumption. She engages in a confident

discourse around the family's efforts to prioritise sustainability, including describing the family who routinely pass clothing to P-20's family. Further, P-20 reuses clothing within the family, passing from her eldest child to the younger siblings, made easier as P-20's only has daughters. Consequently, P20 asserts there is '*very little shopping in shops*' for the children's clothing. Although P-20 recognises that hand-me-down clothing saves the family money overall, this is inessential, as it is the recycling aspect which fits with her moral conviction, which is thought of as '*just magic*'. During the description of obtaining hand-me-down clothing, P-20 uses words like '*delighted*' and '*they absolutely love it*'. This was a reflection that clothes came into the household in such abundance that the children could pick and choose; consequently, the children were not disadvantaged or perceived stigma in receiving hand-me-downs. This extended to passing clothes to her children's friends and the children were not concerned with how they gained ownership of the clothing, illustrating that the children's clothes are perceived as a shared commodity and passed to whichever family can make use of the garments.

Much of the passing of used-clothing occurred in mothering networks established in the school playground. The network is described as both supportive and practical, for example, although those who pass on clothes do not directly benefit from a direct swap, the knowledge that others benefit is indicative of the sense of community created by the mothers. This community spirit has notions of historical solidarity from a time when life was less complex. However, it is also evidence of daily encounters with other mothers in the community, where passing clothing normalises used-clothing networks within a mutual social consensus. Passing used-clothing contributes to a number of values: efficiency through the ease of passing clothing within their everyday behaviours; excellence of receiving clothing that was much needed for the growing children, saving both the time for shopping and the financial implications of new clothes. Esteem was experienced within a likeminded community (Micheletti and Stolle, 2007; Shaw, 2007; Cherrier, 2006) and coupled with the ethical approach aligning with moral value, altruism was

experienced (Szmigin et al., 2009; Schaefer and Crane, 2005; Smith, 1999). Neither status nor aesthetics are compromised, as there is no desire for new clothing and due to the abundance of clothing received unwanted styles surplus to requirement were passed on through charity bags.

Charity bags delivered through the door provided another route to recycle clothing. The desire that someone would benefit from the clothing was a reflection that P-20 appreciated getting hand-me-downs and knowing that the clothing would continue to be used provided intrinsic satisfaction. Motivation for recycling was also reflected in the immediate positive response for the PET fleece label, which implicates waste as producing new garments, a concept that caused '*amusement*'. Further, P-20 was one of the few participants who was aware that clothing not suitable for re-wear could be recycled. This was a reflection of the local authority promoting a kerb collection for used textiles; although P-20 was unaware of the processes involved, she had confidence that she was able to minimise waste sent to landfill.

Everyday recycling behaviours were also confidently executed and P-20 received emails from the council recycling department which raised her awareness for new developments and also illustrated her interest in seeking information regarding sustainable developments. She was able to express confidently which waste would be collected and on what day, referring to the kerbside collection as '*really good*'; as such, recycling waste was an established household behaviour. This is indicative of how P-20 managed the everyday behaviours to incorporate sustainability; she was immersed in the household activities and was able to ensure that behaviours were consistently sustainable through gaining awareness and organising her routines accordingly.

When evaluating the labels, P-20 also considers other retailers which she can recall as adopting sustainability. For example, she liked that the Body Shop encouraged returning the bottles used as packaging for reuse. Although this recycling of packaging involves the consumer returning the bottles which may be inconvenient and offers no direct benefits to the consumer, it also offers a

tangible assurance that waste does not increase landfill. This active participation in sustainability was a concept understood by P-20. Similar to P-10, P-20 expresses motivation to adopt sustainability when the concepts are understood and tangible. Further, just as P-10 expressed an alignment with Lidl due to their stance on plastic bags, P-20 considered that the Body Shop was '*quite a good place to shop*' due to their efforts to be sustainable.

For P-20, sustainability was not only prioritised due to her moral orientation, it also enabled perceptions that she was focusing her efforts to be a good mother. As explained in Section 5.3, P-20 had reassessed her lifeworld when weaning her first child and questioned what was the '*best possible thing*' to nourish her child post-breastfeeding. P-20, believed organic food would avoid the application of pesticides used in production, consistent with Zabkar and Hista (2012) who postulate that health properties supersede utilitarian needs. The symbolism between the purity of the child fed only on breast milk, as opposed to formula milk, aligns closely with organic produce, implying organic food is more natural. Purity is also acknowledged by Giddens (1992) within developing a personal model of confluent love between feelings and behaviours. P-20 illustrates the desire to protect her young child from the implications that pesticides are unnatural and will tarnish the natural purity of the new life.

Bailey (1999) also found that pregnancy offered an opportunity for changing '*practices of the self*', through recognising the responsibility bestowed through motherhood. For Bailey's participants, pregnancy increased their appreciation of self-worth and necessitated the need to be less egocentric. This is echoed in P-20's discourse of being immersed in the family. Seeking new information was only incorporated existentially if related to family provisioning; for example, she was currently reading Gina Ford's '*The Contended Little Baby Book*', to ensure she was equipped with sufficient information for the best familial provisioning. The need to seek information to support the mothering role was also identified by Bailey (1999), whose participants '*read vicariously*' about their new role. It is evident that P-20 embraced motherhood and wanted to

excel in the mothering role to provide her children with the best start in life. This was reflected in the family's behaviours, establishing a new way of being, enhanced through knowledge. P-20 was less actively engaged in her employment, as she was on maternity leave. She had actively sought to enhance her employment prospects pre-motherhood (she mentioned that she had completed her PhD before having children in the casual conversation we had before the interview started) and motherhood offered an opportunity to suspend her previously chaotic lifeworld. Therefore, her narrative illustrates her activity had transferred to seeking information to support her everyday behaviours, such as child well-being and sustainability.

This could be explained by recognising that P-20 was the only participant still on maternity leave, whereby her world centred around the family. Bailey (1999) also found that the '*private space*' of the home was increasingly important for her pregnant participants, as home was considered as providing security. However, more time in the home ensured that the participants were more conscious of home-related activities and this naturally ensured a greater focus on the family as home and family are concurrent. Sartre (2003) theorised that awareness of one's immediate surroundings is the positional consciousness of being before knowing. From this, it can be assumed that the everyday experiences contained within the participants' lifeworld had a far greater influence over their behaviours due to the existential consequences.

This was evident for P-20, who was supported by her husband who passed on external information from a world outwith the family, which contributed to sourcing the family's provisioning, as well as his financial support through working full-time. This manifests in the parents having specific roles to ease the responsibility of familial provisioning, with the main focus being on ensuring the wellbeing of the family. Giddens (1992) suggests that self is a reflexive project, an infusion that incorporates past, present and future and is socially influenced. This is illustrated P-20's lifeworld as she focuses on idealised traditional mothering and accepts temporary subordination to nurture her

children when they are most vulnerable. In contrast, P-10 is emerging post-motherhood to establish a new lifeworld, which is possible as her children are less dependent upon her. Consequently, two important points can be considered as relevant: firstly, when there is the opportunity to focus on reduced multi-tasking (for example, juggling motherhood and employment) it was easier to prioritise a greater focus on familial provisioning; secondly, this naturally becomes less of a focus as the children become more independent.

P-20 demonstrates a paradigmatic shift in attitude and behaviour, implying that motherhood has repositioned her notions of value: the utilitarian purpose of food has been replaced by food pertaining increased nutritional and natural qualities, as well as preference for food sympathetically (environment and workers involved in production) produced. P-20 aligns her sense of self with her self-conviction which manifests in sustainable behaviours rather than the projection of an image. Thus, P-20's approach is consistent with Giddens (1992: 75) assertion that '*lifestyle choices are constitutive of the reflexive narrative of self*'. Further evidence that P-20 expresses her sense of self through behaviours includes her reluctance to describe her own experiences of fashion consumption. It seems that her need to express her identity has lessened through motherhood. This appears to be because she has experienced body changes through three pregnancies in six years, she explains that she has gained and lost weight and this has necessitated the need to acquire clothing to manage her changing body-shape.

*My clothes [laughing]! Some of my clothes for work, when I was at work, and I have changed size a lot ... so I have needed a lot of clothes because I have been pregnant three times and lost weight and put on weight all through three pregnancies. EBay, really, if I need smart trousers or a suit or something, and I have one or two good suits.*

Immediately, P-20 focuses on her clothes for work, almost as though this is the only time when she may be judged on her appearance; as she is currently on maternity leave, clothing for the present time is disregarded and she is not concerned by her visual appearance. Throughout the pregnancies, she has

changed both physically and psychologically, altering her self-perception. Similar to P-10, P-20 recognised that she is not the same person post-motherhood, which is further amplified as she is no longer the same body-shape. This could be a further reflection that clothing is transient, as her body-shape is continuing to change post-pregnancy, therefore used-clothing acquired from eBay just '*kind of does*' in the interim.

For work purposes, she has a clear idea of the image she wishes to project, an aspect influenced by her colleagues where the culture of the work environment is to express professionalism. Nevertheless, she relies upon '*one or two good suits*', therefore work clothing is akin to a uniform, serving a utilitarian purpose to align with the culture of work and not expressive of her notions of self. P-20 also receives hand-me-downs from her sister, who she describes as a '*shopaholic*' shopping in '*normal shops and shops a lot*'. This again illustrates that fashion is viewed as utilitarian; shopping for more than what is needed is perceived as excessive, particularly when it is purchased from '*normal shops*' and without concern for what constitutes production. Although this contrasts with P-20's moral value, she accepted used-clothing from her sister which is another of Allwood et al.'s (2006) sustainable fashion behaviours.

On the occasions where she purchased clothing from high street retailers, she was unapologetic, believing sustainable options were impossible, amid the knowledge that predominantly her consumption behaviours were sustainable, albeit this was mainly only relevant for food consumption. Further, fashion shopping included a utilitarian approach to fashion and this is expressed throughout the interview: the only time she mentions going shopping for the children is to get fitted for shoes or school uniform. When her mother-in-law took the children for new shoes, P-20 relinquished both the financial cost and control over the style of shoes selected. Thus, she has no agenda to stipulate the children's appearance, bypassing autonomy to someone else.

Even when shopping for her eldest daughter's school uniform, choice was relinquished to her daughter. Again, it must be recognised that this was within



the context of a selected retailer, M&S. This is indicative of trust in the organisation, through selecting M&S, P-20 felt confident that the clothes available for her daughter to choose from would be suitable. Although allowing her daughter to choose herself was explained to the baby crying, P-20 made the assumption that she *'thought'* firstly of M&S for school uniforms, she is subconsciously transferring the status of M&S to the fashion available, either a reflection of marketing or historically recognising that is where her own school uniform came from.

However, it is also a reflection that there is little choice in the current retail sector for children's clothing, especially for school uniforms. This is further reduced by P-20 having little knowledge of current fashion retailers due to disengagement with fashion. Further, as echoed by other participants, shopping for the children's fashion was required regularly due to growth, and this likened the consumption experience to a habitual chore, rather than borne out of desire for new fashion. Although the children sometimes made requests for products advertised, to avoid disappointment she suggested the children requested the item for their birthday. Rather than say no, she employed a delaying tactic; this featured in a number of the participants' narratives as a means to not force moral value or financial restrictions onto the child which may result in parental guilt.

P-20 was keen to explain her husband's fashion consumption behaviours, despite the absence of her own fashion consumption experiences. This appears to be acknowledgement that sourcing fashion is more prevalent in his life than her own; therefore, his behaviours are more relevant to the interview question than her own contribution. In response to media allegations that Gap clothing derived from using children in production, her husband had ceased to purchase clothing from Gap and instead sourced new garments from Howies, an online sustainable fashion retailer.

*[My husband] used to like Gap. Then there was something in the paper ... about Gap and ... children in factories ... and he stopped using Gap. Then he*

*started using Howies, so ... I would love that, I feel much more confident, whatever I was buying, if it had that on it.*

P-20 expresses that the allegations alerted both her husband and herself to garment-worker exploitation, which neither wanted to contribute to. They therefore made the effort to source fashion that was sustainably-produced. In this quote P-20 is evaluating the EJF label and expresses that knowing of a retailer's attempts to adopt sustainable production offers confidence of an alignment with her moral sentiment. The notion of confidence is an important aspect as can be seen in the quote; the couple had lost confidence in Gap due to allegations of garment-worker exploitation. Although it was recognised that sustainable clothing was more expensive than mainstream retailers, superior quality ensured that the clothes lasted longer and so her husband was not 'shopping all the time' for fashion and the ethos of sustainability 'really suit[ed] him, because he is really right-on'. This contrasts with the other participants who selected fashion retailers due to an alignment with style rather than sustainability.

Recognising that Howies focused on sustainable production at the core of business transactions increased their confidence in the retailer. P-20 also read the information in the catalogue from Howies which included articles on production issues and how the retailer addressed sustainability; this had expanded her knowledge of fashion production.

*It's quite a good catalogue ... they have information about the producers, where they get things and if they switch producers, they tell you why.*

P-20 describes that she reads the articles in the catalogues, expressing more interest in production practice than the end product. Again this illustrates her active interest in obtaining relevant information to support her behaviours. The information provided transparency in the supply chain, allowing a connection between the producer and the consumer. Similarly, Traidcraft, an online sustainable retailer selling food, household products and gifts, also sent emails with producer information, which P-20 enjoyed reading.

*We try to use Traidcraft because with each product you get this whole thing ... it has a picture of the person and the plantation [information about the producer being] paid a fair wage, [and] I can support my whole family.*

P-20 was interested in the people who produced the food she purchased for household consumption. Reading about the producers reduced the distance between production and consumption and P-20 was able to understand what her consumption had contributed to: supporting producers. This ethos of supporting producers also incorporates concern for people in developing countries through supporting their livelihoods and not contributing to conditions of poverty. This is a reflection that capitalistic markets contribute to inequality through an imbalance of power. Although P-20 recognised that this was '*propaganda*' to an extent, she absorbed the information to expand her knowledge, which in turn motivated further sustainable consumption.

P-20 had also attempted to purchase clothing from Howies and People Tree, (another online sustainable fashion retailer) as an effort to align fashion consumption with her moral value:

*I have tried shopping at People Tree, which is quite ethical. I like the idea of the ethical shopping and organic things, [but] it didn't really fit me, right, ... because I am smaller, and I don't think they had a petite range. That never applies to [my husband], ... everything fits him. Years ago, I did try to get a bit of stuff from Howies and ... none of it fitted and I ... sent it all back.*

P-20 illustrates her desire to purchase sustainably-produced fashion, however was disappointed by the experience because of the standardisation of the garments complied with average UK body-shapes. P-20 described herself as '*petite*' which, coupled with the body-shape changes incurred throughout her pregnancies, resulted in clothing which did not '*fit*'. As sustainably-produced fashion is still niche, production runs are smaller and sizing ranges (height and plus sizing) are reduced to maximise profitability. Therefore, despite expressing that she '*like[d] the idea of ethical shopping*', the misalignment of '*fit*' led to P-20 perceiving that ethical fashion was not a viable option and she had given up pursuing ethical fashion. Similarly, she also recognised that the style of ethical

fashion was '*off-centre*', alluding that the style did not align with her notions of self or would be suitable for work. Limited selections of style, appropriateness and fit was also identified by Hiller Connell (2010) and Shaw and Tomolillo (2004). This endorses the argument that the negative consequences of fashion will be dramatically reduced without mainstream retailers embracing sustainability to appeal to the multiplicity of fashion consumers in a range which fits a variety of sizes (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000).

P-20 lacked the motivation to seek fashion, unable to select fashion produced sustainably and disengaged with mainstream fashion retailers, so she focused expressing her sense of self through her behaviours. This was in part due to her increased involvement in the family, as evident in her narrative expressing sustainability as '*we love that*' and '*we are very ethical*'. The blurring of P-20's individual opinion and that of the family ethos illustrates the centrality of motherhood in reconstructing identity. Bailey (1999) recognises changing perceptions of identity, which are not only physical due to changing body-shape, but represent the responsibility encountered through motherhood as behaviours symbolically embody mothering abilities. However, Giddens (1992) posits that females are more likely to adopt '*we*' rather than '*I*' as indicative of loving relationships and the merging of lifeworlds. P-20 saw her role primarily as provisioning for the family; this may be a reflection of the age of her children as the youngest was 5 months old. However, it resulted in a primary role where the sole focus was ensuring that the family's needs were under her control, this was dominated by sourcing food which aligned with the family's key sustainable criteria. For example, P-20 states '*we only shop organic*', the reasoning behind this was having been alerted to the exploitation of food producers by supermarkets and she did not want to contribute to this imbalance of power.

*[My husband] somehow discovered Joanna Blythman and then we both read the book, and we were ... horrified about the power of the supermarkets and the pesticides, and the family eating. We just had a real think about everything and [thought] let's just try and source stuff a wee bit differently, and since then, that's six years, it ... our shopping just, just sort of, all comes now.*

P-20 and her husband were alerted to the business practices of supermarket transactions through reading Blythman's book 'Shopped: The Shocking Power of British Supermarkets' and were '*horrified*' that food producers did not receive fair payment for their produce. They no longer wanted to support the supermarkets' unfair business practice and began to review their circumstances as a family unit rather than two independent units. From this it is evident that the children provided a sense of cohesiveness and offered an opportunity to reconceptualise their contribution to society overall. Coupled with information about the potentially damaging consequences of increased pesticides in food production, for both the environment and human digestion, the couple reconsidered the family's lifestyle. This resulted in their efforts to source food produced organically, locally and ensuring a fair transaction between the producer and retailer. Having identified which retailers focused sustainability at the core of their business practice ensured confidence that each product did not require checking individually. Consequently, P-20 perceived that everything sold by the identified sustainable retailers aligned with her moral value. As she states:

*Because they only do organic, we felt ok. You could have whatever you wanted, you didn't have to be fussy [as you would in] the supermarket.*

P-20 expresses trust that the retailer only sources food sustainably. In contrast, were she to continue to purchase from the supermarket, she would have to evaluate each product individually to ensure that production aligned with her moral ideal (Yates, 2008; Mayo and Fielder, 2006). This supports notions of '*nudging*' consumers towards sustainability through limiting choice or choice editing (Goworek, 2011) to include only sustainable options, as well as developing notions of trust in the retailers (Young et al., 2010).

For P-20, sustainable food consumption behaviour is well established in the household, as she states, after six years she has established a routine for accessing sustainably-produced food. Although initially sourcing sustainably-produced food would have been inconvenient, once identified the family relied

upon repeat orders which were delivered on a weekly basis. P-20 recognises that organising familial provisioning initially required careful planning, but through repeat orders the *'shopping is very organised from these places'*.

P-20 described her lifeworld as always being *'in a rush'*. Consequently, she considered that purchasing sustainably-produced food for the family as more convenient as *'they deliver for free as well ... that suits me, it comes directly to the house, rather than me trailing three children around Asda'*. This perception evokes the feeling that children dislike shopping, a view held by other participants. Further, as delivery is free, P-20 is not penalised though an additional charge, perceiving gains through time, convenience and enabling sustainability to be at the core of consumption, rather than a further financial loss (Kahneman and Tversky, 2000). This implies a number of values: efficiency is evident as the time required to plan, source and identify sustainable produce is reduced. Similarly, excellence is perceived in the quality of organic food as providing the children the best food available, thus facilitating esteem. Ethics and spirituality are addressed as P-20 is able to purchase food with aligns with her moral value.

As the household food was delivered, P-20 did not have to think about carrying the shopping home and had not established a routine to take a bag when shopping. All the shopping delivered comes in boxes or re-usable bags which are returned the following week. She mentioned a recent shopping trip to a supermarket to gather supplies for their holiday whereby she had *'totally forgotten about that whole bag thing, and we got, ten, twelve, bags at the till ... had I thought it through I would have packed some cloth bags but I didn't at all think about it'*. Similarly when purchasing the school uniform for her daughter, she took a bag, as it *'didn't occur'* to her to take one in advance. Evidently, remembering to take a bag shopping is habitual and encouraged through experience.

Engagement with sustainable concepts was evident when P-20 expressed an immediate affinity with the organic status of the M&S organic cotton shirt label.

This was due to her previous experience and preference for organic food. When evaluating this label, P-20's voice was animated and engaged as she began to relay a recent consumption experience to obtain organic cotton sheets whilst pregnant with her third child. She had requested that her husband went to purchase organic cotton sheets, contrasting with her previous behaviours of passing down textiles.

*We did buy something new for [the baby], new sheets, and I said to [my husband] go and get her organic cotton and he did. Well actually he phoned me from the shop [laughing] ... the first shop he was in! He said they had bamboo sheets, I said oh, I have never heard of that, and he said, it is brilliant they're grown without pesticides. I was like brilliant, buy those. I looked it up on the internet, .. and they just sound absolutely brilliant ... particularly for babies. I think the pesticide thing, near their skin and everything, is not good.*

This story implies that the participants, as mothers, projected forward to anticipate the needs of the child, a notion akin to nesting and preparing for the impending birth. As established, P-20 perceived sustainable status as providing the 'very best' for her children. Consequently, she sought organic cotton for the baby's bedding to avoid contact with unnatural applications of pesticides. Further, she had requested that her husband specifically purchase organic cotton sheets, indicative of the mother as the primary decision-maker. This role is further exemplified when whilst in the retailer, her husband called to inform her that he had found bamboo sheets and wanted to check that she was happy for him to purchase those rather than the organic cotton sheets. Although P-20 had not previously been aware of the sustainable properties of bamboo, she was immediately pleased when her husband explained that bamboo is also grown without pesticides, describing the process as 'brilliant'.

Further evidence of P-20's interest for sustainability was that after her husband informed her of the option of bamboos sheets, she sought additional information on bamboo fibre production from the internet. This discussion as captured in the quote above was typical of the couple's ethos to align their consumption with sustainable principles, also illustrating that they discuss

sustainable issues and support one another in identifying information; there was much evidence of this mutual support and aligning with moral perspectives throughout the narrative. Moreover, integrating sustainability into the family's behaviours was endorsed by sustainable initiatives employed by the school which her eldest child attended; this resulted in her daughter having an increased awareness for sustainability. P-20 recognised that the children were aware of the family's sustainable behaviours, and was pleased when during their recent holiday her eldest daughter observed that there were no compost facilities. P-20 went on to express how all the children routinely sorted waste from what could be recycled or composted.

Nevertheless, P-20 is not just applying sustainability out of concern for the environment, although this is an important area of concern, but she perceives organic status, or bamboo, as better for the baby due to the omission of pesticides in production. Another interesting component of this discussion is her intentness to purchase organic cotton sheets and giving her husband specific instructions. In previous other discussions where she has relied on someone else to purchase for the children, she has transferred the autonomy of decision-making to them. For example, when her mother-in-law purchased shoes for the children, decision-making for the style of shoe was transferred to her mother-in-law. This contributed to her surprise that M&S labels indicate sustainable production and she states that '*I didn't know that you could get that thing in regular shops*', implicating that she did not know that mainstream retailers were addressing sustainable production. This was also evident when evaluating the Global Girlfriend label, as illustrated in the quote below:

*Women's, non-profit clothing, wow, fairtrade in Nepal. I had no idea you could get so much of this stuff, I suppose it's because I am not buying as many things. That's magic. I would buy that. You don't even have to get it on the internet. That's amazing.*

The quote expresses her pleasure that fashion can be produced without detrimental implications; P-20 is surprised to read that the garment was produced by a social-enterprise organisation, established to support garment-



workers by paying a living wage and is available in mainstream fashion retailers. P-20 states: 'I *didn't know you could be so ethically aware with your clothes shopping*', evidence that although P-20 feels able to purchase sustainably-produced food, this does not transfer to fashion consumption. The information on the label is similar to the information regarding producers she receives from Howies and Traidcraft. Further, the label communicates that natural dyes are used, as well as organic cotton; therefore, fashion production is eco-friendly through avoiding chemical applications. This addresses P-20 preference for avoiding pesticides used in production, as evident in the following quote:

*I like the vegetable dye thing. I like [that] it's organic cotton. It tells you something about the producer and I think, oh, I am doing a good job because I am also supporting these people in a kind of fair way. It makes you feel good.*

P-20 understands that this fashion garment was produced without environmental degradation; she is transferring organic concepts bereft the detrimental consequences of pesticides. Coupled with addressing her concern for workers involved in production, P-20 felt that she was '*doing a good job*' as a consumer by contributing to positive business practice. As sustainable production is an important component of her consumption decision-making, she seeks sustainable retailers and states that she would pay more for products produced sustainably. This desire to pay more for sustainable production was also noted by other participants, due to the perception that sustainability increased their perception of value; however, sustainability was not something considered relevant for everyday consumption by the other participants, due to perceptions of increased pricing. A further advantage is also stated in the quote, and was also expressed by other participants, that access to sustainably-produced fashion is not restricted to internet retailers. Through mainstream fashion retailers addressing concerns for sustainability, participating in sustainable fashion is more attainable.

P-20's narrative has included concern for both the environment and garment-workers. This supports the assertion that some consumers are equally concerned with the broad construct of sustainability as including concerns for both the environment and social well-being, opposing researchers who ascertain these issues are separate (for example Wells et al., 2011). Nevertheless, despite P-20 prioritising sustainable consumption in the context of food, transferring similar principles to the context of fashion consumption is perceived as more complex. For example, she states that *'we try to be a little bit ethically aware and I didn't know any of that'*. Although P-20 is able to adopt sustainability when accepting hand-me-downs and her husband purchasing clothing from sustainable retailers, when the children need something specific, such as school uniforms and shoes, choice is reduced to mainstream retailers which are viewed as bereft of sustainable production. As she accepts herself within the narrative: *'we try to follow principles, but we can't absolutely do it a hundred per cent of the time'*. In other words, she prioritises sustainability when she can, however accepts without guilt that there are instances when sustainable production is not available, as identified by Szmigin et al. (2009) and Parsons et al. (2009) whose participants adopted a flexible approach.

It is interesting to note that because P-20 did not routinely visit supermarkets she was unaware of supermarket fashion prices. Therefore, she was unique in perceiving the price of the sustainable labels as good value. This has two implications: she thought that the prices were good value because they were less expensive than the price of fashions from known sustainable retailers, such as Howies, Traidcraft and People Tree. Further, she was not evaluating supermarket fashion prices as a benchmark.

*We never buy clothes in Asda. Because I have got three children, ... you would maybe think that we buy a lot of clothes, but we just don't. The girls wardrobes are packed full of clothes, because we get ... a lot of ... hand me downs. They have so many clothes and I just don't need to by buying clothes.*

Immediately P-20 dismisses the supermarket as applicable to their fashion consumption for the children. Her voice drops to a whisper, as though she feels that she must explain why. This could be due to the desire that she is not categorised by her lifestyle demographic, as dependent on the supermarket for convenience and low price points (Ross and Harradine, 2009; Orbach and Macleod, 2008). For P-20, sustainability is a lifestyle choice; finances are not the motivation for dismissing supermarket fashion: it is moral value that is more important. She elaborates further by explaining:

*I think the whole Walmart, Asda, thing is absolutely appalling. I know you can buy things at absolutely super cheap, but at what cost?*

Although supermarket fashion is inexpensive, P-20 perceives the greater cost to the environment and producers as greater. The cost that she refers to is the detrimental consequences to the environment and garment-worker exploitation. This is indicative of P-20's concern overall for implementing sustainability into mainstream consumption markets, where she believes that consumers will always focus on low prices rather than think about the wider impact of unsustainable production. This perspective that during the consumption experience, consumers will focus upon immediate lifeworld concerns, such as finances or style could, according to P-20 be solved through legislation to force sustainable production. P-20 draws a parallel with the smoking ban in public places. Despite initial concerns of banning smoking, the positive impact of reducing premature births (Roberts, 2012) and heart attacks (Hall, 2007) is better overall for society. P-20 considered that she could no longer recall people smoking on buses or in the cinema, and warned that it could be the same for producers who can no longer sustain their business and will be taken over by multi-national organisations who have little concern for societal well-being. P-20 suggests that consumers are motivated to buy food that is dramatically transformed for consumption, and consequently production practice and the products origins are obscured.

*People think Britain is a nation of foodies. Because they all go to Marks and Spencer's ... they think it's posh and they buy chopped up carrots and ready-made meals. People have no idea where it comes from.*

P-20 suggests in this quote that consumers are obscured from production and consumption, selecting produce solely for end use attributes, such as convenience (Hudson and Hudson, 2003). Selecting carrots washed and chopped distances consumers consciousness that carrots grow in the earth. The novelty of avoiding the menial preparation tasks is symbolic of decadence and luxury. Transferring this notion to fashion consumption, the consumer is primarily concerned with style and the benefits of ownership (O'Cass and Choy, 2008). This links with values such as status and self-enhancement through illustrating a lifestyle which focuses on more important tasks, dismissing cooking preparation as menial, as well as illustrating the ability to afford food ready-prepared.

P-20 is more aware than the other participants of what constitutes workers' conditions in developing countries and environmental exploitation. This was evident in the following quote whereby she read that pesticides used in pineapple production impacted on the local environment and the communities' health.

*I did read one newspaper article, my husband found it in the Guardian, about pineapples ... in Costa Rica. The chemicals ... they use have gone into water supply. People have been really ill for two years of drinking this water. They are bussing in, tankards of water ... and they have really violent, ... union, ... bashing. People are paid really low wages and I was like, oh my God. The pineapples are all like £1.00. It's like, awful. We had two or three pineapples every flipping day, ... and then [my husband] saw this ... and we felt terrible about it. We just didn't know.*

P-20 had been advised that eating pineapples may stimulate the birthing process during late pregnancy when her third child was overdue. She was unaware of the wider detrimental consequences of pesticide use in the production of pineapples. Awareness of the how environmental concerns were disregarded to prioritise providing inexpensive goods for developed countries, as well as the impact on the people's health, resulted in P-20 feeling 'terrible'

that she had inadvertently contributed to the appalling conditions. She felt let down by the retailer, whom she would have preferred to have taken '*an ethical stance*', protecting not only the producers and environment, but her as a consumer from inadvertently contributing to exploitative practice.

Similar concerns transfer to fashion production, whereby chemicals and dyes pollute the local environment (Fletcher, 2008; Lee, 2003; Rivoli, 2009) and workers are aggressively prohibited from collective bargaining to request equitable conditions and salaries (AFW, 2009; Rivoli, 2009; Miller and Williams, 2009; Yu, 2008; Hearson, 2006). Consequently, consumers are primarily unaware of what constitutes production, which can be explained by the focus of marketing upon consumer-use attributes, rather than production characteristics (Hudson and Hudson, 2003). This contributes to illustrating a number of expressed values, such as esteem being compromised by learning that consumption behaviours have caused detrimental consequences. Further, P-20 expresses feeling terrible that she was inadvertently responsible through her consumption, compromising her emotional status, through reflecting the intrinsic value of spirituality. Concern for exploitative practice had also increased for P-20 post-motherhood, particularly when children were involved.

*The thing about children being exploited in factories, hits you far more, now that you have got children. Before I would kind of maybe, glossed over it a little bit. But now I am a mum, I just think, children ... possibly my children's age, ... and their eyesight is deteriorating and they are doing tiny stitching. It's awful.*

P-20 is transferring her feeling of responsibility for her children, and her desire to protect them from damage, to the children often involved in fashion production. This reflects her protective instincts as a mother: to nurture, protect and provide for her children; she is empathising with mothers who cannot sufficiently provide for their children and rely on the children contributing to the family income. Before she was a mother, she could not relate in the same way to these emotive feelings and was able to '*gloss*' over the implications without fully understanding the impact of children being employed. The

concern that she applies to her own children's nurturing has increased her ability to understand the disparity of children's experiences in developing countries and this motivates her desire to avoid practice which exploits children.

### 5.5.1: Summary of P-20's lifeworld

P-20 expressed that she has disengaged with her notion of self and reconceptualised her primary role as a provider. From this view, she has reconstructed the family's consumption habits to align with her emerging awareness for production practice to ensure that all the food consumed within the household derives from sustainable sources. This has evolved to align with a number of values, whereby ethics are at the core as P-20 does not want to contribute to either the exploitation of the environment or producers. P-20 exhibits a strong moral ideology, similar to the '*ethical hardliners*' described in Niinimäki's (2010) research. P-20 was unique in perceiving confidence that her behaviours aligned with her moral value in the context of food, however this did not transfer to sustainable fashion consumption despite her raised awareness of the issues, such as garment-worker exploitation, child labour and the impact of pesticides on both the environment in terms of pollution and consumers as the end-user.

She attempted to purchase fashion from sustainable fashion retailers, however was disappointed that the clothing did not fit her body-shape or height. Her disengagement with fashion was a result of immersing herself in the family, moral beliefs and changing body-shape throughout three pregnancies. On the occasions where she purchased clothing from high street retailers, she was unapologetic, believing sustainable options were impossible amid the knowledge that predominantly her consumption behaviours were sustainable, albeit this was primarily in the context of food consumption. Further, sustainable consumption contributed to her feeling that she was giving her children the best, through focusing on the health properties of organic production. Nevertheless, she felt confidence in both passing and receiving

used-clothing for herself and the children, as a form of recycling, minimising waste and maximising the garments lifespan.

## **5.6: Conclusion and theme development**

This chapter has established P-10 and P-20's efforts to apply sustainability to fashion consumption behaviours through exploring their narratives. It was established in Chapter One that this was the aim of the research. This aim also included exploring whether sustainability contributed to perceptions of value and the narratives describe an interplay of values in which sustainability plays a role. Values were juxtaposed within lifeworld management, understanding the sustainable implications and efforts to transfer sustainable principles from the context of food to that of fashion. Thus, the main themes derived from the focus upon P-10 and P-20 are:

- Self (self-identity; self-conviction and optimum mothering)
- Managing lifeworlds: An Interplay of values
- Processing sustainable information
- Neutralising connotations of exploitation

Although upon reflection the themes selected could be perceived as obvious, the emergence of the themes derived directly from the case study participants' narratives describing everyday behaviours. This meant that some of the analytic topics were unexpected and the literature had to be revisited to understand the meaning behind the data. This relates specifically to the literature regarding self-identity and heuristics. The literature establishing heuristics was described in Chapter Three to offer continuity of the theoretical framework, illustrating that negotiating value in consumption behaviours is endorsed through certainty of outcomes. Uncertainty leads to seeking generic information, such as brand name and price, as indicative of sustainable production. Chapter Two established the prevalence of fashion to express identity and although this was expected as an important, if not the most important, value in fashion selection, the depth of understanding identity under reconstruction through the evolving role of motherhood was not anticipated. Motherhood affected the three main

themes identified within the conceptual framework: self; motherhood and lifeworld management. This mantle was integral to perceptions of self-identity, influencing moral sentiment, whereby lifeworld management was constructed around consideration for familial provisioning.

Within the narratives, the case study participants describe a strong discourse around identity, which is not only related to their appearance but manifests also within their behaviours. For example, for P-10 sustainability was less of a priority for fashion consumption, despite expressing a strong moral conviction for sustainable concerns which manifest in other behaviours. Consequently, the theme of self reflects the reconceptualisation of self-identity, as well as the development of personal morals that contribute to self-conviction. However, it should be recognised that overall the participants were reconstructing their lifeworlds to react to the dynamic environment in which they exist. External factors, such as new information, current affairs, and advances in knowledge are presented within society and increase awareness being adopted by innovators and filtering throughout society.

Similarly, personal constructs, such as the family's life-stage, the children's emerging sense of self, employment status all impact upon familial consumption needs and wants. Personal constructs are expressed within an interplay of values, as illustrated in Table 5.1, whereby the participants negotiate value trade-offs to manage their lifeworld. This is applied through perceptions of rationality where lifeworld constraints are prioritised over moral beliefs.

Despite P-10 and P-20's belief that certain practices were morally reprehensible, both expressed their reduced ability to fully integrate this with behaviours due to constraints within the current fashion market-place. This is experienced by P-10 as she contemplates the implications of shopping in Primark; whereas P-20 is unapologetic in shopping for fashion in M&S due to a lack of awareness of sustainably-produced fashion on the high street, and her conviction that other behaviours centre upon sustainable principles.



**Table 5.1: Sustainability contributing to value types when evaluating fashion**

| <b>Value</b>        | <b>Participant 10</b>   | <b>Participant 20</b>   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Efficiency</b>   | Sustainable fashion was not sought due to perceptions that it would cost more. However once 'owned', efforts were made to maximise the lifespan   | Predominantly the food arrived through deliveries from organic and Fairtrade sources, saving P-20 from going to the supermarket with three children<br><br>Clothing was swapped within everyday networks (neighbours, connections through her daughters school) |
| <b>Excellence</b>   | Inferior quality was a trade-off for accessing fashion and dressmaking skills were employed to restore poorly constructed garments  | The quality of the clothing enabled garments to be passed down from eldest child to her younger siblings  |
| <b>Status</b>       | P-10 expressed the desire to be seen as pro-social taking a shopping bag and refusing plastic bags; this is symbolically illustrated socially through her concern for the environment                               | P-20 was extrinsically expressing 'social identification' as pro-social, as opposed to pro-self; therefore, she was less interested in fashion as expressing self and illustrated her orientation through sustainable behaviours                                |
| <b>Esteem</b>       | Took pride in her repairing skills to pro-long garments lifespan<br><br>Educated the children to think about the consequences of their actions through rejecting a plastic bag when shopping                        | Organic produce was considered as being the best quality she could offer her children<br><br>Esteem was evident when P-20 described reading about the producers on packaging and knowing that she had contributed positively to the producers well-being        |
| <b>Play</b>         | Sustainable production would not motivate fashion consumption, although it would add to perceptions of value; style preferences motivated desire  | P-20 illustrates an emotive desire to avoid consumption that has detrimental consequences and is attracted to sustainable production: this is more important than the product itself  |
| <b>Aesthetics</b>   | Aesthetics would not be compromised for sustainable production  | Aesthetics were not important, P-20 adopted a 'make do' approach to accessing fashion   |
| <b>Ethics</b>       | Ethics were considered, however the focus was to provide for the children (fashion and food) as an intrinsic component to the everyday experience: in contrast, garment-workers conditions were viewed as ambiguous | The ethics of production were evaluated prior to consumption and were a strong component of decision-making   |
| <b>Spirituality</b> | P-20 illustrated spirituality when evaluating the Global Girlfriend label, particularly when thinking of the transferral of a philosophy as the emotive transferral of attributes when selecting gifts              | Spirituality was at the core of P-20's consumption behaviours, motivating both organic, Fairtrade and locally produced food; similar concepts transferred to fashion where possible   |

Nevertheless, both described an affinity with sustainability and a desire to adopt sustainability when they understood the benefits of their contribution. This was particularly apparent when participation in sustainable behaviours were easy accessible and aligned with perceptions of value, as evident when they described networks of passing used children's clothing, reuse of plastic bags, purchasing sustainably-produced food and recycling behaviours. This contrasts with their uncertainty of applying sustainable concepts within the context of fashion consumption, where heuristic propensities were applied to avoid behaviours which did not align with their moral sentiment. Similarly, despite the disparity between their moral discourse and their behaviours, notions of guilt were neutralised within a cultural context and encouraged within social market conventions.

The next two chapters further discuss the emergent themes, incorporating the remaining participants narratives to support the findings. Collectively, this will be explained in relation to both the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and the theories established in Chapter Three.

# Chapter Six: Negotiating fashion sustainability in everyday lifeworlds

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## 6.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the emergent themes of self and managing lifeworlds developed from Chapter Five and supported by the remaining participants' narratives and the literature introduced in Chapters One, Two and Three. The aim of this chapter is to explore the everyday lifeworlds in which the participants negotiate sustainability within the context of fashion consumption, focusing upon the themes of self and managing lifeworlds.

### 6.1.1: Theme development

At the beginning of each section, a table will present the narrative that contributed to the theme development from the case study participants along with examples from the supporting participants. The purpose of this is threefold: to illustrate how the theme was developed from the case studies; to provide an explanation of the nuances within the narratives; and to extend the theme development from the case studies to the wider collection of data.

## 6.2: Self

The participants' lifeworlds were a triad of self, family and external activities and were constantly evolving, within which nuances of self were undergoing reconstruction to reflect personal constructs. For P-10, this included a visual representation within a social world, where fashion was selected to portray an image appropriate to her age and body-shape, as well as representing her participation within internal and external lifeworlds. Her behaviours were shaped by a moral conviction and personally constructed to reflect her interest in environmentalism, and were expressed as equally integral to her sense of

self. Consequently, P-10 was an avid recycler, repaired garments to maximise lifespan and spoke passionately about her efforts to avoid taking plastic bags when shopping, behaviours that she encouraged her family to participate in. This intentness manifested in her perception that using cloth bags represented her attitude towards sustainability within a synthesis of style. It was this fusion that endorsed her behaviours, particularly as it contrasted with her assumptions that sustainable fashion consumption was unviable due to perceptions of unfashionable styles and increased price points.

P-20 also perceived sustainable fashion consumption as unviable, since previous efforts to purchase sustainably-produced fashion had been disappointing due to fit. This resulted in P-20 disengaging with fashion consumption and focusing upon sustainable consumption in other contexts. Motherhood offered the opportunity for P-20 to reflect upon the consequences of her behaviours; with support from her husband, she had reconsidered where household consumption derived from, selecting produce that was produced locally, grown organically and included Fairtrade negotiations. P-20 also perceived sustainably-produced food as providing enhanced attributes which equate to optimum provisioning. Sustainable behaviours extended to recycling, minimising waste and accepting/passing on hand-me-down clothing. Examples of quotes from the case study participants illustrating the themes can be seen in Table 6.1.

The case study participants described notions of renegotiating self-identity post-motherhood to incorporate to the mothering role and adapt to address the evolving family needs, particularly as their children matured and become less dependent (Smith, 2007). Giddens (1991: 11) postulates that familial change culminates in '*establishing a new sense of identity*', which was also identified within the wider body of participants. Therefore, the first theme in this section includes renegotiating fashion to adapt to changes in age and body-shape, amid efforts to maintain a sense of self.

P-10 and P-20 described how sustainable information was incorporated about into their everyday behaviours, as did the other participants, primarily focusing upon sustainable principles of reduce, reuse and recycle. For example, the participants perceived that inexpensive consumer commodities were easily assessable, yet were neither valued by consumers nor reflected the wider consequences on the environment or workers involved in production. Increased consumption coupled with increased disposability aligns with planned obsolescence and a number of participants recognised this compromised sustainability. Therefore, the second theme includes sustainable behaviours that minimised waste, including avoiding planned obsolescence, recycling and taking bags when shopping.

**Table 6.1: Case study narratives expressing the importance of self**

| <b>Self</b>              | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>  |
|--------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| <b>Self-identity</b>     | Fashion is used to depict identity, albeit suited to both age and body-shape  | 10                 | Yeah I consider image. I'm conscious of fashion. I like fashion. I like things that are on trend [and] suited to both my age and my body-shape  |
| <b>Self-conviction</b>   | The firmly held belief that passing used children's clothing aligns with moral value, including intentness to recycle and avoid consumption derived from exploitation | 20                 | We get a lot of hand-me-down clothes. We are very ethical and we do think about where they come from and who makes them and if they are made in China in factories with children. I love the recycling aspect   |
| <b>Optimum mothering</b> | Belief that organic food was the purest food she could provide her children with after breastfeeding  | 20                 | We switched to all organic, food-wise when [first child] was weaning. We read a book on it and ... I suppose you are a bit precious about it, you do breast milk and they have never had anything and then all of a sudden you are giving them food and then you [consider] what's the best possible thing you could give them? |

Sustainability was also identified as relating to optimum parenting, consistent with P-20, some of the participants believed that organic food was better for the children, particularly when weaning. Further, the participants expressed that encouraging their children to adopt sustainable behaviours was integral to their socialisation. Therefore, the last theme in this section describes how sustainability relates to optimum mothering, as the participants both strived to provide their children with the most nutritious food and educate them to consider the consequences of consumption, yet often compromised their moral sentiment for familial provisioning.

### **6.2.1: Self-identity**

The research did not set out to explore identity transition, however this seemed to be imbued within the participants narratives as they reconstructed their identity post-motherhood. Identity is intrinsically linked to depicting self (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000) and the participants describe the integration of a multifaceted life, including selfhood, mothering and professional-self. The importance differed existentially for each participant, depending on personal constructs and participation in external activities outwith the family, such as employment commitment and the age of the children: younger children were more dependent on their mothers support (Smith, 2007). However, at the core of the narratives it was evident that their perceptions of selfhood underpinned their identity.

Self-identity was mainly expressed through three value types: self-esteem, play and aesthetics. According to Holbrook's (1999) Typology of Consumer Value, self-esteem is reactive and extrinsic, seeking validation in the external world (Richins, 1999). Holbrook (1999) describes both play and aesthetics as self-orientated and intrinsic. This suggests that value is perceived from the perspective of self, manifesting through actively seeking self-enhancing products within the shopping experience, as exemplified in play. Examples of the quotes from the case study participants which led to the formation of these

themes as relating to the relevant values can be seen in Table 6.2, and the wider body of participants in Table 6.3.

**Table 6.2: Case study narratives expressing the interplay of values in relation to self-identity**

| <b>Self-identity</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|----------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| <b>Esteem</b>        | Appearance indicates how others will make judgements, including both fashion and sustainable orientation  | 10                 | Yes, I always use them and I have got loads of them, I've got a Bodyshop one and Primark and loads of different  |
| <b>Aesthetics</b>    | Image is viewed as a visual representation of her roles in an external world incorporating her age, shape and sense of self   | 10                 | I'm a lady of a certain age [laughs]! I like to keep up with, trends, but I am also aware of my age  |
| <b>Play</b>          | Expresses disengagement with fashion shopping due to an inability to find clothes that suit her body-shape after three pregnancies; consequently, the experience is neither pleasurable nor rewarding | 20                 | I have changed size a lot, up and down and up and down, so I have needed a lot of clothes because I have been pregnant three times and lost weight and put on weight all through three pregnancies |

Similar to P-10, mainly the participants were interested in fashion, whereby the higher their involvement, the more fashion was valued (O'Cass, 2004). Fashion consumption was perceived as self-orientated without apology and it was style that initially attracted the participants to a garment. For example, P-9 selects fashion based on a '*sort of impulse ... that's really nice, or unusual*', illustrating an aesthetic motivation as their consumer-self was foremost in their consciousness (Jägel et al., 2012; Lin and Xia, 2012; Valor, 2007; Joergens, 2006). The quotes in Table 6.3 illustrate the salience of self for the participants: fashion was something integral to their notions of self and had evolved to adapt to the various roles undertaken within their lifeworlds (Evans, 1989).

**Table 6.3: Supporting participants narratives expressing the interplay of values in relation to self-identity**

| <b>Self-identity</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|----------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| <b>Esteem</b>        | Shopping for fashion was viewed as a treat after being immersed in mothering, her 40 <sup>th</sup> birthday party offered an opportunity for celebration and she wanted to select fashionable clothing as indicative of her continuation in an external world  | 18                 | I actually bought a really nice dress. It was quite an expensive one, ... because, [it was] for my 40 <sup>th</sup> birthday and I wanted a nice dress and I bought a nice pair of shoes. I spent quite a lot of money on it, ... and it was quite fashionable item. I wanted to look good, it was my party and [laughing] ... I was getting back into, I suppose being, a bit more fashionable!   |
| <b>Aesthetics</b>    | Personal style is indicative of her sense of self and this is how she wants to present herself socially  | 22                 | I have my own personal style that is important to me. I would only wear things, I guess that, ... matched my own style   |
| <b>Play</b>          | The participants had an individual approach to their appearance and it was important that they could continue to express themselves visually to maintain the respect of others. Therefore, garments were selected on style and some had separate work wardrobes to express professionalism or offered a flavour of their type of work. Further, they had a separate wardrobe for when playing with the children, clothing that was comfortable and enabled ease of movement. | 27                 | I ... have three sets of clothes. Smart casual, kind of nice mum clothes, that I do the school run in. Then I have things that I will wear for work. My smart casual stuff that I wear outside work is probably the thing that reflects me most. I don't wear like a fleece and a pair of jeans, ... I wear quite, quirky clothes. The clothes that I sew, ... the fabric will be quite unusual, or the pattern will be quite unusual. So I probably dress quite oddly for a 44 year old woman. I'm just quite unconventional. Quite often when I am not at work have my hair in bunches or plaits. Because that's me. I have fun with it and I enjoy it |

For some of the participants, shopping for fashion was a treat, a time for focusing on themselves and they wanted to do this without children so that they could browse without distraction. P-5 commented that she would leave her children with her mother and choose a fashion retailer which included an augmented customer service, such luxurious fitting rooms, so that she could enjoy the experience. Birtwistle and Tsim (2005) identified consumers aged over forty five years preferred a luxurious shopping experience, which was



endorsed by a number of participants who expressed a preference for a solitary hedonistic experience (Memery et al., 2005; Smith, 1999). It was viewed that there was little pleasure in fashion shopping with children, who had little patience for the activity (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). Other participants described how fashion shopping occurred around their birthday, which provided time for themselves to be self-indulgent, contrasting with their everyday experience of juggling family and employment responsibilities. Consequently, the participants pursued fashion consumption as a form of escapism from the mundanity of their everyday lifeworlds, resulting in the participants responding to stimuli in the market-place and being aesthetically attracted to fashion which they perceived would enhance their appearance (Workman and Studak, 2006).

Opportunities to indulge in fashion consumption had reduced post-motherhood due to time and financial limitations. They described hectic lifeworlds that focus upon familial responsibilities and employment. Therefore, fashion shopping, although infrequent, evoked memories of a time when they could be self-indulgent and more carefree. For example, P-6 mentioned that she bought spiky heeled shoes that she could not walk in, but liked the idea of owning them. Shopping for fashion was reminiscent of a time when they participated in social occasions and had more excitement in their lives. This is evident in P-18s quote in Table 6.4, whereby she recognises that she had been immersed in mothering and her 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party offered an opportunity to get back to feeling like herself again. P-18 elaborates by expressing:

*I have ... stopped shopping as much as [I did] before I had a baby [laughing]! It's funny, before I got pregnant again I was starting to get back into... maybe trying to dress up a bit, if I was going out. Because I hadn't been out for a long time, you kind of feel it's a bit of waste of money, ... spending money on nice clothes. But I'm starting to go out a bit more, I am starting to want to wear, ... really more fashionable clothes again. [So] maybe I would leave work a bit early ... if she was in childcare ... and [have] a quick look. (P-18)*

P-18 expresses both the guilt at spending money on herself and how she had begun to emerge from being immersed in mothering and expressing this through her visual appearance. Although pregnant again, she postulates that in-between the pregnancies, she has begun to resume her social life. Previously, she had felt guilt at spending money on fashion, particularly as she was not participating in an external world; however, post-pregnancy she had opportunities to recommence social activities. This approach is similar to P-10's description of reconstructing her lifeworld as her children were less dependent upon her, offering the opportunity to reconsider her career. Emerging from a lifeworld imbued within mothering is an acknowledgment of reconstructing their sense of self through merging their own needs with that of the family. For example, P-14 expresses that it was important to:

*Maintain a little bit of my pre-mummy identity. Professionally ... that matters quite a lot, ... that I haven't got a top with, yoghurt, or, ... crap, all down it. Although I don't always reach this high, [laughing] target [laughing] myself! (P-14)*

P-14 is acknowledging that her sense of self and her career remains important; however as a mother, she is renegotiating a lifeworld juxtaposed with caring for children, employment and household duties. With three children under the age of five and a demanding part-time job as a secondary school teacher, P-14 did not have much time for herself; however, she attempted to continue to present herself socially as depicting professionalism (Miller-Spillman, 2005; Damhorst and McLeod, 2005; Storey, 1999). This different approach to self-identity depending upon the days activities is also expressed by P-27:

*When I am not [at work], ... I wear jeans and t-shirt and a jumper, or I dress in joggers and stuff. Because my children are still so young, I end up with yoghurt smeared all over me. (P-27)*

Both P-14 and P-27 imply that anticipating their daily roles influences their approach to identity, and this is also evident in the quote in Table 6.3. They also describe that motherhood reduced their ability to wear fashionable garments, particularly as motherhood increased the likelihood of getting dirty and comfort

was preferential due to participating in child friendly activities. P-14 adopts strategies which will enable the transition from child-centred activities to maintaining her sense of self:

*I hated the idea of totally letting myself go after the children. So I, ... make sure that my hair is cut fairly regularly [before] it starts being straggly and a mess. I have spent large amounts of my time on the floor, wearing jeans and tops, ... I think just, almost as an antidote to being at home, I'm trying to think, right well, I am not going to be in my pyjamas, and equally, I am not going to be in tracksuit bottoms and a floppy top, I'll try, and wear something that makes me feel as though I am more of a grown-up and not just a stay-at-home, mum, who doesn't give a shit [laughing]! (P-14)*

P-14 recognises that caring for young children is time-consuming and it is easy to become so immersed in caring for children that self-identity is compromised. Therefore she wants to continue to care for her appearance as evidence of her preservation of self, noting her strategy is a reflective counteraction of the self-imposed stay-at-home activities of motherhood. In her study of the identity transition of motherhood, Smith (2007) found her participants began to review their lifeworlds five months after the birth. The evidence from the participants in the research reported in this thesis identifies this is ongoing as the children's needs evolve. As the children grow, the participants begin to turn their gaze back to themselves and external activities. P-14 also mentions wanting to feel 'grown-up', aware that her appearance depicts a sense of maturity and development. The participants expressed awareness that appearance is reactive and responsive, offering visual communication of status. For P-27 this included remaining attractive to her husband post-motherhood:

*The way that you look, ... is sadly, quite important, [not just for] myself [but] also for my partner. I mean, I don't want my husband thinking that his wife looks like a bag of old spuds. It would be really inconsiderate ... if I didn't make an effort. Because ... he is very appearance conscious [laughing]! (P-27)*

P-27 expresses that she still wants to be viewed as attractive and this involves continuing to care for her social appearance, particularly out of respect for her husband. Despite the participants' lifeworlds consisting of predominantly

childcare activities, there is a fear that they will somehow lose themselves if they do not make the effort to maintain their appearance. For example, P-27 expressed that her husband is image-conscious and she is trying to remain the same woman he was once attracted to. This could be a reflection that men do not experience physical changes through parenthood and P-27 is contrasting her own shape with his. Akerlof and Kranton (2000) postulate that women acutely feel the loss of self, which may lead to anxiety, particularly as the stereotypical assumption of female identity is one which is aesthetically attractive.

Similarly, P-20 had reduced self-esteem due to physical changes in body-shape, resulting in a disengagement with her appearance. Bailey (1999) posits that body-change altering self-identity was temporary and transitional, and this was reflected within the participants discourse as evidence of transposing a new self to accommodate changes in their lifeworld. However, some of the participants were less retrospective and changes in their body-shape had reduced their self-esteem and involvement in fashion. As expressed by P-27, gaining weight resulted in fashion shopping being less pleasurable.

*I am quite small ... and I am ... a dress size and a half bigger, than I would normally be. So the other thing that comes into play when I buy clothes is, making sure that they actually fit, and that they look, flattering. Actually I don't really like my body at the moment, so I don't tend to want to go clothes shopping for recreation. I am not interested [or] think it is a valuable way to spend a day. (P-27)*

P-27 feels that fashions suit her less now that her body-shape is larger and she has disengaged from seeking new fashion, contrasting with her playful description of fashion from Table 6.3. Further, she expresses disliking her body post-pregnancy and struggling to adapt to the changes, particularly when the idealised image of women promotes a slender body-shape (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000). Concurrent with P-20, P-27 explains that her size and height reduced her ability to find fashion that fitted in mainstream fashion retailers that fitted, reducing her choice of viable fashionable options, as was also identified by Hiller Connell (20120) and Ontieno et al. (2005). Bailey (1999) identified that pregnancy was a physical marker of impending motherhood and

this inner change resulted in being treated differently by others, including strangers, which affected their perception of self. Similarly, the participants in this research recognised they were not the same person they had been pre-pregnancy, as well as the pregnancy altering their body-shape. Often the weight gained in pregnancy is viewed as less important than creating a hospitable environment for a healthy baby (Bailey, 1999). Nevertheless, post-pregnancy, the participants express a preference to retain their sense of self, including losing the weight gained in pregnancy, an important marker of reclaiming notions of self.

Therefore, it was important for the participants to maintain their established personal style. It was not necessarily the latest trends that the participants sought, reflecting their confidence in their self-concept (Ogle and Damhorst, 2005); however they still wanted to remain fashionable to demonstrate that their continuation to care about how they look and to preserve their self-respect. Maintaining their appearance meant that the participants still felt worthwhile and had integrity (Akerlof and Kranton, 2000). The quotes in Table 6.3 also support this notion, implying that visual presentation offers social validation and respect from others (Richins, 1999).

Because of changes in body-shape, the fashion retailers frequented by the participants prior to the pregnancy were no longer suitable, a reflection that fashion retailers target younger market-segments.

*I think since having children, my body-shape has changed. So quite a lot of what I had ... just doesn't look right anymore, and also my taste in that time has changed. I am just more aware, ... of having, ... higher quality stuff, that really looks good on me, than lots of things from Topshop [laughing]! So I am more likely to hold off and decide that actually a pair of trousers from Hobbs looks good on me, so I will buy those [rather than] more items, for cheaper. (P-14)*

P-14 recognises that her body-shape has changed and she expresses that it is more important to her that clothes fit and suit her shape. Ming Law et al. (2004) described fashion consumption needs as including psychological; physical and

external influences. This section has delineated how the participants select clothing reflective of their personality and sense of self (Diaz-Meneses, 2010; Workman and Studak, 2006; Wagner, 1999), as well as enhancing body-shape. External needs have also been addressed, as depicted in Tables 6.2 and 6.3, and included social occasions and work-wear. Further, the participants appropriate their clothing depending on the day's activities, as P-27 describes in Table 6.3.

The participants recognised that their age restricted the appropriateness of following fashion trends. Lin and Xia (2012) proposed that women have a chronological age, whereby they purchase fashion that reflects the age they perceive themselves to be rather than their actual age. Although fashion consumption research tends to focus upon younger consumers (Naderi, 2011), due to their increased fashion involvement and consumption, Ogle and Damhorst (2005) and Damhorst (2005c) postulate that women aged over 40 years were still interested in their appearance, and this was true of most of the participants. For example, P-5 stated, she is '*not ready for granny wear*'. Similarly, P-16 was discouraged from some fashion retailers due to the maturity of other consumers trying on similar garments in the retailer she was browsing (this quote can be found in Table 6.7). Evidently this extended to the participants still perceiving themselves as aligning with a fashion retailer due to style, described by Otieno et al. (2005) as self-image congruence. The participants described preferred retailers where they could shop for fashion due to an alignment with style, assurance of fit and quality and affordable price points. It was postulated in Chapter One that consumers align with a retailers identity when selecting fashion (O'Cass and Choy, 2008; Shukla, 2008; Hines, 2007; Marzo-Navarro et al., 2004) and meaning is assigned to lifestyle traits (Solomon, 1999). Thus, the participants re-evaluated their lifestyle, including motherhood and professionalism, to conform socially (Mayo and Fielder, 2006) and react to marketing intermediaries positioned by retailers; these expressed attributes were foremost in the participants consciousness when selecting fashion.

There was a feeling permeated within the narratives that both time to shop and finances were much reduced post-motherhood; coupled with physical changes, the desire to maintain selfhood was already subject to restrictions. Accessing fashion that would be suitable reduced predications for fashion sustainability, particularly as perceptions of sustainable fashion were infused with ethnicity and not following fashion trends. Black (2008) questioned whether it was possible to be both fashionable and environmentally friendly. P-10 and P-20 both expressed in Chapter Five that sustainably-produced fashion was considered as unfashionable, more expensive and not available on the high street, as postulated by Connolly and Prothero (2003) who situate sustainable consumption as *'giving up and losing out'*. This was the opinion of all of the participants, words that were used to describe sustainable fashion included *'frumpy'* (P-4), *'obscure'* (P-13), *'arty-farty'* (P-15) and *'comfy clothing'* (P-18). Comparable opinions have been previously identified within the literature (for example: Bray et al., 2011; Hiller Connell, 2010; Szmigin et al., 2007; Valor, 2007; Joergens, 2006; Shaw et al., 2006; Carrigan et al., 2004; Chen-Yu and Kincade, 2011; Meyer, 2001). Therefore, sourcing sustainably fashion was believed to be less convenient, more expensive and not following fashion trends, as P-4 stated:

*Those sort of clothes never change. The ones you get in ... hippy market stalls ... don't really follow fashion. They are their own fashion. (P-4)*

P-4 is suggesting that the clothes are of ethnic design and follow ethnic fashion, rather than western fashion trends, symbolic of a nonconformist orientation. The perception that sustainably-produced fashion was not available on the high street could explain why ethical ranges which have been available on the high street have not performed well (Cervellon et al., 2009). Ethnicity was not how the participants wanted to present themselves, for example P-14 explains that ethical fashion is *'not to my fashion taste'* or and P-26 expressed: *'I just couldn't wear that to work'*. This was anticipated as the participants were not selected as being ethically active; even ethically committed consumers have struggled to source sustainably-produced fashion, especially for work-wear (Valor, 2007:

Shaw et al., 2006; Shaw and Newholm, 2004). Some of the participants wanted to, or were required to, wear garments that expressed professionalism (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Miller Spillman, 2005b; Bannister and Hogg, 2004; Dewsnap and Hart, 2004), as described by P-20 in Chapter Five. This aligns with Hirshman's (1993: 550) observation that the 'charm' of fashion is aesthetic, a notion reflected in marketing intermediaries that promote fashion through aesthetic qualities enhancing appearance; marketing accentuates consumer value as opposed to production value (Belk et al., 2000; Hudson and Hudson, 2003). The narratives also illustrate that consumers are yet to include sustainability for fashion consumption, due in part to viewing fashion from a personal perspective, including the value of ownership (Workman and Studak, 2006; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989) and the use of fashion as visual communication (Park and Burns, 2005; Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Faber et al., 1987). P-17 wants assurance of sustainability when browsing for fashion.

*It would be so great to walk into a shop that was reasonably priced where you thought ... every item in here has been made in a factory that has been inspected. And where all the workers have been ... paid a proper wage and that they have not, .. been exploited. **And** I actually want to buy the things in that shop. Because there is that One World shop at the other end of Princes Street. I wouldn't buy those clothes. I don't relate to them at all [laughing]! (P-17)*

Similarly, P-27 expresses:

*The stuff in the Fairtrade shops, ... you get the odd gem, but most of the time you are looking at it and going, ... I wouldn't wear that. It's tie-dye, or ... it's a weird shape. And it is like you have suddenly got to look like somebody that is Fairtrade in order to ... buy ethically, ... which I find ... quite, insidious. I think you should be able to look completely ordinary, if you want to, but still have the option of buying [sustainably] and I think that's extremely difficult to do. (P-27)*

P-17 and P-27 express that they want to see sustainably-produced fashion that aligns with their sense of self, something neither of them perceive is possible in the current market-place. The literature asserted that consumers reject fashion that does not enable expression of self (Hiller Connell, 2010; Valor, 2007; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004). The styles of sustainable fashion identified in sustainable



fashion retailers reflected an ethnic design which deterred the participants from seeking sustainable fashion; they were not prepared to further compromise expressing their self-identity, after expressing reduced opportunities to shop for fashion, to include sustainable production (Jägel et al., 2012; Joy et al., 2012; Niinimäki, 2010; Hiller Connell, 2010; Joergens, 2006; Valor, 2007; Iwanow et al., 2005; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Dickson, 2001). However, there was some acknowledgment that within the current fashion market-place sustainable options were increasing, albeit sporadically, as described by P-23:

*Ethical fashion sounds like an oxymoron. But I have seen some quite nice products, which, describe themselves as ethical. (P-23)*

P-23 expresses that she has chanced upon fashion which has been produced under sustainable principles, illustrating an awareness for sustainability within mainstream fashion retailers and offering the potential to reduce established barriers, such as access and price (Low and Davenport, 2006; Schaefer and Crane, 2005). However, the participants expressed disappointment that sustainable garments are restricted to basic styles, such as t-shirts (Hiller Connell, 2010; Fletcher, 2008). For example, P17 asks: '*why has it gotta be like that?*', particularly as fashion consumers want stylish fashion that they can '*wear to a club on Saturday night*' and do not want to '*look like [they are wearing] sacks*'. Carrigan et al. (2004), Auger et al. (2003) and Dickson (2000) believed that ethical credentials were insufficient for consumer acceptance when requiring a sacrifice of style, price or quality; however, if the garments were stylish, of a similar price and available in high street labels, knowing that the garment had been produced sustainably was perceived as added value. P-25 had recently purchased an organic t-shirt for her daughter:

*I bought an organic t-shirt at the weekend. Part of the reason that I was so impressed by it was that it looked really nice and it was only £6.00. A reasonable price, I am quite happy to pay that. (P-25)*

P-25 expresses that she was attracted by the t-shirt initially due to aesthetics, however, the price was also acceptable and organic status was perceived as added value. To appeal to mass-market fashion consumers, following fashion

trends produced within the boundaries of sustainability can raise consumers' consciousness for the pertinent issues and alter perceptions that sustainable fashion is an oxymoron (Black, 2008). Similarly, P-7 had identified that a fashion retailer who stocked organic cotton t-shirts and she expressed that choosing this aligned with her moral value. Consequently, when she needed new tops, this retailer was her first choice:

*I am not one for wearing [slogans]. But ... I thought I don't mind people knowing that, this t-shirt, that I am wearing, is about the environment. I will buy them if I am looking for a t-shirt. (P-7)*

P-7 wants to portray her ethos as supportive of environmental concern, similar to Niinimäki's (2010) 'ethical hardliners' who illustrated their personal ideology for sustainability. However, it should be recognised that this does not include expressing their stance through ethnic styles, contrasting with the research by Dickson and Littrell (1997). Reducing price points, following mainstream fashion trends and availability in mainstream fashion retailers enables fashion consumers to select fashion that aligns with moral values and beliefs (O'Casey and Choy, 2008; Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001), particularly by reducing barriers of ease of access and price (Newman and Patel, 2004). Thus, as postulated by P-7, prioritising sustainable production raises the retailers profile, offering the potential for sustainability to be introduced as a competitive advantage. Similarly, this supports assertions that the market potential for sustainably-produced fashion is growing (Gowerek, 2011; Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006; Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004), and the participants expressed the desire to be seen to support sustainable principles (Fletcher, 2008). This is particularly relevant as the participants illustrate a strong sense of self-conviction which is permeated throughout the next section.

### **6.2.2: Self-conviction**

Self-conviction was apparent as the participants described attitudes and beliefs that shaped sustainable behaviours. Similar to P-10, this was most relevant when describing everyday behaviours which stemmed from understanding how

their individual approach contributed to the wider sustainable agenda. This was reflected within a dynamic social discourse as an assimilation underpinned by moral nuances. Evidence of the participants' self-conviction was threefold:

1. The participants understood behaviours that compromised sustainability; this included increased levels of consumption which resulted in increased disposal to landfill sites
2. The participants understood that adopting sustainable behaviours would be beneficial overall for the environment; this included reducing consumption, recycling and rejecting plastic bags when shopping
3. The participants believed that their individual behaviour would contribute to reducing environmental degradation

Self-conviction was expressed through two value types: status and spirituality. Status was expressed through the family's positioning, including expressing values that were important to the family, such as sustainability and pro-social behaviours. Spirituality reflected the tangibility of the experience which was enhanced through understanding their contribution. This was evident when P-10 expressed that her motivation to avoid plastic bags derived from knowledge of the detrimental consequences to sea-life. Similarly, P-20 emotively expressed horror when learning that the pineapples she had purchased had damaged the environment and caused ill-health in the community in which they were produced. The case study participants quotes are exhibited in Table 6.4 and the remaining participants' quotes can be found in Table 6.5.

**Table 6.4: Case study narratives expressing the interplay of values in relation to self-conviction**

| <b>Self-conviction</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| <b>Status</b>          | Expressing awareness that taking a cloth bag is both indicative of her engagement with the movement to reduce plastic bags as well as indicating her patronage with a value fashion retailer alleged of exploiting garment-workers; this is a visual statement of status which is both pro-social and pro-self | 10                 | I took my, my Primark bag to [laughing] university the other day! I was thinking [laughing] what will people think I am like [laughing]! Schemey ... university person with this Primark bag!  |
| <b>Spirituality</b>    | Understanding the negative consequences of plastic bags disposed into the environment, coupled with her endearment for wildlife and the environment has resulted in a passionate disregard for plastic bags use  | 10                 | I have done a lot of conservation, work. I've been very much into wildlife. You ... hear horror stories, about ... whales, crustaceans ... mistaking plastic bags for jellyfish. I just hate all that and the fact that they don't break down. I just think its so unnecessary |

**Table 6.5: Supporting participants narratives expressing the interplay of values in relation to self-conviction**

| <b>Self-conviction</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>  |
|------------------------|---|--------------------|---|
| <b>Status</b>          | Awareness of a social shift whereby taking a bag shopping implicates pro-social behaviour and not participating in this sustainable movement is viewed as anti-social | 17                 | The culture with that is definitely changing. I definitely see people showing up with, [a shopping bag] and I actually almost feel a bit of a loser, if I am taking the [plastic bags] [laughing]! It's obviously culturally developed enough, like drinking and driving, you just don't do it, taking a plastic bags, you just don't so it |
| <b>Spirituality</b>    | Reflecting upon the wider implications of consumption behaviours as being unsustainable   | 6                  | I like the idea of the recycled. It's looking at ways that, we as a nation, or ... a race of people consum[ing] and continu[ing] to consume and then dispose of [the product]   |

Both P-10 and P-20 expressed their concern that current consumption behaviours included increased quantities of inexpensive products (Parker, 2011; CSF, 2009; Jones et al., 2005) and this theme was expressed by the majority of the participants. It was posited in Chapters One and Two that inexpensive fashion offered an opportunity for planned obsolescence through a proclivity for disposability (Friedman, 2010; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Majima, 2008). The participants discourse around increased consumption focused on distaste for consumption borne out of desire rather than need, contrasting with assumptions that inexpensive fashion encourages consumption as a leisurely pursuit (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; CSF, 2009; Holt, 2008; Mayo and Fielder, 2006; O’Cass, 2004; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). P-2 was unique in purchasing fashion ‘*far too much, far too often, cheap things that I don’t need*’. However, P-2 was the only participant still in her twenties and this approach is similar to the findings of Fisher et al. (2008), Joy et al. (2012) and Joergens (2006), where younger consumers purchase inexpensive fashion more frequently and inexpensive fashion enabled access to rapid new trends in fashion.

Mainly, the participants assumed a distance from frequent consumption, applying voluntary simplicity as a sustainable stance. It was viewed that historically consumers were more frugal, because garments were more expensive and therefore valued more, resulting in efforts to extend the lifespan, such as repairing damaged clothing. P-26 and P-17 expressed their feelings about the frivolity of planned obsolescence:

*Western society is just ridiculous in what we have. And we just don’t need half of it. (P-26)*

*The sort of easy throw away culture of clothes is so prevalent, that people don’t even really notice. (P-17)*

The quotes from P-26 and P-17 illustrate acknowledging a ‘*culture*’ of purchasing inexpensive fashion, which is desired rather than required and perceived as a societal norm (Fletcher, 2008; Jones, 2006; Wagner, 1999). P-3

described the prevalence of a 'consumerist society' as motivating consumption of the latest fashion or gadget and disposing of products not because of damage, but because it is no longer contemporary. The participants establish their distance from planned obsolescence, which was used as a benchmark for their own consumption. For example, P-3 states:

*I don't feel that as a family we contribute hugely [to increased consumption and disposal]. Obviously we contribute a bit, but I don't think that we over contribute. (P-3)*

P-3 expresses that she does not feel that as a family they purchase more than what is required, nor does she feel that the family contributes to increasing landfill sites, as she recycles what is no longer used by the family. This was a view held by other participants also, for example P-13 said that:

*I don't think that we are extravagant shoppers, ... so when we do buy, I like to think that I am buying something that they will, like and appreciate. (P-13)*

P-13 illustrates that as they do not shop frequently, it is also important to ensure that the children are happy with their choice. This approach is similar to the defence offered by P-10 for shopping in Primark: consumption occurs infrequently and is based upon need, therefore she wants to ensure the children are involved and fulfilled with the garment. This can be construed as a coping mechanism to alleviate guilt that the children's requests are not often granted, particularly as marketing media messages encourage increased consumption. P-3 recognises that market-forces encourage continuous consumption of goods with a limited lifespan.

*There's an awful lot of money being invested in getting people to feel that they need to buy. You go to BHS at Christmas time ... [and see] pink fluffy ceramic shoes with bath salts in it. What's the point in that? You know where that's going! (P-3)*

P-3 describes that consumer commodities are designed without purpose or longevity; such commodities are produced for the sole purpose of gift-giving and end in landfill after limited use. The participants expressed distaste for

marketing that that encouraged planned obsolescence, contrasting to the research by Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2011) whose participants alleviated guilt by blaming marketing as encouraging increased consumption. As the participants recognised that production included scarce resources and energy processes, the rapid turnaround of evolving trends increases environmental degradation; as described by P-26: *'In the long term you do worry about the sustainability of ... cheap clothing'*. This recognition included acknowledging increased consumption ensured more products destined for landfill. P-19 felt that her voluntary simplicity approach was frequently thwarted by external social influences:

*Things are available cheaply ... almost [a] sort of a semi-disposable basis. They are not really taking into account that, ... buying increases demand for things that they don't really need [which] impact on production ... wasting, the earths resources. For example, at our children's football club, [we] paid [our] subscription for the year and each child got a t-shirt and a jacket. That was great, very well received. Then this year, there was another, subscription [for] another t-shirt and another jacket. The majority of people, ... just handed over the money without question. I said ... the t-shirt and the jackets we have, are fine. They haven't outgrown them they will do for another season. I think this is wasteful. Then I get my son saying, but I want the new jacket. So I have to go through the whole explanation of ... production is harmful for the environment. Sometimes feel like I am a lone voice. (P-19)*

P-19 recognises that new goods impact on sustainability through continuous production requiring scarce resources, as suggested in Chapter One (Rivoli, 2009; Fletcher, 2008; Allwood et al., 2008). She feels that garments should be used for as long as possible and not disposed of because of a new style. However, she expresses feeling isolated in this opinion, particularly as she feels forced by her children's football club to accept the new season strip and is obliged to conform with social norms. The participants describe that it is not only fashions that rapidly evolve, other consumption contexts, such as technology, also inspire planned obsolescence. This added further complexity, as expressed by P-19 in the above quote, the participants' deliberation that consumption should be purchased out of need rather than desire was

manageable for their own needs, however having children often forced a compromise. This was also experienced by P-4.

*We buy more ... things that I just really wish had never existed and had certainly never come into our house. Having children ... you are brought into ... a world that is changing at a faster pace. There is so much more advertising than even when I was a child. I can remember pestering my parents for things, but not in the same league as the children now. You don't want them to be different. We ... have different values to a lot of people. We didn't have a car until recently, we just had a tiny little telly, ... we didn't have ... the sort of material things. And when [our son] went to school, we ... became aware ... that he may come home and say ... so and so has got this. [We did not want our] children [to] feel that they are different ... even if you whole heartedly believe that your values are what counts. I have seen ... children of parents who are [ethical hardliners] and their children can just be a bit weird and ... socially outcast. So, I think we have ... had to temper ourselves. That's one of the differences with having children, that you have to live in the world that they share. (P-4)*

P-4 felt able to manage her consumption; she was aware that her reflective trajectory had self-actualised and she no longer required consumer commodities to define her sense of self; similar to P-20's narrative, behaviours and values were indicative of her identity. However, P-4 felt that she did not want to transpose her moral perspective onto her son, aware that he had to negotiate his sense of self within society, particularly noting her lifeworld was juxtaposed within a 'world that they share'. Thus, she suspended her approach of reduced consumption to allow him to feel like his peers and this included purchasing consumer goods that were incongruous with her moral perspective. This can be viewed as sacrificing her moral sentiment to allow her son to find his own sense of self. Bailey (1999) believes that the interface of contrasting discourse allows for creative space. However it also creates tensions and these tensions are evident within the above quotes. Frequently the participants had to compromise their moral beliefs to incorporate others' needs, and this was interpreted as an appeal to a higher loyalty to enable the children's sense of self to emerge.

The narratives expressed above illustrating self-conviction as motivating the desire to purchase only what was required and minimising commodities to



landfill were viewed as sustainable behaviours (Waste Aware Scotland, 2009; Dobscha, 1993). The quotes are indicative of the broader discourse around sustainability, particularly when considering the main themes described by P-10 and P-20 as pertaining to sustainability, such as the networks passing hand-me-down clothing, intentness to recycle and avoiding plastic bags. This thesis will not investigate the extent the participants passed on used-clothing, recycled and rejected plastic bags (evidence of their quotes can be found in Appendices 11, 12, and 13) to maintain focus on how they perceive sustainability in the context of fashion. However, the prevalence of these behaviours does illustrate that the participants apply sustainability within their everyday lifeworlds and will be abridged in the following paragraphs to support the theme of self-conviction.

The ethos to minimise waste motivated much of the networks passing used children's clothing, similar to the research by Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012). The extent to which used clothing was passed was unexpected, however upon reflection this approach is responsive to the transience of children's clothing. The narratives illustrate the extent that worn clothing is utilised and valued within internal and external mothering networks. It was questioned in Chapter Two what rules existed for passing used clothing and the narratives identified that hand-me-down garments were passed within immediate families and some participants stored baby clothing in anticipation of another child; this extended to wider family members, friends and donations to the charity shop. Further, some participants sold children's clothing and other baby paraphernalia no longer required through websites, like eBay, or nearly new sales. Furthermore, a couple of participants mentioned donating unwanted garments through '*freecycle*' - an online network where products are advertised and requested without charge, underpinned by the ethos of diverting unwanted goods from landfill. Consequently, this research complements and extends previous research, such as Fisher et al. (2008) and Birtwistle and Moore (2007), expanding understanding of behaviour post-consumption fashion behaviours, an area under-researched. This includes the value placed on children's clothing

and the reliance on networks for familial provisioning, as depicted in a table exploring the value of passing used-clothing in Appendix 16.

The extensive networks passing used-clothing offers a new perspective on the expectations of commodities. Whereas historically garment reuse and hand-me-downs were a common feature for provisioning children's clothing, this is less prominent, due to mothering networks being less close; for example, more mothers work and spend less time socialising with other mothers. Smith (2007) elucidates that women refocus their attention from work and their external identity during pregnancy to concentrate interest on domesticity and this was evident in the participants who did participate in networks passing used-clothing, they worked part-time and were more involved in socialising within their mothering networks. This is indicative of Cherrier's (2006) '*community if meaning and support*' which '*bind[s] autonomous individuals*' into a likeminded community, endorsing sustainable behaviours both as a philosophy and for practical support. Thus, sustainability offers the opportunity for group identity (Smith, 1999). Research exploring how children's fashion is acquired have previously focused upon the role of supermarket fashion as convenient and inexpensive (Ross and Haradine, 2009). However, this research found extensive networks in which children's clothing was passed were equally convenient, free and available in abundance.

Concurrent with research by Bianchi and Birtwistle (2012), the participants recycled fashion within personal networks and donations to charity shops. Passing used clothing was considered applicable if the garment was in a re-usable condition (Bianchi and Birtwistle, 2012; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009). The main problem with purchasing inexpensive fashion is reduced longevity: the garments reduced quality reduces the lifespan (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009), as described by P-10 who had to repair garments even before they were worn. This has not been identified in previous research and Chapter Two postulated to the extent that consumers value clothing and repair or restyle fashion. P-10 was unique in repairing and restyling fashion. As she notes in

Chapter Five, sewing skills have reduced; therefore maximising the lifespan becomes the responsibility of the consumer, through repairing, which is unlikely when consumers do not have the skills.

Some of the participants disposed damaged clothing to landfill, as there was little awareness for the ability to downcycle, particularly with regard to footwear. This is most likely due to infrequent textile recycling campaigns (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009), for example textile collections were only available for P-20; therefore, textile recycling is lower in consumers' consciousness. However some participants were aware that charity shops accepted '*rags*' for recycling, illustrating the transferral of recycling was also applied to fashion. This contrasts with Joy et al.'s (2012) participants, who did not recycle unwanted garments, despite adopting recycling behaviours in other consumption contexts. Nevertheless, there remains an opportunity for fashion retailers to encourage consumers to recycle damaged clothing to enable the fibres to be recycled to reduce the overall impact upon the environment (Allwood et al., 2006). This could be through promotional material or an in-store initiative, similar to the M&S campaign where M&S clothing donated to Oxfam is encouraged through offering consumers an M&S voucher (M&S, 2013).

All of the participants described their high involvement in recycling activities, supported by kerbside collections from the local authority (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Fletcher, 2008; Downing et al., 2004). This resulted in recycling behaviours being '*real easy peasy*' (P-20) and P-16 asked '*why wouldn't you?*', particularly as recycling facilities are often situated alongside the refuse bin. The desire to avoid contributing to landfill and concerns for equitable production contrasts with Hawkins (2001) position that consumers are apathetic with the production and disposal of consumer commodities. The efforts undertaken to react to sustainability depict engagement with new information, particularly marketing intermediaries encouraging consumers to assume responsibility for sustainability within the context of waste management. Therefore, marketing intermediaries have influenced behavioural

change, acting as a change agent to guide consumers to understand the pertinent issues (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Ehrenberg, 2002).

One change agent identified within the participants' narratives was the PET fleece (made from recycled plastic bottles), which raised consciousness for both the ability to recycle plastic bottles to make polyester and the availability of PET clothing in mainstream fashion retailers. Some participants had previous knowledge of PET, however perceived PET fleeces as more expensive; the price of the M&S fleece was considered more acceptable. This illustrates that unless the price of sustainable fashion reduces, the participants were unlikely to select sustainable options. Further, PET was considered as novel, and the participants suggested it was the sort of information they would pass to the children as an interesting innovation. Little is known about consumers evaluation of recycled fibres and previous studies have found that recycled products are considered as pertaining to a lower quality; however, the participants felt that the quality of recycled products was improving. For example, P-11 said:

*They say that they are recycled and you are quite surprised now. Whereas, maybe ten years ago you would have thought, well that looks like it has been recycled. (P-11)*

Although the participants spoke at length of their recycling activities, it was the phenomenon of avoiding taking a plastic bags which is indicative of presenting themselves socially as engaged with sustainability. Supermarkets encourage consumers to reuse cloth or recycled sturdy bags to minimise waste sent to landfill (Yates, 2008). P-10 was very motivated to avoid taking a plastic bags when shopping and this was reiterated by most of the participants. Avoiding plastic bags elucidates the participants included concern for the environment within their everyday behaviours (McCallum, 2008) illustrating that the potential of providing consumers with relevant information can motivate sustainable behaviours. However, as expressed by P-10 and other participants, the role of the retailer's employees is pivotal in encouraging consumers. For example, P-10 noted that she had to adopt a militant approach, whereby her partner accepted bags as he did not want to cause a fuss. Although taking a

plastic bags was viewed as a paradigm shift, in that they had to consider the action in advance, it was felt that the '*nudge*' from the retailer was appreciated and endorsed their behavioural change.

P-10's intentness to avoid taking a plastic bags manifests in a visual representation of her moral stance (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Vindigni et al., 2002), illustrating pro-social behaviours as a '*cool to care*' attitude (Lee and Sevier, 2008). The retaliation against plastic bags was not only due to the desire to reduce the environmental impact, but it was also expressed as a fashion movement. Again, this was noted by a number of participants, and the sentiment is expressed by P-2:

*I think that they are fashionable. People use them at uni, ... for work and for everything. (P-2)*

P-2 recognises the increase in taking a shopping bag is more prevalent socially. This was noted by other participants also, not only from a fashion perspective, but as indicating engagement with sustainability. The participants recognised the visual component of taking a bag shopping as depicting their desire to reduce the negative consequences (Ritch et al., 2009; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Wood and Marsham, ND; Lee and Sevier, 2008). Further, taking a bag was considered as a social movement, whereby not participating was viewed as anti-social (Damhorst, 2005c; Miller-Spillman, 2005). This was evident in the quote from P-17 in Table 6.5 and noted by other participants. For example P-5 stated: '*the fact that we all take bags now ... that's been a really positive change*', it is interesting to note that P-5 uses the term '*we all*', implying the commonality of the behaviour. Further, intentness to avoid plastic bags supports the assertion by Carey et al. (2008) and Valor (2007) that progressing sustainability has the potential to become a fashionable trend.

Thus, the participants express '*social integration*' (Cherrier, 2006: 183; Shaw, 2007; Michelletti and Stolle, 2005) through participating in a social movement which is pro-social (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Similarly, the participants expressed feeling embarrassed or frustrated when they forgot to take a bag

when shopping, as prescribed by Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara (2008), this was social embarrassment when not conforming to social norms and was evident as the participants questioned why other consumers continued to take plastic bags, suggesting that this was unacceptable (Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis, 2011; Sorooshian, 2009; McCallum, 2008; Hawkins, 2001). Further, cloth or jute bags were thought of as more convenient for carrying shopping, due to the ability to carry more with shoulder handles. Thus, shopping bags align with a number of values types: aesthetics, efficiency, excellence, status, esteem and spirituality, as evident in the Table in Appendix 16.

As the participants expressed that planned obsolescence was gratuitous, coupled with increased confidence in the extensive networks passing used children's clothing, routine recycling of waste to avoid contributing to landfill and responding to the call to reduce plastic bags use, it can be deduced that these sustainable behaviours are integral to self-conviction. Further, this section illustrates the evolvment to apply sustainability to fashion consumption behaviours, as identified by Jägel et al. (2012). Existential sustainable behaviours were a manifestation of understanding the consequences of behavioural change coupled with believing their individual behaviour contributed to the wider sustainable agenda. The extent that the participants were motivated to participate in those behaviours has the potential to extend, particularly through support from fashion retailers. Participating in sustainability was also viewed by some participants as optimum parenting and this will be described in the next section.

### **6.2.3: Optimum parenting**

Nuances of optimum parenting were described by P-10 and P-20, albeit from polarised perspectives. For P-10, providing her children with fashionable clothing was viewed as satisfying her role as a provider. This was enhanced by the pleasure experienced by her daughters, which culminated in them participating in a fashion show and provided both P-10 and her daughters with feelings of esteem. P-20 also experienced esteem through aligning the

household consumption with her moral sentiment. This was enhanced through her belief that organic food was considered the purest option due to the omission of pesticides in production (Ethical Company Organisation, 2008; Fletcher, 2008; Memery et al., 2005), which she felt had additional health properties. Thus, she felt she was excelling in the mothering role, which as illustrated in the quote in Table 6.6<sup>8</sup>, was endorsed by a childcare expert.

Previous literature has not extended to sustainability as contributing to optimum parenting, as was notable within P-20s narrative in Chapter Five. The research approach was designed with acknowledgment of mothers' preference for organic food to avoid the children from ingesting pesticides, positioned as a healthier option (Gam et al., 2010; Carey et al., 2008; etc). The research postulated this may transfer to a preference for organic cotton and other sustainable fibres. Consistent with previous research, the participants purchased organic food, within a myriad of personal constructs. For example, P-5 always bought organic fruit if the skin was eaten, this did not extend to fruit with peel, such as bananas; P-5 applied a rationale that the skin protected the fruit from pesticides. Similarly, P-17 did not purchase organic root vegetables, assuming that growth under the soil offered protection from pesticides. These individual value constructs are further discussed in Chapter Seven when exploring perceptions of organic cotton.

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<sup>8</sup> There is one table presented in this section to avoid repetition of quotes

**Table 6.6: Participants narratives expressing the interplay of values in relation to optimum parenting**

| <b>Optimum parenting</b>         | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|----------------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| <b>Esteem</b>                    | Seeking information regarding premium provisioning shapes and endorses behaviours, consequently she feels assured that she is providing her children with the very best start in life  | 20                 | I really don't want to feed [the baby] anything with pesticides and [Gina Ford in her book] has a huge big section on [organic food]. And she even says, which I agreed with, ... although organic food is more [expensive] you must make that sacrifice on either toys or clothes. Get hand-me-down toys or clothes and spend the extra money on food. She was saying it's absolutely vital and ... related to behaviour, sugar ... the chemicals and everything can cause misbehaviour. Sleeping and organic eating, she said, they were the best thing for your child |
| <b>Ethics (Social-wellbeing)</b> | Internal and external lifeworlds merge to communicate sustainable issues, therefore she feels satisfied that she has provided her children with a sustainable perspective and to think about the wider implications of fashion production and consumption, whereas in other family's the emphasis may be to simply consume | 22                 | We are also members of woodcraft folks, so we talk about Fairtrade and those kind of things quite a lot. They talk about it at school as well. There is a high level of awareness amongst ... the young people that I know of, [including] child labour and that relationship to the fashion industry. The additional pressure comes from me, definitely. They are [aware of a] difference [between] them and ... their friends. I would be seen as a bit odd for making a big issue of it, where some other mum might say lets have a trip to Glasgow and go to Primark |
| <b>Ethics (Environment)</b>      | Sustainable behaviours are endorsed by the school and within the everyday experience at home, this means that the children are socialised to be sustainable and she expresses self-satisfaction that her son is aware of what constitutes sustainability   | 25                 | I'm really impressed that the message that, the kids get at school. My son had a jumper and it had a hole in it, ... I think he thought I was going to put it in the bin, because I put it down on the floor beside the bin. He said, mum you can't do that, that's got to be recycled, which of course I would have done. So my kids are really, clear about the message. I think that that's actually a two way thing, ... partly from the school and ... partly from us, because we do take that very seriously   |



Organic food was more relevant when weaning; it became less relevant as the children matured, primarily due to cost: the children ate more and to manage the family budget, organic food was purchased less. Chapter Three indicated that the purchase of organic food was perceived as middle class (McEarchern and McClean, 2002), and the participants also expressed this, which is paradoxical when considering that their professional status would position them as middle class. It also led to scepticism that sustainability was included to appeal to middle class consumers with a higher disposable income (Bray et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2008; Peattie, 1999; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Most felt prohibited from purchasing organic food due to higher pricing, hence the personal constructs described above. The instigation to seek organic produce was intrinsically linked to familial provisioning, in an effort to provide children with food untainted by pesticides. From this perspective, organic status was viewed as optimum parenting, to give children the purest food available. Similarly, some of the participants purchased organic clothing and sheets for the children when they were babies, transferring the ethos of purity from food to textiles. For example, P-9 considers:

*I'd think somehow, it's better for the people that made it. It's better for the environment. It will probably feel nicer for the baby. So I kind of factor all that in. (P-9)*

P-9 believes that organic production included superior tactile qualities; whether it was a psychological interpretation or factual, this was concurrent with a number of participants. Thus, the participants anticipated additional value in selecting organic cotton. Organic baby clothes and textiles are more prevalent in the current consumer market (Aspers, 2008), which may increase consumers' consciousness to consider organic cotton when seeking textiles for babies. As older children's fashion is less likely to be organic, consumer consciousness is reduced.

The participants discussed familial issues within their peer groups, leading to preferences to avoid foods deemed unhealthy, such as minimising food with additives. Bailey (1999) identified pregnancy as entering a new community of

women, based on the commonality of their condition. This was reflected in some of the participants' narratives where relationships with peers offered an opportunity to share lifeworld stories and experiences. This strengthened individual constructs, such as moral sentiment and commitment to mothering, endorsing behaviours and beliefs. For example, a number of participants actively boycotted Nestlé products and this seemed like a social movement .

*Sometimes we talk about things ... socially ... women sit and they talk about different things ... sharing what all our thoughts are on things and somebody says something ... [for example] I don't buy Nestlé. (P-28)*

P-28 suggests that when gathering for child-related activities, mothers will often discuss their existential experiences and support one another. Smith (2007) suggested that relationships which provide social support during pregnancy become more important. During these discussions, information is passed, and it was apparent that the boycotting of Nestlé stemmed from discussions within peer groups. This is indicative of reacting to information once heard or read and not checking the accuracy of the information (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009; Jones, 1991; Irwin, 1999; Lepisto et al., 1991), illustrating the importance of heuristical propensities. Not all participants were clear on the reasoning behind the boycott, perhaps a reflection that attempting discussions with children present are often fraught by a child seeking attention.

Nevertheless, motivation of the Nestlé boycott originated in the strength of feeling within social networks which focus on child well-being, extending from concern for their own children's health, to empathy for children who are malnourished from Nestlé's marketing activities<sup>9</sup>. Thus boycotting manifests in a social moral act (Smith, 1999), contrasting with Giddens (1991) assertion that modernity has reduced social communities. Although this is not applicable to

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<sup>9</sup> The Nestlé boycott stems from Nestlé marketing formula milk in developing countries as aspirational, providing mothers with free formula milk until their own breast milk dries up. The implications are that mothers in developing countries are unable to afford formula for their children, nor have the facilities for sterilisation, resulting in the death of their babies (NCT, 2012).

sustainable fashion consumption, it does illustrate the potentiality for similar networks to influence mothers to include sustainable issues as part of optimum parenting. Hence, discussions around prioritising organic food when weaning will influence other mothers. This is similar to the online community identified by Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) where those with similar interests exchange information.

Excelling within the mothering role was partly perceived as a class-based cultural practice (Bailey, 1999) and this included behaviours such as purchasing organic food, passing used children's clothing in a networks and recycling. This was notable in Chapter Five, where both P-10 and P-20 were educating their children to consider their actions through incorporating wider sustainable implications for sustainability. Although the wider body of participants incorporated nuances of spirituality through familial provisioning, including providing fashionable clothing and organic food for optimum health, it was the approach of educating their children of ethics that was most evident within their narratives. This is evident in P-25s quote below:

*Our lifestyle, since we have had kids, has significantly changed. We have gone down to one car [and] we cycle far more. Those sorts of thing, are, becoming much more important. I think that if you ... give the message to your kids, then you ... have also got to act it as well ... to see that it is A, possible, B, practical and C ... that you live [as] you say you are going to do. (P-25)*

P-25 recognises that it is important to illustrate the inclusion of sustainability into their everyday lifeworld. She has adopted a number of sustainable behaviours, decreasing driving to reduce carbon emissions and encouraging the children to cycle. These notions of sustainability are also evident in P-25's quote in Table 6.6, where she recognises she endorses the message the children get from school and leads by example. Previous research has not included educating children on sustainability as part of the parenting role. It was recognised that sustainability was increasingly part of the school curriculum and the children learned about sustainability in other contexts also, such as Woodcraft Folk, and the Scout movement, as described in Table 6.6. Consequently, the children were

socialised to adopt sustainable behaviours from multiple sources, often informing their family of how to extend sustainability (Davies and Crane, 2003); for example, P-25 expresses in Table 6.6 that her son rebuked her when he thought she was disposing a garment to landfill. Kerrane et al. (2012) suggest a rise in reverse socialisation, where children introduce new consumption behaviours to the parents, and this was evident in the participants' narratives, however it was perceived as more collaborative. P-12 told a story of how she was impressed at how the message of Fairtrade being fairer for producers was presented to children:

*At Beavers last year ... it was a Fairtrade night. They all sat in a circle and we started with twenty single pennies. Everyone was given a part ... the grower .... the person that ... captained the ship or worked in the supermarket. It was the full cycle. The beavers had to guess how much the grower got of the twenty pennies for the banana. It was something like one pence or two pence to start with and Tesco at the end got ... something phenomenal. They were all like, oh that's not fair. The grower, he's taken all the risk, ... but this is all he gets. Then we all had a chat about Fairtrade and then we redistributed all the pennies and allocated it a bit more on risk. The grower got an awful lot more and it was all distributed a lot more evenly. So, really it was a really good message for them. They were all like, oh that's really good [and now my son] associates that that Fairtrade symbol with products where the person that made it gets a better deal, basically. (P-12)*

P-12 was impressed by the way that Fairtrade was presented to the children and how they interpreted non-Fairtrade as pertaining to inequitable trade. Educating the children to incorporate Fairtrade into decision-making raises their awareness of the issues of concern, for example inequality and exploitation, coupled with the desire to contribute positively (Davies and Crane, 2003; Diamantopoulos et al., 2003; Trevino, 1986). Ethical concern is other orientated and manifests as concern for what constitutes production, for example the producers and the environment (Fellows and Jobber, 1999). Through educating the children of production practice, the participants were developing their children's moral integrity (Singer, 1979) and raising their consciousness of social relations (Dower, 1991). Children's increased involvement in Fairtrade was reiterated by a number of participants whose

children had awareness of the Fairtrade symbol, through school and other activities, and understood what it represented, leading to the children requesting Fairtrade products. This was viewed by P-22 as using pester power:

*They are very aware of Fairtrade, and, those kinds of labels. In fact they will say to me [laughing] that's Fairtrade mum [laughing]! So they will use that as a way to cajole me into getting something. (P-22)*

P-22 joked that her children used Fairtrade production as a lever to get her to purchase products for them. Previously, she expressed in Table 6.6 that they often felt that her behaviour differed from that of their peers' parents as she tried to adopt sustainable behaviours, such as rejecting planned obsolescence. Consequently, they were very aware of her sustainable orientation and used this status to 'cajole' her into buying them products, which had extended to fashion through the inclusion of sustainable fashion in Topshop. Nadeau and Bradley (2012) and Kerrane et al. (2012) postulate that children learn by experience to manipulate effective strategies to obtain consumer goods, however no previous research has found that sustainability is harnessed as pester power. P-22 was not alone in wanting to adopt sustainable behaviours, however as expressed in the beginning of this chapter, the participants described hectic lifeworlds. The responsibility for managing the families' lifeworlds pertained to a number of value trade-offs, particularly through time and finances, and will be discussed in the next section.

### **6.3: Managing lifeworlds: An Interplay of values**

This section describes the interplay of values established within the typology of consumer value as the participants describe familial management within their multi-faceted lifeworlds (Carey et al., 2008; Holzer, 2006). P-10 indicated her existential lifeworld created tensions within an interplay of values; post-motherhood she felt unable to prioritise her moral sentiment, due to perceptions of increased pricing and reduced availability. This was echoed by other participants, who were the primary caregivers and the main shoppers for

the households. Although this was shared when both parents worked full-time, the participants still experienced hectic lifeworlds and decision-making included lifeworld management strategies.

This section is structured to express the main values anticipated prior to and during fashion consumption: efficiency and excellence. Reduced time and finances featured prominently in Sections 6.1 and 6.2, and continue to Chapter Seven. However, the themes are juxtaposed with other values types during decision-making, as will be illustrated within this section. Presenting the participants with the labels during the interview presented an opportunity to observe a resemblance of the decision-making process, albeit without the garment. Concurrent with P-10, the participants predominantly initiated that style was the most important attribute within fashion consumption, as described above. Having identified a garment that they liked, they would then look at the price and quality and any other information offered by the label (Valor, 2007; Harrison et al., 2005). Examples of the quotes from all the participants depicting the interplay of values can be seen in Table 6.7. Chapter Five concluded with a table illustrating the case study participants interplay of values.

**Table 6.7: Case study participants expressing an interplay of values**

| <b>Managing Lifeworld</b> | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|--|
| <b>Efficiency</b>         | Efficiency is self-orientated, active and extrinsic (Holbrook, 1999). Therefore, the participants had to manage their time more strategically due to a myriad of responsibilities.   | 18                 | Now I have got a child, ... my shopping strategies have probably changed. When you don't have children, you can be quite independent and just go round shops and browse at your leisure. Whereas ... having a two year old ... you have got to be quite strategic about shopping and ... think in advance of what I will need  |
| <b>Excellence</b>         | Excellence is self-orientated, extrinsic and reactive (Holbrook, 1999). The family budget had to provide for all family members household needs, including fashion. This reduced the participants ability to be egocentric, as shown in the quote spending money on fashion reduces the family expenditure which contributes to household provisioning, such as food | 6                  | Before you know it you have spent sixty quid and I think, well what else could <b>we</b> have done with that.  |
| <b>Status</b>             | Status is other-orientated, extrinsic and active (Holbrook, 1999). There was an awareness that the children's appearance was symbolic of the family's status and was reflective of how others judged both the participants and their children. Therefore, appearance was manipulated to conform socially and as evidence of the participants care for the children   | 25                 | I am [more] strict with school uniform than some of the other parents at the school. I think that it is important that ... both of them look smart going to school. Although you can still look smart with tracky bottoms, ... I think it is important ... they go to school [and] look clean, tidy and cared for. So I suppose in that sense, there's a message                       |
| <b>Esteem</b>             | Esteem is other-orientated, reactive and extrinsic (Holbrook, 1999). Fashion can contribute to esteem through situating self as a visual message as well as exhibiting familial provisioning. This extends to feelings of altruism through contributing to positive consumption that has neither exploited the environment or the workers involved in production     | 19                 | I found myself in Marks and Spencer's quite recently ... browsing in the Per Una section. I thought, that's a quite nice jacket. I tried it on, then all of a sudden [there were] silver haired sixty something's ... looking at the same thing. I thought, oh no, [laughing]! You feel good when you buy something that you feel ... whoever has produced it, is getting a fair price |

**Table 6.7: Case study participants expressing an interplay of values (continued)**

| <b>Managing Lifeworld</b> | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------|--|
| <b>Play</b>               | Play is self-orientated, intrinsic and active (Holbrook, 1999). This reflects the pleasure for both the participants and their children receive from new fashion from the perspective of self which is actively sought, particularly as it was accepted that the need for children's fashion was ongoing  | 3                  | I take <b>much more</b> interest in buying clothes for [my children]. You have to accept that you have to buy clothes for them ... because they are growing. [My son] he likes to wear a shirt and tie ... he has done since he was four. Mainly because Dr Who wears a shirt and tie. So I quite like buying him stuff because he is quite cute to dress up. I will confess to quite liking to dressing them up in a way that I just don't, for me at all |
| <b>Aesthetic</b>          | Aesthetics are self-orientated, active and intrinsic (Holbrook, 1999). Awareness of the children's emerging sense of style was accommodated by the participants who recognised this was part of their socialisation. Further, they wanted to encourage their child's sense of self and confidence within their peer groups  | 3                  | [My daughter] would spend days trying on clothes and prancing in front of the mirror and wanting to look a particular way. [She] has very kind of strong sense of a look that she wants to get and that's also, I think, beginning to be shaped by what she thinks other people will think about what she is wearing   |
| <b>Ethics</b>             | Ethics are other-orientated, active and intrinsic (Holbrook, 1999). The participants expressed the desire to consider their consumption holistically and identified that shopping in a charity shop pertained to a number of sustainable advantages: donating money to a charity; allowing the children to choose and gain affordable commodities; extending the products lifespan; reducing the need for scarce resources; and this is viewed as a continuous whereby items no longer wanted were re-donated to the charity shop | 4                  | Why we are so keen on charity shops [is] because it seems to be an absolute win-win. The kids spend their pocket money on something and it doesn't matter whether ... they are going to play with it for a long time, because ... they've given their money to charity, ... it's being used [again], and they have got a thing which .. will ultimately return back to the charity shop to be sold again   |
| <b>Spirituality</b>       | Spirituality is other-orientated, intrinsic and reactive (Holbrook, 1999). Thinking of others is incorporated into gift-giving, not only for the recipient, but the wider benefits of sustainability through selecting used goods and making more of an effort to align with the recipient  | 26                 | [At] Christmas [my ex-colleagues and I] we still do a secret Santa, but a couple of years ago we changed that into being a charity shop secret Santa. It saved us money and it made us be a bit more thoughtful about what we bought and ... it was a bit more, ethical.   |



### 6.3.1: Efficiency

Within the Typology of Consumer Value, efficiency is considered as an important measurement which is evaluated objectively and subjectively (Holbrook, 1999). Efficiency therefore relates to the ability to manage lifeworld responsibilities and manifested in the participants developing organisational strategies to cope with their responsibilities. For many participants, fashion consumption was an additional duty which had to be combined within their lifeworlds. As P-28 began her narrative:

*My shopping experience ... to be honest it is a bit of a chore. It is something else I have to fit into my working schedule. I have to clothe three children, myself and my husband. There is a cost factor, ... there's the time within to do it. It's about practicality. (P-28)*

P-28 begins by explaining that fashion consumption is not solely focused on her own needs, she acts as the main caregiver for all of the family. It is interesting to note that shopping for fashion is now viewed as part of the 'working schedule' as opposed to a playful pursuit. This contrasts with P-28 previous inclination to seek fashion hedonistically, the highlight of which was a shopping trip to Milan. The participants' discourse focused upon the children's continued growth which ensured that fashion needs were ongoing and the participants describe a utilitarian approach, due to responding to need recognition (Babin et al., 1994). From this perspective, fashion consumption for the children was akin to food shopping (Babin et al., 1994), whereby the participants were responsible for sourcing. This resulted in the participants combining food with fashion shopping in the supermarket, due to the convenience of the location, ease of parking and anticipating inexpensive pricing, as predicted by de Kervenoael et al (2011), Ross and Haradine (2009) and Sorenson (2009). This is explained by P-25:

*Probably because the kids are busy and ... my husband works away from home during the week so I am on my own. I don't want in the evening to take all the kids out to go shopping. So, generally speaking I ... pick up their clothes ... when I go along to do the food shop. It is easier for me [to] just pick stuff up. (P-25)*

P-25 was not alone in having a hectic lifeworld that sought time efficiency. Ross and Haradine (2009) and Orbach and Macleod (2008) found that mothers viewed inexpensive supermarket fashion as a viable option for children's fashion, as the children's continued growth reduced their inclination to pay more. Similarly, Carrigan and Szmigin (2006) postulated that working mothers sought convenience. Often the participants expressed that the need for clothing, in particular to respond to children's growth, led to making quick decisions. This was expressed by the participants, particularly for practical garments like socks and underwear, which they would just '*grab*' (P-1) or '*pick up*' (P-16) whilst navigating the supermarket aisles. For example, P-24 states that she '*wouldn't sort of go out my way to go there to get him clothes*'. Thus, purchasing fashion for the children alongside food consumption is a response to familial provisioning and motivated by need rather than desire.

Shopping for fashion in the supermarket was also a response to the extended shopping hours of supermarkets, with many open 24 hours daily. P-11 and P-21 took advantage of this by visiting the supermarket in the evenings when the children were in bed, again as a response to familial provisioning. It was established in Chapter Two that consumers seek to maximise time efficiency (Schiffman and Kanuk, 20120; Parsons et al., 2009) and will develop strategies to minimise the time allocated for menial tasks (UNICEF, 2011; Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). The participants quotes describe that supermarkets provide a number of opportunities enabling efficiency. Further, P-26 postulated that there were limited options for children's clothing in the current retail market outwith supermarket and value fashion retailers. For the participants availability of children's fashion in supermarkets was a trade-off to satisfy the familial predicament rather than consumption behaviours that aligned with their moral sentiment. This was conveyed by P-14:

*Now I am buying vests and pants and stuff in Asda, just because I am there routinely and it kind of fits in best. I never get into town anymore, double buggy and kids on busses and it is just too difficult. Asda and Tesco, just because of the availability of them, ... that's, saving me a trip into town, with difficult kids. Even though, I am aware, that actually, [laughing] I am*

*giving lessons about what you should watch what you are buying, in terms of clothes and trying not to support sweatshops, in India, etcetera! I am hoping that that will change, [but even] if I won the lottery, and finance was absolutely no objective, then convenience would still trump quite a lot. (P-14)*

P-14 summarises a number of reasons to purchase children's clothing in the supermarket: the constant need for basic garments to respond to children's growth; the reduced ability to function with young children through navigating transport and busy shops; and ultimately the convenience of both the location of supermarkets and the fact that shopping can be combined with the constant need for food in the familial environment. Although she concludes by stating that she is '*hoping that that will change*', she still expresses that '*if I won the lottery, and finance was absolutely no objective, then convenience would still trump quite a lot*'. This implies that to manage her lifeworld, she has had to respond to values which contrast with her moral sentiment, which Carey et al. (2008) describe as a '*paradoxical trade-off*'; she is aware that she teaches her pupils about the negative consequences of fashion production, yet does not apply her knowledge to her own consumption. Consequently, P-14 describes suspending ethical value to manage her lifeworld, or adopting a flexible approach by selecting sustainable alternatives when possible (Szmigin et al., 2009; Parsons et al., 2009), as did many of the participants.

Reduced time for browsing resulted in the participants developing an efficiency strategy of researching online retail websites to reduce the number of shops visited. Rotfeld (2007) previously suggested that multiple roles restricted decision-making and consumers would seek information which is easily accessible. The expansion of choice in the current consumer environment was noted by the participants as exacerbating decision-making; consequently, some of the participants utilised online shopping to maximise time efficiency, for both food and fashion. This extended to using the internet as a search tool for sourcing was available within the retail market and to compare pricing. P-24 found that using websites such as eBay offered the opportunity to search

specifically for garments which were needed, such as red accessories to match her child's school colours, as explained below.

*I bought some stuff on eBay. [My son's] school uniform is red and ... I bought ... a red hat and gloves set. I couldn't find them in the shops. [An online search] can be quite specific and obviously tailor[ed] [to] exactly what you want. (P-24)*

Consequently, the internet was not only harnessed as a search tool, but was also viewed as offering an opportunity for efficient consumption practice and avoiding the need to take children shopping. However, the participants expressed a reluctance to purchase children's clothing online, despite recognising this would enable them to access sustainable fashion. The reasons were twofold: firstly, sizing disparities between retailers meant that judging the size required for a child was speculative and may require exchanging; secondly, postal deliveries and subsequently postal returns, were not considered as convenient as shopping in a retailer, as illustrated by P-26 and P-21 below:

*The problem [purchasing] clothing online, is trying things on. That would be far too much of a palaver with kids clothes. The sizing in kids clothes in shops anyway is so variable. You could pick up like a four to five year old in one shop ... and in another shop they could be a foot longer. (P-26)*

*There seems to be lots of quite small websites [that] sell great organic clothes, for kids. [It] puts me off a bit ... that ... I have to order ... three t-shirts from this place. I can just stick them in the trolley at Asda instead of going through this palaver of ordering them and waiting for them to come and not being in and having to collect them from the post office and they are not quite the right size, I should have ordered age five instead of age four. And then it just becomes a bit of a hassle. So I quite often look at those websites and think, oh ... that's really nice and that's a really good ... idea, and then just don't follow through. Because it seems like more trouble than it's worth. (P- 21)*

Both P-26 and P-21 refer to internet shopping as a 'palaver', something that needs to be eradicated to avoid inefficiency. The quotes also illustrate the participants are looking to solve the need or requirement quickly, they do not want to extend the process for any longer than necessary. Therefore, they are seeking some kind of familiarity in sizing or an easier return process. This is

central to the quote from P-21, whereby she can pick up children's clothing during her food shop, and other participants also recognised that they could return garments not suitable during the next food shop, due to the frequency of visiting supermarkets. Therefore, efficiency also relates to retailers providing an augmented service, including the ease of the return policy. The second quote also illustrates that some of the participants had awareness that sustainable children's fashion was available online and deliberated whether to include sustainability within fashion consumption. However, as P-21 explains, anticipating a less efficient shopping experience reduced her inclination to purchase sustainably-produced fashion, despite wanting to include sustainability as is possible in other consumption contexts. This suggests a further trade-off between moral sentiment to manage familial provisioning.

Anticipating a less convenient shopping experience reduced the participants inclination to source sustainably-produced fashion (Yates, 2008), particularly as the participants widely acknowledged it was not available on the high street. Thus, there was an acceptance that sustainable fashion was only available from sustainable fashion retailers, which as described in Section 6.1 was perceived as not following fashion trends, more expensive and less efficient. As the participants' consumption was dictated by shopping areas which were sympatric to time management this meant that supporting local retailers, including charity shops, was not always possible, despite their acknowledgement that this was perceived as sustainable consumption. For example, the participants viewed charity shopping as ethical, yet felt unable to commit the time required to browse charity shops, particularly as finding something suitable was dependent of what was available. P-11 often browsed charity shops when on holiday, as a leisure activity; however, lacked the time to do this within her everyday lifeworld. This is also expressed by P-14:

*I used to love trawling through charity shops and it's not that I have an objection to wearing clothes that other people have worn. If they are still good quality and they fit me properly, then why would I not buy it just because it's not new off the shelf. But, I don't have the time [and] you kind*

*of have to devote quite a lot of time, I think, to find good things in charity shops. My patience for these things has just dimmed, somewhat. (P-14)*

P-14's expression that charity shopping was less efficient due to the time it took to search the rails, finding suitable fashion which was the right size and of a suitable quality, all of which was dependent on what was available at the time was noted by a number of participants. For example, P-15 said she purchased fashion displayed in the charity shop window, but was unlikely to browse. Hiller Connell (2010) identified that consumers find merchandising in charity shops was confusing. Although it was recognised that accessing fashion from charity shops was a sustainable behaviour, which by-passed production and maximised the garments lifespan (Shaw and Tomolillo, 2004; Shaw and Newholm, 2002), it was also based on chance. Although many of the participants purchased from charity shops, this tended to include other consumption contexts, such as books and children's toys. Further, some of the participants felt charity shopping was only applicable when seeking vintage fashion, and not everyday fashion or work-wear, as identified by Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) and Shaw and Newholm (2002). Furthermore, some participants perceived that in comparison to supermarket fashion, second-hand children's clothing was more expensive and often looked worn, due to increased donations of inexpensive fashion of a lower quality (DEFRA, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006). The attainability of inexpensive fashion encouraged participants to purchase supermarket fashion which was considered less expensive than second-hand, (Agin, 2005; Bakewell and Mitchell, 2003). Therefore, the value trade-off included prioritising low price and suitable quality for the time the garment would be required rather than sustainability.

Familial management restricted the time available to consider values which were not integral to the family's needs, such as sourcing information regarding production practice or retailers codes of conduct. As there is little acknowledgment of sustainability by fashion retailers, this would incur the participants seeking relevant information. This was dependent upon available time. This restricted the participants from seeking information superfluous to

familial management, as stated by P-3: *'I don't have time, to go and find out'*. Further, spare time was spent on familial experiences, whereas seeking information on sustainability was viewed as another chore. It was not only that time was restrictive, it was not within the participants' consciousness to consider sustainability of fashion production practice, as considered by P-23:

*I know that I could do more to research the ethics of what I am buying, but I don't just because I haven't got time. It's one of these things that you just don't do. (P-23)*

It is interesting that she adds within this statement that *'it's one of these things that you just don't do'*, implying that her approach is generic within consumers' behaviour. Consumers have not been primed to consider sustainability in the same way that they have with food, which often contrasted with their moral sentiment; for example P-1 had been engaged with sustainable issues from a young age:

*When I was a teenager I was a member of the Green Party and a member of Greenpeace and it very much was at the forefront of my mind. Having children, I have less time to think about it. (P-1)*

P-1 was not alone in suspending her moral sentiment due to lack of time. A number of participants mentioned previously being engaged in ethical campaigns, such as boycotting South Africa and Israeli goods. P-1 postulates that she has less time to engage with moral concerns as the children take up both physical and mental time. This was also considered by P-3, that organising work and children required though and fore-planning. P-19 felt that adding another dimension, such as worrying about how fashion was produced, to an already fractious lifeworld was *'another thing to think about [laughing]'*. This approach of feeling rushed extended to evaluating the primer labels, which were also viewed as cumbersome, for example P-13 considered the Global Girlfriend label as too fussy for a *'busy mum shopping'*. Similarly, P-11 considered that *'if they put too much too much on there, nine times out of ten I won't read that because I haven't got the time'*.

Overall, the participants reverted back to concern for efficiency, focusing on maximising the family budget and managing their own time within a busy multifaceted lifeworld (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). P-20 noted that it was impossible to apply sustainability at the core of all her consumption, nevertheless she had developed principles that she tried to follow. This notion is supported by Szmigin et al. (2009) and apporportioned as the prevalence of multinational organisations in the market-place. P-20 managed this by investigating sustainable retailers to align with her moral sentiment. This enabled confidence that she could then purchase from that retailer without having to check each products provenance individually. This is an important marker, as the participants express that seeking information to support their moral sentiment as time-consuming and complex (Rose et al., 2008)

Efficiency featured prominently in the participants' discourse, often negotiated as a value trade-off against prioritising moral sentiment in consumption behaviours (Jägel et al., 2012; Young et al., 2010; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001). The divergence of P-20's discourse viewing sustainable consumption as more convenient was therefore unexpected. For P-20, trade-offs were not required, consumption aligned with her high involvement and concern for sustainability, as expressed in Chapter Five. Having selected retailers based upon their sustainable philosophy, the risk of purchasing products which misaligned with her moral sentiment was reduced. This is supported by Goworek (2011) who refers to choice editing as relieving consumers from evaluating individual decision-making by limiting options to focus on sustainability, particularly as checking individual products in the supermarket was not efficient.

This reduction of tension within the interplay of values is dependent on efficiency aligning with moral sentiment, and this is only possible having sourced a suitable sustainable retailer who holds a similar philosophy. Such an approach is easier to manifest in food consumption behaviours, as the variety of choice in supermarkets includes sustainable products, such as local produce, Fairtrade and organically produced food. Therefore, the participants were able



to make a choice which included sustainability in the supermarket, guided by cues on the packaging, such as the Fairtrade and organic logo. This was less obvious for fashion and the participants were unaware of where they could purchase sustainably fashion.

### 6.3.2: Excellence

Excellence relates to quality and P-10 described in Chapter Five how the children's continued growth reduced her desire to pay more than required for clothing with a limited lifespan. This feeling expanded to the majority of the participants; however, it was only applicable to the children's fashion consumption. For their own fashion selection, quality was preferential due to a superior quality relating to a better fit and appearance, particularly throughout laundering. Consequently, excellence manifested into opposing values: selecting inexpensive children's fashion to manage the children's continuous growth and more expensive fashion for their own fashion consumption to ensure a better fit and longevity. Each will now be discussed.

#### 6.3.2.1: Purchasing fashion for children

The children's needs were constantly evolving, requiring reassessment and this was a reactive process. Continuous growth resulted in increased fashion consumption and accepting hand-me-down clothing supported new consumption. As described above, to manage finances, the participants developed personal value constructs to focus on their most pressing concerns. One technique was to purchase the lowest priced clothing, as described by P-14 and P-15:

*When I was buying them, I was thinking, this is probably not brilliant. But equally, it's two pairs of trousers for a fiver and ... kids [laughing] need stuff at an alarming rate! (P-14)*

*I tend to buy cheap clothes actually, for the kids. They go through them so quickly so I don't see the point in buying more expensive ones. (P-15)*

P-14 expresses that inexpensive fashion 'is not brilliant', indicating that her moral value is compromised, however the lure of low pricing supersedes moral

concern by enabling frequent consumption required by her children's 'alarming' growth. This is reiterated by P-15, who expresses that paying more is 'pointless' due to the rapid continued turnaround of clothing. Although inexpensive fashion has a reduced lifespan (Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009), for the children expectations were already reduced through growth. As indicated above, the majority of the participants sought low prices to enable continued purchasing to satisfy the children's continuous growth; thus, longevity was inconsequential and not expected as the participants took advantage of lower price points to acquire clothing for the children. This is similar to Joy et al. (2012) and Joergens (2006) participants, who purchased new fashion frequently to maintain rapid fashion trends and preferred to pay less to enable frequent consumption. However, growth was not the only aspect considered, the children's play often damaged clothing and this was viewed as a trade-off for inexpensive fashion.

*I am looking for ... value for money. They just go through the knees so quickly and I haven't really found ... how to get round that. [So] why pay any more? (P-19)*

P-19 expresses a reluctance to pay more than necessary for children's clothing (Orbach and Macleod, 2008), particularly as her sons constantly go through the knees of trousers, which then need replacing. Another consideration was loss, as expressed by P-24: 'Hats and gloves, I wouldn't want to pay a lot for it, because [they will] get lost' (P-24). Similarly, it was recognised that damage was likely through play. Together, these characteristics imply feelings of transience and reduced perceptions of value, as described by P-4:

*I'm not precious about clothes. If they were to roll down a muddy bank with their trousers on and get completely muddy knees, I wouldn't mind. Because, I think that's childhood and I know that we've got lots more clothes. Whereas if I had bought a £20.00 pair of jeans for [my son] and he had trashed them in the park, then I would mind a lot more. (P-4)*

P-4 explains that she does not feel 'precious' about the children's clothes. She had previously explained that they receive much of the children's clothing as hand-me-downs; thus, she has not invested financially in the garments and they are not valued. This enables her children the freedom to play and get dirty, the

sort of behaviours expected of children. Paying less for children's fashion was viewed as socially acceptable and the participants relied upon inexpensive fashion for familial provisioning, whereby sustainability was a secondary consideration (Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). However, longevity was considered if garments were utilised within the family. Thus, they sought a superior quality if clothing was to be passed down from older siblings, as explained by P-28:

*You might buy something cheap, but it just doesn't last. It's finding that really fine balance. The children are ... my benchmark, as the clothes that I have bought them seem to have lasted ... to the point where it can get passed down. I don't want to be constantly replacing clothes ... I don't have the time to go shopping. [I] try and take care of my products so that they last. (P-28)*

P-28 explains that she balances value trade-offs of price and quality depending on how long she expects the garment to last. She evaluates previous experience of quality whereby the children provide a reference point of judgement. The ability to pass clothing within the family is described as enabling both efficiency and excellence. Evidently, value is viewed as individualistic and holistic, primarily from the perspective of familial needs.

Reduced finances were not unexpected, particularly as the participants' income had to provide for the children and household. Consequently, the participants were less egocentric and prioritised provisioning for the children before addressing their own needs, as P-22 expressed, she accepted hand-me-downs for herself to be able to afford new clothes for her children.

*I inherit ... clothes from my partner's sister [which] is just good, because it's recycling stuff and ... I certainly couldn't afford it. I would normally be sorting out the children's needs first and then ... if I had any extra money, then I would get something for myself. (P-22)*

One reason that the participants had reduced their fashion consumption was due to feeling guilty when spending money on themselves, recognising this put a strain on the familial budget. P-6 mentioned that a friend had purchased a Mulberry bag for £500, and expressed: '*I could never justify spending that amount ... it's half a holiday*'. She also expresses this in Table 6.7, when she

reflects upon her own consumption and compares this to what 'we', the family, could have spent that money on. The family finances had to provide for all the family's expenditure; therefore, the participants expressed guilt at spending money on themselves and the participants budgeted to reduce costs where possible (Carrigan and Szmigin, 2006). For example, P-11 explained that their disposable income would be spent on a fun family experience, therefore potential savings benefited the children, which was her primary focus. Inexpensive fashion enabled the participants some discretionary income for personal or family treats. Consequently, affordability resulted in some of the participants expressing feeling prohibited from sustainable choices. As explained by P-1:

*Money is quite an issue for us, there's lots of us. If I had all the money in the world I would never buy anything that I didn't know where it came from. [Laughs] I am astounded at the contradictions in myself when even I can walk around the supermarket on one day and buy all of the proper ethical and expensive stuff and on another day I will buy the very cheapest because I am feeling bad about money! [I] justify it by [thinking] I am just another poorish ... person ... who doesn't have all of the choices that I would want. (P-1)*

P-1 expresses frustration that she is unable to apply moral sentiment to all her consumption. She has four children and managing the household budget does not consistently facilitate prioritising ethical value. Therefore, she has to balance participation in sustainability, expressing flexibility motivated by finances. The literature postulated that sustainability was viewed as a luxury not all consumers could afford (Yates, 2009; Aspers, 2008; Devinney et al., 2007; Lyon, 2006); thus, as asserted by Hiller Connell (2010), affording sustainable fashion adds to the complexity of ethics, as some consumers are unable to afford to participate in ethical consumption.

However, for some of the participants, the frequency with which new children's clothing was required resulted in an increased involvement, which incorporated values of aesthetics and play into the experience, similar to the literature expressing fashion consumption as hedonistic (Jones and Kim, 2010; Workman

and Studak, 2006). This is illustrated in Table 6.7 by P-3 who takes '*much more interest in buying clothes for*' her children, primarily because this is a continuous process. She adopts a playful stance which she no longer experiences for her own fashion consumption; through accepting that they need clothing due to their growth, her involvement increased, she '*confesses*' that she is '*dressing*' him up in a playful manner, indulging him with his Dr Who obsession, from which she receives pleasure. She also recognises that this time is also transient, her son is going through a phase that will not last. Similarly, as illustrated in Table 6.7, she notes that her daughter is starting to become aware of her appearance within an emerging socialisation (Ming Law et al., 2004). Most of the participants described that their children had explicit ideas of how they wanted to dress, due to their perceptions of self and also to fit in with their peers, as was advised by Main and Pople (2011) and Pope et al. (2006). Consistent with P-10, the participants wanted to provide their children with fashion that they liked. The children were beginning to establish their own personal sense of self and primarily the participants indulged the children's emerging socialisation. For example, P-18 explains:

*[My daughter is] quite assertive. I will ... say we'll put this on, no, no, I want to wear that one [distressed voice] [laughing]! So she is already starting to show that there is certain clothes she wants to wear, even at two. (P-18)*

P-18 describes that even from the age of two, her daughter expresses a preference of what she wants to wear, and mostly the participants indulged their children. One reason was that the salience of the bond between the mother and child within their everyday lifeworld and the desire to fulfil the children's desires. It could be argued that fashion trends are inconsequential for children, and that provisioning requires simply that children are clothed. However, the participants sought children's clothing in mainstream fashion retailers, therefore by default the clothing reflected fashion trends and popular images desired by children, for example: High School Musical emblems. Further, the children were exposed to media images, including fashion trends, and this influenced their desire to be fashionable, particularly as they experienced peer

pressure (Main and Pople, 2011; Pope et al., ND). This depicts that aesthetic value was equally important for children's acceptance of the fashion purchased by their parents. The utility of children's clothing had evolved for the participants with older children whereby the consumption activity was more about spending time together and the creation of a shared experience. Further, as the children asserted what fashion they wanted, they also became reluctant to wear clothes chosen by their mothers; thus, to avoid unwanted consumption, the children were allowed to choose (Boden, 2006). This also enabled the children to express their sense of self, as explained by P-17:

*My son is quite picky about what he wears. He has definitely got opinions and I don't fight those. I think ... for kids ... some of their choices are so limited, that ... it's nice to let them ... express themselves that way. It's not a big deal. (P-17)*

P-17 is addressing the imbalance of power between mother and child, where children are often told what to do and have to live within boundaries. She believes that enabling children the autonomy to express themselves visually is a small concession which empowers children within their particular peer groups. Giddens (1992) acknowledges the significance of the power of parents to influence their children's attitudes and disposition, however the participants negotiated fashion selection collaboratively with their children. Thus, value focused upon indulging the children's fantasies and allowing them to express their own sense of self. This is indicative of the approach taken by the participants; values centre upon the immediacy of the familial lifeworld, which although is hectic and demanding, is also transient. As the children's needs evolve, the participants adapt and renegotiate their values. To prioritise moral sentiment may mean that the children's emerging sense of self and playfulness would be sacrificed and this was viewed as more important, particularly as the participants knew childhood was momentary. This is similar to the approach by P-4, who described she had to accept the world her children share with her and it was accepted that the children wanted clothing that would allow them to align with their peers (Damhorst, 2005c; Berry and Kunkel, 2002; Solomon, 1999;

Belk, 1988). P-19 was unique in dictating what her children wore, as explained below:

*I ... avoid all .. cartoons and characters. Although ... my boys love that, but I don't. My boys dress .. quite conservatively .. they don't ... individually choose. I .. lay out clothes for them and they will just put them on. (P-19)*

P-19 expresses her desire to remain in control of what the children wear, and this was more notable on the participants with younger children. The reasons were twofold: older children were experiencing socialisation and expressed the desire to conform within their social peers groups and their mothers understood and encouraged this. For the younger children, the participants attempted to manipulate the children's appearance, which was recognised by P-23 as '*projecting something of your ... own taste*'. Often this was representative of the family's social status (Cherrier, 2009; Park and Burns, 2005): the participants were aware that the children were judged upon their appearance and this was indicative of the parents ability for provisioning. For example, P-13 did not want her children to look '*scruffy*' and expressed feeling embarrassed when her son had outgrown his trousers, stating that when she noticed she was '*cringing*'. This indicates an inability to conform (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008) and evidentially, this was considered as unsatisfactory familial provisioning.

The children's appearance was of particular importance for school, as P-25 explains in Table 6.7, she wants her son to wear school trousers rather than the tracksuit bottoms that many of his peers wore. She postulates that this is sending a visual message. Chapter Two postulated that fashion is used for '*social identification*' (Bannister and Hogg, 2004: 851), and this is evident in the quote from P-25. By insisting that her children look smart for school, she is signalling that her children are '*cared for*', thus expressing lifestyle characteristics (Park and Burns, 2005) which will symbolically transfer (Damhorst, 2005c; Miller Spillman, 2005b) to how the children are viewed by the teachers. In this respect, she is aligning with the teachers as fellow professionals (Szmigin and Carrigan,

2006) and indicating the family belongs to this social group (Piamphongsant and Mandhachitara, 2008; Dodd et al., 2000; Wagner, 1999, Sparks and Guthrie, 1998; Faber et al., 1987).

The research has contributed to understanding the negotiations between a mother and her child for fashion selection, an area of research which has previously received little attention (de Kervenoael et al., 2011). Further, the research delineates that children's appearance is both an extension of, and representative of the family's status. Thus, sustainability is compromised, as the participants sought inexpensive school clothing to ensure the children were smartly presented for school and were reluctant to repair clothing, such as patching trouser knees, as this would imply lower social status and an inability to meet the children's needs.

#### **6.3.2.2: Seeking excellence in consumption**

Contrasting to the strategy adopted to manage their finances of purchasing inexpensive fashion for the children, the participants sought more expensive fashion for themselves. The reason for this was described by P-14 in Section 6.1: she wanted clothes that offered a better fit. Rejecting fashion from inexpensive retailers was a result of previous dissatisfaction post-consumption:

*Although I would shop in Asda for the kids, I have done it once or twice for me and then seams have sagged and it's ended up as looking crappy. The skirt cost £5.00 but actually then that's £5.00 on something that you never wear, because it doesn't quite look right on you anyway. (P-14)*

P-14 recognises that inexpensive fashion deteriorates after laundering, resulting in dissatisfaction with fit and appearance. She suggests that inexpensive fashion becomes a false economy, post-consumption dissatisfaction results in rejection of the garment. The trade-off for increased price points was the expectation that the clothing would last for longer, coupled with superior material and construction which ensured that the garment looked and fitted better, as well as maintaining shape after laundering. Similarly, Birtwistle and Tsim (2005) found that older consumers evaluated post-consumption quality



within decision-making. Further, paying more for fashion ensured that the garment was valued and efforts would be made to expand the lifespan, as described by P-6:

*It's easier to chuck away stuff that only cost a tenner and it makes it more disposable. If you are going to spend money on something then [it is better] to get something that you would wear and try to make the most of it. (P-6)*

P-6 expresses that clothing is more valued when it is more expensive, therefore she would make an effort to extend the lifespan. This reverts back to the opinion of the participants in Section 6.2.2, where the culture of planned obsolescence was negatively evaluated. Inherently, the participants valued their own fashion consumption, a reflection of the time and money invested in obtaining it. This finding is similar to that of Fisher et al. (2008) who found that life-stage influenced consumption behaviour and preferences for price and quality. Hence, values were considered in relation to need and expectations of longevity. For example, P-18 who was pregnant during the interview, explained:

*I am much more aware about the quality of clothes and how durable they are. When I was younger, you don't really think about that as much. You don't have much money, not that we have got loads of money now, but .. I want to be .. strategic about picking **a few things**, that are going to last. Maybe that's an age thing and maybe that's ... part of being a mother and not having the time to shop like you used to. It's different, I suppose, when I am pregnant. I was debating about whether it would be worth buying a winter coat for the last few months [laughing] of pregnancy! But I just decided that if I could get one quite cheaply and that is ... contradicting what I said earlier, [but] this is a short period of time that I am going to be pregnant. (P-18)*

Similar to the participants' recognition that children's clothing has a limited lifespan, P-18 recognises that her pregnancy is finite and it is not worth spending more money on clothing with limited wear. Thus, her inclination is whether to purchase a winter coat with a limited lifespan, paying much less than she would outwith pregnancy. Consequently, this research differs from that of Joergens (2006) and Joy et al. (2012) as fashion behaviours are evaluated protectively and individually constructed for the specific requirement as opposed to just obtaining fashion to maintain new fashion trends.

Some of the participants, like P-20, saw sustainable production as worth paying more for; this was linked to a perception that sustainable production was indicative of a superior quality. Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) and Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) focus upon whether consumers will pay more for organic cotton, as organic production is more expensive. The participants exhibited a similar desire to pay more for sustainable production and through unpacking the narratives it can be deduced that sustainable status contains added value. The literature informed the research that value would be negotiated alongside price, whereby the price variation would be considered as a trade-off for additional attributes (Bray et al., 2011; Peattie, 1999; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Value was perceived in both a superior quality and equitable production (for both the environment and producers). Aligning consumption with moral sentiment was most salient when selecting gifts, due to the transferral of feeling imbued within the gift exchange (Holbrook, 1999; Belk and Coon, 1993). Although P-20 routinely prioritised sustainable consumption, P-10 felt this was more relevant when selecting a gift than for everyday consumption. This was expressed by a number of the participants, for example P-9 mentioned that during the Edinburgh Festival, she often frequented the city centre where there were ethical markets and whilst browsing, she considered the practicality of purchasing sustainably-produced goods:

*I wouldn't head there ... so the chances of me being there and seeing something, at the right time. (P-9)*

P-9 went on to explain that if a child had a birthday coming up, she would purchase something from the ethical market, due to the novelty and perceived quality of the products on offer. This is typical of a number of participants who expressed that selecting a gift, the preference would be to include sustainability as part of the decision-making. P-15 explains what motivates her to purchase an ethical gift:

*If I was buying for other people, like gifts, if someone has a baby, obviously I am not going to buy them something out of Tesco's. [A friend] had a baby last week ... we went to Flux, an nice ethical gift shop and bought a really*

*nice organic, cotton and Fairtrade sleeping bag thing for the baby. So, when I am buying for other people I am aware of the ethics [laughing] and I want to buy them nice things! I suppose, I am thinking of finance really, because that was £35.00 for a sleeping bag. I would buy [others] nice, ethical [laughing] but just not for my own family! (P-15)*

As described in Section 6.2.3, the purity of sustainability is preferred for babies, and this transferred to other opportunities within gift-giving. P-15 uses the word 'nice' within the quote to describe both the retailer and product, which are imbued within the passing of the gift. Other participants described that sustainable gifts were 'nice and that bit special' (P-12), the additional value attributes being transferred within the gift (Davies et al., 2009; Dickson and Littrell, 1997; Belk and Coon, 1993). Belk and Coon (1993) describe the social symbolism of passing gifts as creating a bond between the gift and the receiver, including sentiment contained within the gift-givers extended self (Belk, 1988). This aligned with other participants' sentiments who described that sustainable gifts were perceived as having additional value, particularly novelty where unusual materials were used for production. For example, P-13 had purchased Christmas decorations out of palm trees and she thought this was 'something a wee bit different'. Similarly, P-28 thought that gifts made from sustainable materials made a 'good conversation piece as well'. It was around traditional gift-giving times, like Christmas (Davies et al., 2009), that the participants actively sought sustainably-produced commodities.

*I bought my Christmas presents, last year and I was going to try and do that again, from Amnesty. They have got quite nice stuff and ... it's a good charity to support. You know, ok, I'm getting somebody a present that maybe is going to go towards something and it is something that is maybe a bit different and it's not mass-manufactured. (P-26)*

P-18 expresses again that sustainably-produced goods as 'different' (P-13) as they are not mass-produced. Belk and Coon (1993) posit that the exchange includes the transferral of socially desirable behaviours as representative of feelings; this is symbolically transferred within the effort of the gift-giver to source a suitable gift (Davies et al., 2009), exacerbated by rejecting mass-market retailers. The contrast between a carefully sourced gift to align with the

receiver was also noted by P-3 in Section 6.2.2 where her description of mass-produced commodities which contained little purpose or thought (Bird-David and Darr, 2009). P-26 also explains that she recognises that her consumption also supports a charity. UNICEF was another charitable organisation that was supported around Christmas, P-26 recognised that through purchasing from UNICEF, she contributes to:

*[An] initiative where it's employing people to give them a trade, basically and to give them money, I think it is such a good idea. [When] you are buying ... a gift [it] adds up and makes a difference. (P-26)*

The participants perceive sustainable production as being more relevant for gifts, particularly as they express that they pay more for gifts. However, the myriad of limitations that they experience in their lifeworlds ensure that the characteristics valued in sustainable gifts do not transfer to what is more pertinent for everyday consumption; therefore, managing everyday limitations are viewed as more pressing.

## **6.4: Conclusion**

This chapter has explored how personal value constructs are engineered to comply with the participants' lifeworlds, portraying an interplay of values which are balanced within lifeworld management (Jägel et al., 2012; Holbrook, 1999). Jägel et al. (2012) found that self-identity motivated style selection, followed by price, focusing upon these values resulted in a trade-off for sustainable production, compromising upon complete satisfaction. However, the data demonstrates that a number of trade-offs are experienced by the participants, which have been exacerbated post-motherhood and altered their perceptions, leading to the renegotiation of self and behaviours. For example, they are focusing on the children, but still trying to maintain a sense of self. Thus, as implicated by Fisher et al. (2008), the participants primarily reacted to life-stage and lifeworld concerns.

There is little acknowledgment within the literature of the transition a women experiences through the mothering role, particularly how it changes perceptions of identity and fashion consumption behaviours. However, altered perceptions of identity are logical, as a women experiences psychological and physical changes and the opportunity to be egocentric is greater reduced post-pregnancy. Further, the participants were obliged to compromise their moral sentiment due to the difficulty in carrying out sustainable behaviours; sustainable practice was suspended to accommodate the emerging socialisation of the child. Consequently, their lifeworld often restricts their ability to align moral values with behaviours, illustrating that consumers seek value in their consumption and evaluate potential benefits among an array of values (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009). This was symptomatic of their hectic lifeworlds, where trade-offs were applied to enable multi-tasking (de Kervenoael et al., 2011).

As established within the preceding chapters, sustainability is infused within the consumer market-place and it was anticipated that the participants would illustrate a greater understanding of sustainability within the context of fashion consumption behaviours. Similar to more recent research, such as Cervellon and Wernerfelt (2012) and Jägel et al. (2012), the participants illustrate applying sustainable concepts to fashion consumption, such as passing used-clothing, paying more for quality garments which will last longer and donating clothing suitable for re-wear. These fashion behaviours were considered by Allwood et al. (2006) as pertaining to sustainability. However, sustainability was compromised by the children's continued growth, where reduced expectations of longevity reduced their inclination to pay more than required. Thus, sustainability was manipulated to satisfy the familial needs foremost: networks of used-clothing were adopted and sustainable fashion consumption was rejected, due to expectations that this would be less efficient, more expensive and unfashionable. This was not viewed as neglecting sustainability or their moral conviction, it was a form of suspending sustainable consumption until it is was viable. Therefore, the participants describe flexibility within their

lifeworlds, participating when there are no barriers (Szmigin et al., 2009; Parsons et al., 2009).

# Chapter Seven: Evaluating the sustainability of fashion consumption

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## 7.1: Introduction

Chapter Six offered an overview of how the participants negotiated an interplay of values within their existential lifeworlds, including value trade-offs to prioritise the most pressing concerns. The participants evaluated the content of the labels, which were presented to stimulate their narratives around sustainability within the context of fashion. Two important characteristics were identified in the data, facilitated by insufficient knowledge and fashion retailers' lack of transparency of fashion production. Firstly, the participants incorporated heuristic propensities as implicating sustainable production, attempting to transfer sustainable concepts from other contexts to fashion; secondly, uncertainty enabled the participants to neutralise allegations of garment-worker exploitation. These themes will be addressed in this chapter, structured in two sections. The first describes how participants managed their confusion for sustainability in the context of fashion through the practical use of heuristics (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982a). The second examines the participants' efforts to dilute their contribution to exploitation, framed within Skyes and Matza's (1957) Neutralisation Techniques.

## 7.2: Utilising heuristics to evaluate sustainable production

Previous studies have not explored how consumers evaluate sustainable concepts in relation to fashion consumption. This research identified the participants' practical use of heuristics as transferring sustainable status from other concepts to fashion. The thesis first introduced the concept of heuristics in Chapter Five when P-10 made an assumption that sustainable fashion was more expensive, solely available from a specialist retailer and would not be fashionable. Further, she struggled to transfer sustainable concepts, such as

carbon neutrality to fashion production. The analysis revealed that primarily the participants applied similar heuristic assumptions to avoid unsustainable implications. Table 7.1 illustrates the participants quotes indicating heuristic propensities in relation to sustainable fashion.

**Table 7.1: Narratives expressing heuristic propensities**

| <b>Heuristic</b>               | <b>Description</b>   | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>  |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------------|---|
| <b>Representativeness</b>      | Established UK retailers were believed to be devoid of garment-worker exploitation because of their dominance in the UK retail sector and the marketing of an enhanced service orientation               | 4                  | It's almost like you trust the reputation of those bigger stores, or because they ... are more expensive that somehow they've got a policy. I don't know if John Lewis has a policy on ... sourcing. I think that Marks and Spencer do. I remember having a conversation with somebody in there ... about where they source their clothes and they do ... try to ... look into it |
| <b>Availability</b>            | The participants were more aware of NGOs alleging garment-worker exploitation than environmental degradation within fashion consumption, so when recalling ethical issues, garment-workers were foremost | 27                 | A Plan A eco factory, carbon emissions, renewable. But how much were the people being paid? Because it can be as eco as it likes, but if ... they are working a fifteen hour day, then slightly different   |
| <b>Risk aversion</b>           | Retailers who had been publically alleged to have utilised garment-worker exploitation were rejected to avoid contributing to practice which was perceived to be unethical                               | 18                 | I tend not to buy Gap things. I tend not to go to places like New Look. Oh, I wouldn't go to Primark  |
| <b>Adjustment to an anchor</b> | Price was evaluated against supermarket and value fashion retailers, leading to reducing participants price threshold  | 28                 | I am not going to go out and buy two ... little shirts for £12.00, when I can get two for £2.00 or £3.00 in Tesco   |

Heuristics were described in Chapter Three as guiding principles or rules of thumb which are applied during decision-making (Nisbett et al., 1982a; Bar-Hillel, 1982; Ross and Anderson, 1982), manifesting through representativeness, availability, adjustment to an anchor and risk aversion.



This section will begin to unpack the participants' narratives through a heuristical lens. It is also important to reiterate that the participants' use of heuristics derived directly from the data: the analysis revealed that the participants attempted to transfer sustainable concepts from other contexts to fashion in an effort to apply meaning. Their perceptions were developed from recalling salient information and comparisons were evaluated upon what was available in the current fashion market-place. Further, heuristic propensities facilitated assumptions that their consumption did not derive from exploitative practice.

### 7.2.1: Nuances of trusting fashion retailers

It has been well established within this thesis that there is insufficient information available for consumers to understand what constitutes fashion production; therefore, the participants evaluated information which was readily available. As established in Chapter Three, representativeness is applied as a subjective probability of transferring similar outcomes or properties from one context to another (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982a; Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a; Tversky and Slovic, 1982). The participants interpreted marketing activities and service orientation as indicative of an augmented service that was devoid of exploitation. Consequentially, the participants illustrate a belief that purchasing from M&S or John Lewis offered a perceptual distance from allegations of garment-worker exploitation. Examples include:

*Marks and Spencer's is a solid, reliable ... trustworthy sort of organisation. (P-4)*

*I make the assumption, that Marks and Spencer's don't [manufacture garments] that involves child labour. (P-7)*

*I would buy something out of Marks and Spencer's quite a lot, because I think that's quite safe. (P-3)*

*The name lends itself to a good name. There's an assumption made with Marks and Sparks that wouldn't be with others, because you think of them as being ... aware, socially and politically. (P-8)*

The quotes illustrate that the retailer's reputation implicates an ethos of trust and reliability within the brand name (Birtwistle and Shearer, 2009; Oates et al., 2008; Aurier and Siadou Martin, 2007). For example, the participants use the words 'reliable', 'trustworthy', 'safe' and 'awareness' of equitable trading. Jones (1991) predicted that consumers interpret brand names to predict outcomes and the participants assumed trusted retailers could be relied upon to avoid exploitative practice within fashion-production. This was a reflection of marketing an augmented customer service which the participants equated as evidence of implementing equitable production policy, aligning with the research by Shaw and Tomolillo (2004). Trust was further endorsed by the participants' personal experience (Kahneman et al., 2000) within the retailer's environment, where service attributes including interaction with sales staff, the retailers return policy and the quality of the fitting rooms, all contributed to an exchange of mutual trust and respect.

This expands upon the research by Chan and Wong (2012) by consolidating perceptions that store-related attributes pertaining to a superior service and marketing reliable characteristics implicate sustainability. As trust is implied within marketing communications, the participants assume that the retailer is acting responsibly and will make every effort to avoid allegations of exploitation. Similar to the above quote from P-8, P-13 implies purchasing from M&S, John Lewis and Debenhams ensured that the garments '*were made in respectable places*' because '*the big chains are more aware of that*'. This awareness includes perceptions of responsibility for sustainability, as inferred through marketing. For example P-7 recognises M&S encourage sustainable behaviours through introducing a charge for plastic bags, thus transferring implications of sustainability to other business practices, such as fashion-production. This is a result of M&S marketing commitment to sustainability through their Plan A campaign, as recognised by P-12:

*I actually think that Marks and Spencer's, are really good, at putting their message across. I am conscious of their, Plan A. So I am very conscious of Marks and Spencer's [commitment to sustainability] and when I see Marks*

*and Spencer's, generally speaking, I feel like I am getting good quality. (P-12)*

Participant 12 recognises that M&S have acknowledged retailing implications for sustainability and have developed an initiative to address sustainability as a core objective. This supports the assertion that consumers are increasingly aware of sustainability, whereby the retailer's stance offers a broad assurance of trust and raises consumers' consciousness for sustainability in the context of retailing (Weise et al., 2012). However, it must also be recognised that the participants had an affinity with retailers like M&S and John Lewis, which is embedded within a perception of them being '*British*' and having '*human values*' (P-8) and or '*established UK retailers*' (P-4), which further endorses their respectability and trustworthiness. This is concurrent with research by Shaw et al. (2006a) and Shaw and Tomolillo (2004). Affinity was also illustrated through familiar names, such as '*Markies*' (P-26) and '*Marks and Sparks*' (P-8), implicating M&S as a well-thought-of and respected retailer.

As Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) ascertain, the assumption that certain retailers are established UK institutions, implies that UK laws will ensure the garment-workers receive a satisfactory salary. Although this may not be required legally, the overarching British sense of fair-play overrides exploitative practice. Within this context, the participants recognised that marketing intermediaries communicated attributes which translated as an alignment of similar values and enhanced perceptions of trust (Otieno et al., 2005; Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). In the absence of information, it can be seen that trust is utilised to guide the decision-making process to avoid consumption that does not align with moral value (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982b; Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a), albeit they harnessed '*imperfect cues*' (Shaw et al., 2006). The participants assumed that trust reflected the retailer's business approach, not only as experienced in the retail environment, but transfers subjectively as a representational cue, transcending to all stakeholders, including suppliers (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982b).

P-25 also indicates that trust is anticipated in the quality of the garments. Quality is linked to sustainability, as the clothes last longer and fit better, thus maximising the lifespan. Quality also reflects risk aversion, minimising the potential loss of clothing with a reduced lifespan (Abraham-Murali and Littrell, 1995). Previous research has identified a link between quality and trust (Aurier and Siadou-Martin, 2007; Birtwistle and Tsim, 2005). For example, P-13 states that when purchasing clothing from M&S 'you are guaranteed quality'. This was endorsed by other participants:

*Marks and Spencer's are a good name, they are probably going to wash well and the quality is probably quite good. (P-18)*

*Because I see it is from John Lewis, that I would just assume John Lewis ... are a very good company, so I would probably trust them on it. (P-25)*

P-18 recognised that garments from M&S have enhanced longevity post-consumption. Further, P-25 illustrates that she trusts John Lewis to protect her as a consumer, a judgement based on previous experience and reputation (Einhorn, 1982). Post-consumption satisfaction with quality endorses trust and reliability in the retailer. Taylor (1982) asserted that distinctive stimuli contributed to influencing choice when outcomes are uncertain and without specific information to draw upon, the participants incorporated representational cues. This included transferring stereotypical information, such as price and quality, (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982a; Jones, 1991; Lepisto et al., 1991). The participants assumed that paying an increased price ensured a superior quality and that the garment workers are more skilled, would work in factories with better conditions and receive an equitable salary.

*I ... assume that it is ethically produced in that it cost so bloody much that it must be [laughs]! Do you know what I mean? I would ... hate to think that I was spending thirty quid on a pair of trousers for [my daughter] and find out that some kid is getting twenty-seven pence for making them. My very simplistic view on it is that the cheaper it is, the less somebody must be getting paid for making it. (P-3)*

*I sort of assume [more expensive retailers] haven't [been produced through exploitation], because they are that bit more expensive. (P-23)*

P-3 and P-23 are equating the retail price as indicative of the price paid to garment-workers, assuming that paying more ensures that the garment-workers are paid more. Einhorn (1982) suggested that consumers reflect upon consequential causation, particularly drawing upon previous experience. Price relating to sustainable production practice is transferred through the participants' acknowledgement that sustainably-produced food is more expensive. This ethos of paying more to ensure that the garment-workers were not exploited through insufficient salaries was replicated through assuming that inexpensive fashion was indicative of exploitation.

*How can Asda produce t shirts for a pound? Somebody, somewhere is not getting a fair deal. (P-21)*

*T-shirts that are £2.00 [] how can they justify, them being so cheap? (P-16)*

*I can remember buying some school shirts for [my son] they were £2.00 for two shirts. I thought how could somebody have actually grown .. and harvested the cotton ... woven it into material and somebody else cuts it up and makes it into a shirt and then it has to be packaged and ... shipped. It still costs £1.00 and everybody's taken their cut on the way? (P-4)*

The quotes illustrate that the participants view price as a representational cue denoting garment-worker exploitation, questioning production which includes cotton cultivation through to construction and travelling around the world to be available to the consumer. Through paying a higher price the participants believed they could assuage potential guilt of contributing to exploitative practice. Coupled with media campaigns targeting inexpensive fashion retailers with allegations of garment-worker and child exploitation (Shaw et al., 2006), the participants interpreted atypical information as representational logic, assuming all inexpensive fashion equated to lower salaries and exploitative conditions for garment-workers. Thus, to avoid feeling of guilt or remorse for contributing to exploitative practice (Soscia, 2007), heuristic cues were employed to avoid (Ross and Sicoly, 1982; Nisbett et al., 1982a) the type of fashion associated with exploitation. This was prevalent in the participants' avoidance of shopping in Primark, a UK value fashion retailer which has featured prominently in NGO campaigns informing consumers of garment-

worker exploitation and child labour (Action Aid, 2007; Hearson and Morser, 2007). Therefore, the participants apply an emotive response (Soscia, 2007) to oppose exploitation through rejecting retailers alleged of exploitation (Shaw et al., 2007; Iwanow et al., 2005).

*For social reasons I don't buy my clothes in Primark, because I know what is involved in the production of their clothes and I can't support that. (P-28)*

*Primark and places like that ... for me are kind of big no no's and I know that I wouldn't shop there. (P-1)*

P-28 and P-1 indicate reacting to NGO campaigns and concluding that garment-worker exploitation is morally wrong (Shaw et al., 2006) and their moral sentiment has been compromised. Awareness of inequitable production practice motivated some of the participants' preference to categorise all retailers alleged of exploitation should be avoided to minimise the risk of purchasing fashion derived from garment-worker exploitation retailers (Smith and Vogt, 1995). This was an '*uninformed ... prejudice that their, ethics aren't, what they might be*' (P-23), evidence that the NGO allegations damaged consumers confidence in the brand name (Smith and Vogt, 1995). This is indicative of what Bannister and Hogg (2007) describe as negative symbolic consumption, illustrating the participants' understanding of the production consequences of inexpensive fashion (Kilbourne et al., 1997) and demonstrating a prevalence to reduce uncertain outcomes (Quottrone and Tversky, 2000; Einhorn, 1982).

In other consumption contexts, the participants expressed their ability to select retailers based on their ethical credentials (Shaw and Moraes, 2007), such as the Body Shop (Cowe and Williams, 2001; Strong, 1996) and The Co-Operative. It was in this context that the participants expressed their preference to support producers, which was possible through selecting Fairtrade produce.

*I would seek out Fairtrade ... food in a way I wouldn't yet with clothes. (P-12)*

*Fairtrade labels, that's a brilliant idea. That's a wonderful idea. It's so easy just to recognise the label and it just makes it easier for ignorant people like me to say, ok, I can do that one. (P-15)*

The quotes illustrate the participants sought Fairtrade food when shopping due to the confidence that production was equitable (Ethical Company Organisation, 2002; Lyon, 2006, Crane and Matten, 2003), albeit the environmental characteristics were unknown. The participants recognise Fairtrade as an established concept within food production attracting consumers through the distinctive logo, which provides a heuristic cue (Nisbett et al., 1982a), translating into an important dimension of decision-making (Ross and Anderson, 1982; Taylor, 1982) to prompt consumers to include the social consequences of consumption.

Overall, the participants were seeking assurance that their consumption did not derive from exploitative practice (Low and Davenport, 2008). The extent that Fairtrade products have infiltrated the marketplace illustrates that consumer concern has influenced food retailers and producers to adopt Fairtrade principles (Diaz Pedregal and Oxcaglar-Toulouse, 2011). This enabled P-3 to feel she has '*done my bit*' in reducing exploitative practice. Similarly, P-15 elucidates that the logo attracted her attention, acting as a prompt to consider equitable trade, without which she would '*ignorantly*' purchase without consideration for the producers. Hence, the Fairtrade logo attracts what Carrigan and Attalla (2001) term '*passive consumers*' and Carrington et al. (2010) refer to '*automaticity*', as mainstream availability raises consumer consciousness (Kahneman et al., 2000) for equitable trade between production and consumption. Quattrone and Tversky (2000: 469) refer to this as the '*certainty effect*' whereby motivation is increased when assurance of the outcome is certain. Thus, through wanting to support equitable trading, the participants illustrate market preference for sustainable production (Zabkar and Hosta, 2012; Shaw and Riach, 2011).

Mainstream availability also validates the credibility of sustainable behaviours (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a; Nisbett et al., 1982b) and ensures that

consumers are not restricted from supporting equitable production through inconvenience (do Paço and Raposo, 2010; Szmigin et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2006) or increased pricing, as the price differential between Fairtrade and organic produce has reduced (McEachern and Carrigan, 2012; Howard and Allen, 2006). However the participants felt they could not contribute positively to equitable trading within fashion consumption, as P-1 illuminates:

*Clothes shopping is the one area where I feel least able to make choices which are ethical in terms of knowing the origins of something. With food shopping now I've got it down to quite a fine art and I always try to buy Fairtrade products. There are companies that aren't good to use and you don't use them. You can make that choice and I feel that with clothes I don't really know. (P-1)*

P1 expresses that within the food sector, she understands what is involved in production and how she can opt for sustainable production; however, she struggles to transfer this ethos to fashion consumption, as she is unable to evaluate what constitutes fashion production. Towards the end of the interview, she expresses feelings of helplessness, as she feels she has little option to avoid exploitative practice (Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001; Levitt 2009a). This leads to a personal and moral dilemma (Bezençon and Blili, 2008; Dolan, 2002), shrouded in ambiguity as described by P-1. The participants are uncertain what their fashion consumption contributes to and sought familiar logos which are embedded within the context of food as guidance (Shaw et al., 2006). Therefore, the findings identify that sustainable consumption is context dependent, concurrent with research by Joy et al. (2012), Hiller Connell (2010), Niinimäki (2010), Shaw et al. (2006a). Although the participants understand their contribution through the concept of Fairtrade, transferring concepts of organic and carbon neutral production were lesser known.

### **7.2.2: Assessing the environmental impact of fashion production**

The participants were less aware of the environmental impact of the fashion industry (Hiller Connell, 2010) and this reduced their understanding of the



relevance of organic production (as depicted in the organic cotton shirt label) and carbon neutrality (the eco-factory label explains carbon neutral production). Although familiarity of sustainable concepts embedded within the context of food production, develops confidence in understanding the sustainable implications (Thøgersen et al., 2010), the terms were meaningless in the context of fashion. Therefore, the sustainable characteristics depicted on the labels were viewed as either depicting an increased quality or a whimsical fashion trend. For example, P-2 stated: *'In H&M, I did buy some organic tops, but again I didn't relate that to ethical issues'*. Similarly, P-24 asks:

*What does that mean? Organic cotton ... I wouldn't immediately think that that was an environmentally friendly product. (P-24)*

Both participants illustrate that without knowing that conventional cotton contributes to environmental degradation, they are uncertain of the meaning behind organic cotton. This response was typical of the participants, who assumed that conventional cotton was more sustainable than man-made fibres as cotton grows naturally. However, in transferring stereotypical characteristics of organic status, the participants sought health-related benefits from organic cotton, as expressed by P-4.

*People who buy organic food do it not because they believe that environmentally pesticides are bad for the world or that biodiversity will suffer, but because they are eating it, it is a health consideration. (P-4)*

P-4 recognises that organic food offers personal benefits and this does not transfer to organic cotton, a perception that was expressed by other participants, contrasting with the findings from Hustvedt and Dickson (2009), yet concurring with Gam et al. (2010). Organic food consumption was motivated by avoiding their children from ingesting food sprayed with pesticides, although this was more important for younger children particularly when weaning. The increased price of organic food was a trade-off for anticipated health properties, a concept the participants struggled to transfer to fashion as they could not understand the *'harm'* (P-7) from wearing clothing made from cotton grown with pesticides. This illustrates low awareness of reports indicating pesticidal

residue could be drawn into the skin (Pedersen and Hartmann, 2004). The inclusion of the John Lewis label describing a child's top treated with an enzyme wash was included to stimulate a discussion of chemicals, however only P-4 and P-24 expressed concern for Teflon applications on school clothing.

*I remember reading an article about Teflon ... about how it wasn't good for children's skin [and] could be taken into the skin. But I cannot find trousers that do not have Teflon in and it really bothers me. I feel as though I am the only person in the whole world who knows about this, because nobody else seems to care. I've almost got to the point where I'm giving up. I am out of kilter with everyone in the rest of the world. This can't be bad or they wouldn't let it out there. (P-4)*

P-4 expresses her isolation after reading about Teflon being potentially detrimental to skin. She wants to be able to incorporate this information into her decision-making, yet is unable to find children's school garments made without Teflon, or additional information to support her concern. She consoles herself over this inadequacy by postulating that if it was detrimental to skin, there would be legislation in place to protect consumers. This exemplifies that the consequences of fashion production practice, for both the environment and wearing garments, is low in consumers' consciousness, contrasting with the participants' desire to protect their children from ingesting pesticides used in food production. As P-14 stated: '*organic cotton wouldn't be as high on my priority list as organic food*'. Similarly, P-21 indicates her preference for organic food over organic cotton:

*When it comes to clothes, I don't know if I would be that bothered. I would choose that organic banana over that non-organic banana. But I wouldn't choose the organic t-shirt over the non-organic t-shirt. Because I don't know enough. (P-21)*

P-21 is more aware of organic status in the context of food, and struggles to understand the relevance of organic cotton. Hustvedt and Dickson (2009) posit that organic cotton is growing in popularity due to the success of organic food and found their consumers perceived organic cotton as both better for the environment and containing health properties, however do not speculate as to what these health properties may be. Thus, the benefit of a phenomenological

approach is to understand how consumers interpret concepts, such as organic status.

de Chernatony et al. (2000) postulated that perceptions of value manifest through consumers perceiving additional benefits if a product is more expensive. However, it was the benefit from the perspective of wearing garments made from organic cotton that the participants could not understand, coupled with increased prices; this resulted in the participants rejecting organic cotton. Some participants associated organic cotton with eczema, either opting for or rejecting organic cotton depending on whether their children had eczema. This notion derived from perceptions that pesticides may cause '*itchy skin*' (P-11). The use of chemicals have been linked to health concerns, such as asthma and eczema (Lee and Sevier, 2008; Allwood et al., 2006; Waste Watch, 2005; Lee, 2003). To date, no other research has identified consumers' concern that pesticide use in cotton production may result in eczema or that organic cotton is better for people who suffer from eczema. However, this is evidence of applying '*logic and meaning*' (Devinney et al., 2007) to sustainable concepts, through questioning the meaning contained within organic cotton. For example, the participants felt able to manage pesticides or chemicals applied during production through laundering, particularly as children's clothing was '*in and out of the wash all the time*' (P-13). This was summarised by P-21:

*I think about organic cotton quite a lot, because, we tend to buy organic things. I guess I am just a skeptic about how much difference me buying two organic shirts will actually make to the world. My youngest, he has got quite bad skin and I think is organic cotton any better? Well by the time I've washed organic cotton four times in a washing machine, surely it's no different to non-organic cotton. So that argument, doesn't wash either with me. (P-21)*

P-21 describes that she is attempting to transfer the concept of organic from the context of food to fashion and struggling as clothing is worn and she assumes that laundering would remove pesticidal residue. Thus, concern that non-organic cotton may exacerbate eczema is managed, invalidating the value of

organic cotton. This can be explained by considering a quote by P-21 later in the interview:

*I bought [nappies] second hand and then I sold them on again. I used them for two babies, so I felt that that was a benefit that I could relate to. A tangible benefit to me. (P-21)*

P-21 needs to be able to understand her contribution and contextualise behaviours against the wider implications. She purchased nappies second-hand, avoiding another production run and the use of scarce resources and then sold the nappies, another form of recycling. She herself used the nappies for two children, thus diminishing her contribution to landfill, particularly as nappies never decompose. In Chapter One, the rise of consumers' using real nappies was recognised (The Co-Operative, 2011); these tangible perceptions were understood, not only for P-21's own benefit, but for wider sustainable implications, similar to the visual media which Carrington et al. (2010) postulate would reduce the attitude-behaviour gap reported in ethical consumption research. For example P-21 goes on to say:

*I think once it's gone, it's gone. I think about that before I throw anything away. Because I can relate to it and I can see, you know. (P-21)*

P-21 understands that reducing what is sent to landfill reduces environmental degradation, she understands that landfill is not infinite and requires protection. However, she struggles to identify the benefits for her and the wider implications of purchasing organic cotton. Without understanding the additional value of organic cotton, the increased price was a further deterrent, another stereo-typical characteristic transferred from food that was noted by a number of participants.

*If I just saw organic cotton I would assume it was hugely expensive. (P-1)*

*I don't really know much how much it was, but I am assuming it was expensive, by my standards. (P-15)*

Previous experience of identifying sustainable fashion perpetrated assumptions that sustainable fashion had increased pricing. For example, P-1 and P-14 noted

previously having seen fleece jumpers made from PET which were much more expensive. The participants have expressed price as the main consideration for fashion consumption within the last three chapters and this is conceptualised within adjustment to an anchor, where a base rate is applied to evaluate price points (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982b; Tversky and Slovic, 1982; Lichstein et al., 1982). Value fashion retailers and supermarkets had reduced some of the participants' threshold for pricing. As a result the participants were reluctant to pay more than required for the children's fashion, due to the children's continued growth (Orbach and Macleod, 2008). Although the participants concurred that the prices depicted in the labels were affordable, they also recognised that they could purchase cheaper clothing in the supermarket for far less. This is exemplified in the quotes below:

*£12.00 for two t-shirts I probably wouldn't pay. [Not] when I could get three [t-shirts] for £4.00 in Asda. (P-14)*

*£8.00. If I am being honest, I am also conscious that I could probably walk into a supermarket and get a fleece for £3.00. (P-25)*

The quotes signify that despite the sustainable labels depicting children's garments that are not expensive, the prevalence of very low prices has further reduced their threshold. One reason was that they did not understand why sustainable fashion should be more expensive, particularly as cotton is a natural fibre and P-16 believes that as organic cotton is grown without pesticides, there should not be a price increase.

*If it is organic cotton, they are using less pesticides, then surely it must be cheaper? These are natural products in the world. I just find it, unbelievable that they think, because it is organic, they can charge all this much more and make a profit from it. (P-16)*

P-16 was not alone in this perception; a number of participants were sceptical of sustainable claims in relation to fashion, as asserted by P-28:

*One reason why I don't always buy it [is] I am not willing to pay that price. They really, I think, try to get at peoples values. Buy organic and ... line our pockets please. (P-28)*

The quotes illustrate a feeling expressed by the participants that the sustainable concepts were an effort to exploit consumer concerns within food production and increase prices, as reported in previous research (Bray et al., 2011; Fisher et al., 2008; Fineman, 2001; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Hiller Connell (2010) identified low awareness of the components of fashion production, including fibre cultivation skewed her participants' perceptions of what fibres were sustainable. The participants considered conventional cotton as sustainable, as it is a natural fibre. Therefore, they struggled with the concept of organic cotton. Further, the participants believed that as conventional cotton grows naturally in the environment it is more sustainable than PET, due to the additional process required to transform plastic bottles into polyester, unaware this contrasts with research depicting recycling as less energy intensive (The Ecologist, 2010b; Paulins and Hillery, 2009; Fletcher, 2008). Consequently, this research extends previous research (Hiller Connell, 2010; Hustvedt and Bernard, 2008) by delineating the participants' preference to reduce additional production processes, albeit recycling waste, as pertaining to sustainable behaviours

Similarly, Hustvedt and Bernard (2008) identified that a lack of knowledge for the sustainability of PLA fibres (made from renewable corn) reduced their participants' perception of value for the fibre. The participants liked the notion that PET redirected plastic bottles from landfill, however questioned the sustainability of recycled products over natural resources. Thus, despite being avid recyclers in other contexts, as discussed in Chapter Six, recycling in the context of fashion production is less understood. The quotes demonstrate that the participants are attempting to deliberate sustainable implications for fashion consumption. Initially, the evidence from the data indicates that without understanding the consequences, the participants were unmotivated to prioritise sustainable fashion. However, P-26 had some awareness of the negative impact of intensive cotton production in Uzbekistan.

*There [are] issues about cotton being very water intensive. In certain areas where ... farmers ... they need the money, but ... cotton production, it's, completely decimated areas ... because of the amount of water .... Needed.*

*[Laughing] Do I translate that into what I buy? I would say not at the moment, but it's something that has come on my radar. I was watching a programme about that in India, I couldn't believe ... the difference in ... places where they had rivers before, there's just none now. Because [of] cotton irrigation. (P-26)*

P-26 had been alerted to the environmental consequences of cotton production, albeit she struggled to recall the country which experienced degradation (she did however, recall it was Uzbekistan later in the interview). She describes how the programme she watched on TV enabled her understanding of the water intensity required for cotton production (Rosselson, 2008) and that pesticides deplete the soil (Rivoli, 2009; Dahllöf, 2003). She also recognises that the cotton producers were reliant on sufficient crops and this added further complexity (further information can be found in Appendix 1). Uncertain how her consumption contributes, P-26 explains that this does not feature within her decision-making.

In Chapter One, it was postulated that producers in developing countries depended upon agriculture for economic prosperity, therefore were financially unequipped to combat the detrimental impact (Stern, 2006). Without further information from producers or retailers, consumers are incapable of knowing where cotton derives from or the consequences. Uzbekistan has also been accused of child labour, including cruelty of the child workers, and there have been calls by NGOs for fashion retailers to avoid cotton from Uzbekistan. This movement is little known or had much success (EJF, 2005). Concurrent with Hustvedt and Bernard (2008), lack of knowledge for the sustainable implications may reduce motivation to purchase sustainably-produced fashion, however it is not the only reason. The concepts are so diverse to encompass, the participants were unsure which aspects were most important, further evidence of Newholm and Shaw's (2007: 258) claim that '*fully informed is unattainable*'. P-21 expressed her frustration at her inability to evaluate what her consumption contributes to, due to the complexity of fashion supply chains.

*You have to be a very well educated consumer, with lots of time on your hands before you are able to make a sensible decision. I think, ok, well I will*

*research whose factories got central heating, but ... what about the guy that supplies the fabric to that factory with central heating? So, ok this factory ... it doesn't have central heating, but it does use lovely organic cotton. There's so much to research, that I don't see how I can, I couldn't, I wouldn't, know, I couldn't make a sensible decision, about it. So, all these things I kind of think, och that's a nice idea. But my one t-shirt is not going to help you. So I will just go and buy ... t-shirts in Asda ... instead. (P-21)*

This quote sums up the participants' frustration at their inability to evaluate sustainability in the context of fashion, particularly when evaluating the enormity of the issues. Consequently, P-21 believes that by buying 'one t-shirt' is not going to 'help', illustrating that individual behaviour is insufficient and what is required is a collective response (Friedman, 2010). It is dependent upon seeking information that will deepen understanding to predetermine sustainability and then make a judgement on the most important criteria (Lee and Sevier, 2008; Hickman, 2008). The participants' quotes describe that transferring sustainable concepts from other concepts from other contexts to fashion depends upon understanding the issues. This includes the ability to interpret labelling to incorporate the concepts into decision-making, as well as deciding what concepts to support (Shaw and Moraes, 2009; Cherrier, 2007; Consumers International, 2007). This confusion was also expressed when evaluating the garment made in an eco-factory which was carbon neutral.

*Maybe because I work for a tour company, we are very sustainable. We have won awards for our sustainability and we are all about cutting our carbon emissions and ... fuel efficiency. So I know quite a bit about that, but I equate it to transport and not [fashion-production]. (P-10).*

The quote illustrates that carbon neutrality is understood in other contexts, mainly transportation. For P-10, this may be a reflection of her employment whereby sustainability is a differentiating factor against competitors. This is also a reflection that consumers have been educated in reducing carbon emissions through purchasing locally produced and seasonal fruit and vegetables (McDonald et al., 2009; Vyse, 2005). Without understanding carbon emissions in the context of fashion production, P-10 is uncertain as to what the negative consequences of fashion-production are, leading to reduced



engagement with the label. Other participants also expressed unfamiliarity with the label, for example, P-5 stated: *'I don't know what it means'* and P-8 expressed that *'the terminology, that they think we have all been educated in, but haven't, then it's pointless'* (P-8). Similarly, P-25 explained: *'I look at that and think, I don't see the value in it, but that is probably because I don't understand'* (P-25).

Consequently, the label is meaningless in the context of fashion as the transferral of essential properties was not understood (Tversky and Kahneman, 1982a). Although some participants recognised that fashion would travel from production in developing countries to be available for consumption in the UK, this was accepted as the participants considered this was where all fashion-production occurred (Oneko, 2011) and UK production would increase prices (Jones, 2006). Although the participants suspected that some countries, such as Bangladesh or China, implicated in exploitative practice, they were not certain nor felt they had sufficient viable alternatives. Similarly, exploitation may have incurred during another production component, such as cotton cultivation, and the country the garment was constructed in would not offer this information to guide the participants. Moreover, the participants could not recall information which would have raised their consciousness of carbon footprint in relation to fashion, contrasting to their intentness to purchase seasonal and locally produced food due awareness of food travelling around the globe. Thus, the theme of cutting carbon emissions had not transferred from other consumption contexts to that of fashion.

However, awareness for sustainability in the context of the environment was something that the participants felt they should include. For example, P-6 felt that: *'It has to be accepted that you can't just using the planet the way that we do'*. Similarly, P-26 recognises that although the UK may be working to reduce carbon emissions, this is primarily a result of outsourcing production:

*The environmental emissions side of ... production ... is a worry. These kind of factories that you see in China or India and third world countries spewing out emissions ... you think ... where the hell is that going to land us? (P- 26)*

P-26 is alluding to the fact that consumers in the UK may be aware of the need to consider sustainability, yet this is not a priority for developing countries. Further, as production occurs overseas, it is viewed as being problematic for other countries and not the UK, exacerbated by the distance between production and consumption, despite the fact that consumers contribute to the global sustainability through consumption. P-18 summarises the labels holistically and deduces that:

*Sometimes you get a bit complacent, in everyday life and you start to kind of forget about those things. I think it's good to have maybe labels on clothing to prompt you to think, actually, yeah, I should be thinking about this. (P-18)*

For P-18, the inclusion of sustainable concepts within the garment labels stimulates consciousness for the issues, illustrating the origins of the fashion industry taking responsibility for sustainable production and alerting consumers to the issues which maybe of concern. Just as P-10 in Chapter Five focused on her behaviours post-consumption as being sustainable and P-20 postulated that she tried to follow sustainable principles with her behaviours, the participants explained how they participated in sustainability when they felt able to. For P-7 this included selecting Fairtrade, organic and locally produced goods when available and pricing was comparable. P-17 believed that although not all her behaviours were sustainable but felt she would be *'a better person if they [were]'*. Similarly, P-27 stated: *'we try to be a green as we possibly can, [] it's kind of the drive between, belief system and practicality, or budget'*. Consonant with Carey et al. (2008), Szmigin et al. (2009) and Parsons et al. (2009), the participants apply a flexible approach to participate in sustainability where possible and when they understand the implications, as they are not *'adverse'* (P-11) to applying sustainability to fashion consumption. However, as described by P-11, *'I think if things are more spelled out for me, I am more likely to listen to the message'*. Consequently, consumers require a stronger steer on sustainable implications and alternative production practice. It was not only heuristic propensities that the participants utilised to compensate for incomplete or ambiguous information; neutralisation techniques were harnessed to avoid

feelings of guilt that their fashion consumption derived from exploitative practice.

### **7.3: Neutralising connotations of exploitation**

It is interesting to note thus far that the participants engage in sustainable behaviours to reduce the environmental impact of their consumption, albeit mainly in other contexts. Nevertheless, they express motivation to purchase fashion out of need rather than contribute to planned obsolescence and recycle garments in networks and through charity shops. Motivation occurs through understanding the issues and feeling their individual behaviour contributes to the wider sustainable agenda. In the last section, the participants expressed confusion of the detrimental environmental consequences of fashion production. However, they expressed knowledge of garment-worker exploitation, similar to the participants in Iwanow et al.'s (2005) study, most likely as a response to further allegations reported by NGOs (Asia Floor Wage, 2009; Hearson, 2008, 2007; War on Want, 2008; Dickson, 2000). Some participants attempted to avoid fashion retailers alleged of exploitative practice, whilst others equate paying more for fashion as avoiding exploitation. Thus, it could be assumed that the participants were better informed of garment-worker exploitation. Contrary to this assumption, the participants expressed complexity within evaluating garment-worker exploitation.

In Chapter Five P-10 described how she could not make a judgement that shopping in Primark contributed to the exploitation of garment-workers. This was contextualised within cultural differences. In contrast, P-20 illustrated how her awareness for exploitation had motivated sustainable consumption, however this was not typical and the participants neutralised behaviours rather than sourced alternative consumption (Bray et al., 2011; Szmigin et al., 2007). To understand how the participants coped with the emancipation to apply self-convection through the lens of social well-being, this final section will explore how the participants neutralised unsustainable behaviours.

There has been little academic research acknowledging consumer coping strategies to avoid experiencing negative emotions, for example guilt (Soscia, 2007; Dahl et al., 2003). Further, Valor (2007) recommended further investigation into the neutralisation techniques purported by consumers and this research illustrates the dominance of intermediate criteria as more important than allegations shrouded in ambiguity. Neutralisation manifested in denying responsibility, denial of victims and injury and appealing to a higher loyalty. Condemnation of the condemners is merged within the denial of responsibility due to the expressed complexity of judging the ethics of working conditions in developing countries. This includes ascertaining what would constitute a positive outcome for both garment-workers and improving the economy of developing countries. The quotes supporting this theme can be found in Table 7.2.

**Table 7.2: Narratives expressing**

| <b>Neutralisation technique</b>        | <b>Description</b>  | <b>Participant</b> | <b>Example</b>   |
|--|---|--------------------|--|
| <b>The denial of responsibility</b>    | Consumers are overwhelmed with their daily duties, feeling responsible for practice outwith her personal lifeworld is dismissed   | 24                 | I feel there's ... just so many messages ... and for me just getting to the shops ... if I see something that I like to buy, I will buy it   |
| <b>The denial of victims or injury</b> | Deliberating what the best outcome for workers in developing countries is, is any job better than no job? Also, recognising the monetary exchange in countries does not equate, therefore, not really knowing if the wages are exploitative | 6                  | You take factories away from certain parts of the country or the world, you could be taking away their only livelihood. For us, £1.00 a day isn't a huge amount, but £1.00 a day is there. But does that make it right? I don't know |
| <b>Appealing to a higher loyalty</b>   | Despite suspecting that inexpensive fashion derives from exploitative practice, providing clothing for the children is prioritised  | 22                 | I feel uncomfortable with [the low price of supermarket school clothes]. I do it because [of] cost reasons   |
| <b>Condemnation of the condemner</b>   | Some participants expressed an inability to condone the practice that occurs in factories in  | 21                 | Is any job, with any tiny amount of money better than no job at all? There ... are always going to be people working in such bad   |

developing countries due to insufficient information to judge the morality of the best outcome

conditions, that it is clearly, not right. I don't always know enough ... to be the one who judges whether it is right or wrong

### 7.3.1: The denial of responsibility

Zwolinski (2006) postulated that consumers condone garment-worker exploitation through their continuation to purchase fashion derived from exploitative practice. Concurrent with Joergens (2006), the participants accepted that all fashion is produced in developing countries, expressing both the lack of choice in the current marketplace and uncertainty whether fashion does derive from exploitation. Section 7.1 provided evidence to support the participants efforts to avoid fashion from retailers alleged of exploitation through personally constructed boycotts (Shaw et al., 2007; Iwanow et al., 2005), illustrating that exploitation was viewed by some participants as morally wrong (Jones, 1991). P-24 was unique in denying her responsibility for garment-worker exploitation.

*It's something that I would condemn, but I don't feel that I know enough. I know if everybody does their bit, it will change things, but, I don't see it as my personal responsibility particularly. I am trying my best ... recycling in terms of clothing, taking hand-me-downs. I will give my bit to charities, but, I can't change [what occurs in factories in other countries]. (P-24)*

P-24s narrative focused on her existential lifeworld as a struggle, she was a single parent and her main priority was provisioning for her son. For P-24, to take responsibility for garment-workers was overwhelming and she expressed dismay when evaluating the labels. Similar to P-10, she believes that she contributes to the sustainable agenda when she can, but is submerged with managing her lifeworld and feels unable to take on global issues of exploitation (Parsons et al., 2009; Devinney et al., 2007; Schröder and McEachern, 2004; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). Although the other participants acknowledged their responsibility in some form, the enormity of the issues resulted in feelings on emancipation. This was expressed by P-8:

*You can only work with what you have got, really. You can only fight so many battles in one day. You can't expect everybody to sort of be entirely green and ethical at a huge cost. (P-8)*

P-8 refers to 'working with what you have got', alluding to the information available and the options, particularly when participating in sustainability infers increased finances are required. From this perspective, lifeworld management dictates when participation is viable. P-14 expressed that this is why she purchased Fairtrade when she could.

*I just hate the idea that somebody has grown rich, making profits, and somebody is not getting a fair wage. It's the kind of personal element, that makes Fairtrade really important to me. If we were, ... fairly trading with each other, then we wouldn't need economic aid, because everybody would be able to support themselves. That's just the heritage we are living with and I don't ... think I can tackle global poverty and justice, all at the same time. (P-14)*

P-14 recognised that she can use her individual purchasing power positively by selecting Fairtrade produce. Thus, P-14 is supporting the Trade Not Aid stance, through empowering producers in developing countries to become self-sufficient (Jones and Williams, 2012; Action Aid, 2007). In contrast to the emancipation that she experiences when purchasing fashion, is not empowering. P-14 also alludes to the scale of the issues involved, concurrent with a number of participants, who felt that developed countries exploit developing countries for inexpensive commodities, however it was recognised that this was how global markets are structured. P-14 expressed reluctance in contributing to capitalistic societies (Devinney et al., 2007; Adams, 2002; Sayer, 2000; Singer, 1979) and global poverty (Dower, 1991), whereas Fairtrade offers an alternative equitable structure. Pereira Heath and Chatzidakis (2011) found their participants condoned the condemners by blaming market forces, akin to denial of responsibility. However, the participants demonstrate that offered the choice and sufficient information, most would opt for sustainably-produced fashion where it was viable. P-3 expressed, as did a number of participants, that because garment-worker exploitation occurs in developing countries, the problems are global rather than national and therefore:

*In terms of Fairtrade ... it is a way of kind of saying well I've done my bit. Developing countries are in a mess because of what the West does to them. I think that one way to do it is to actually set fair market prices for the produce. If you were concerned about environmental issues or about global poverty and development issues then, my personal view would be that the way to do that is through, political action. Because I am not sure that individual behaviour actually makes that much of a difference. Because there are not enough of you doing it. (P-3)*

P-3 feels that Fairtrade offers her the opportunity to address inequitable market structures, she feels empowered to address her concerns and make a positive contribution. However, P-3 also recognises that putting the onus on consumers to tackle issues of global poverty and exploitation is overwhelming and due to the small numbers of consumers expressing their concern, there has been little acknowledgement from the fashion industry. Consumers expressing feeling helplessness at the power of market structures was previously identified by Parsons et al. (2009). Therefore, to have a bigger impact and bring about change, political action and legislation is required to enforce sustainability, again supporting the need for a collective response (Friedman, 2010). This is similar to P-20s discourse around establishing market structures that protect consumers and producers in Chapter Five, where she likened the smoking ban to a more positive outcome for wider society. However, to introduce legislation, acknowledgement that garment-workers are exploited or experience injury would need to be addressed.

### **7.3.2: The denial of victims or injury**

Chapter Two posited that the physical and cultural distance reduced UK consumers ability to comprehend exploitation (Marx and Engels, 2012; Lyon, 2006; Sayer, 2000; Jones, 1991). It was viewed that the anonymity of the garment-workers would reduce concern for their working conditions and salaries (Singer, 1979). Similar to P-10, a small number of participants applied a cultural context to neutralise connotations that they inadvertently contributed to exploitative practice. (Jones, 1999). For example, P-11 expressed guilt at not considering what constituted the production of the fashion she purchased, yet: *'There's a bit of me that thinks, well, if I didn't buy it, it doesn't give people a job', a*

view expressed by participants in other studies (Devinney et al., 2007; Adams, 2002; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). This was also the view of P-8:

*What we regard as absolutely appalling conditions, some of them think as really quite good compared to other conditions. You can't just go in there with your Western ideas, there has got to be a process of them getting to that point. If we shut down a sweatshop, then that's 300 families without an incomes. [sharp intake of breath]. That's an ethical question in itself. (P-8)*

P-8 is referring to imposing Western regulations onto developing countries (Joergens, 2006; Carrigan et al., 2004; Emmelhainz and Adams, 1999) rather than developing countries evolving to embrace equitable legislation. She also refers to the cultural context, that what is deemed as unacceptable in the UK may acceptable in developing countries (Wong and Taylor, 2000). Further, she questions the morality of not providing workers in developing countries with employment, diminishing their opportunity to improve their economic prospects. This philosophy has been expressed a number of times throughout the thesis, illustrating that predominantly, the participants did not want to contribute to inequality, but equally were unable to determine the extent of their poverty and servitude. P-7 referred to garment-worker exploitation as modern 'slavery'. Similarly, P-6 expressed discomfort that she was benefiting from exploitative practice:

*This idea of child labour or ... a pittance for people that are making things. I wouldn't like to think that ... I'm getting clothes dirt cheap, because it's at the expense of ... other societies. That's probably more important than me than ... the organic thing. (P-6)*

P-6 expresses discomfort in evaluating the consequences of inexpensive fashion may include exploitation, establishing her desire to prioritise the garment-workers over concern for environmental degradation. It was noted in Chapter One that consumers indirectly benefit from inequitable garment-workers conditions through their ability to purchase inexpensive fashion (Memery et al., 2005; Dower, 1991). The evidence from the data illustrates that the participants were uncomfortable with assumptions that their fashion consumption was



facilitated through exploitative practice. However, the participants were uncertain as to what constituted exploitation (Jones, 1991), as inferred by P-8 above this may be contextualised culturally. P-27 describes exploitation as pertaining to a scale:

*I look at H&M and ... I know that you are not going to be using children in a factory somewhere because there would be some sort of huge scandal, like there was with Gap. But at the same time there is a tipping point. You don't have to be using ... eight year old children in a sweatshop. You can be asking woman ... to work fifteen hours a day. It's the same thing, only it's on a scale. (P-27)*

P-27 expresses that exploitation may not constitute child labour; it still may include adults working long days. Auger et al. (2003) identified that some consumers apply a hierarchy of concern, whereby child labour is of greater concern than adults receiving small salaries. It is also interesting to note that all the participants expressed a definite preference to purchase free-range chicken and eggs, preferences to avoid animal cruelty, as was found by Joergens (2006). The previous literature depicted consumers as more concerned for animal cruelty than garment-worker exploitation (Howard and Allan, 2006; Carrigan and Attalla, 2001). A number of participants noted that the visual imagery viewed in the Channel Four programme 'Hugh's Chicken Run'<sup>10</sup> was pivotal raising their consciousness of chicken cruelty and motivated their intentness to avoid consuming produce derived from caged chickens. The participants had developed a set of rules (Dower, 1999) to avoid contributing to the exploitation of chickens, motivated by visual imagery (Adams, 2002; Emmelhainz and Adams, 1999; Kahneman et al., 2000) of caged chickens. This does not transfer to garment-workers, who are primarily anonymous (Singer, 1979) or absent from consumers' consciousness (Giddens, 1991), although P-17 does note in a

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<sup>10</sup> The TV programme on Channel 4 (in the UK) followed Hugh Fearnley Whittingstall's 'Chicken Run' campaign (in 2008) to encourage consumers to prioritise consumption of free-range chicken and eggs, through displaying contrasting visual imagery of caged versus free-range chickens. The programme is considered as successful in motivating consumer demand for free-range options and has influenced policy to uphold a ban of barren battery cages (Chicken Out, ND). This influenced the retailers M&S and Sainsbury's to sell only free-range eggs and use free-range in pre-prepared foods (Moore et al., 2009; Sainsbury, 2009).

quote below (p 286) that if she could ‘*see the little kids face*’, she would be deterred from consumption derived from child labour (Lyon, 2006).

Tversky and Kahneman (1982a) and Nisbett et al. (1982a) postulate that an in-vivo experience is required to develop a personal connection, and this was evident in the narratives. Similarly, the participants were more motivated to avoid retailers alleged of child labour than allegations of adults working in inequitable conditions; predominantly the participants were looking for a vague assurance that their fashion consumption did not derive from inequitable working conditions. Similar to the research by Hustvedt and Bernard (2008), any information that offered an assurance was welcomed. Dickson and Littrell (1997) identified value in supporting garment-workers, expressed through a superior quality of production and also as increasing altruistic feelings (Smith, 1999). The ability to support workers in developing countries was of particular interest, perhaps as a direct contrast to their suspicions that fashion derived from exploitation. For example, P-3 previously expressed guilt at buying fashion for herself out of the family budget, however when evaluating the Global Girlfriend label stated: ‘*it sort of makes it slightly easier to think, I’m doing my bit for women in Nepal*’. Steenhaut and Van Kenhove postulated that guilt would increase intentions to avoid exploitative practice. Guilt was often expressed at the end of the interviews, an indication of the mismatch between moral sentiment and behaviours, as well as reflecting that within everyday experiences little thought is given to the sustainable implications of their fashion consumption. When offered the opportunity to contribute positively to garment-workers, the participants expressed increased involvement, as described by P-3. Similarly, P-4 expressed little motivation to purchase fashion for herself, yet when reading the Global Girlfriend label exclaimed:

*Oh this is exciting, isn’t it! [reading] Global Girlfriend. Women made, eco-friendly, Fairtrade. Yes, very good. [reading]. In style **and** human rights. [reading]. Woman and communities in need. Non-profit. Wow [reading]. That’s just too good to be true isn’t it? It’s organic, it’s cotton, it’s helped woman. Non-profit. You can’t miss a label like that. I would look at it, I*

*wouldn't read every word but I would pick out [certain words]. It would be a bit like buying organic food, I would feel good about my choice. (P-4)*

It can be seen that P-4 has reacted to the label as contributing positively to both environmental concerns and equitable production, providing an intrinsic spiritual and satisfying experience (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993). This is akin to the research by Niinimäki (2010), who postulated that the desire to do the right thing transposes all behaviours: the information on the Global Girlfriend provided sufficient information to enable the participants to understand what constitutes production. Consequently, labelling supports consumers to include sustainability within decision-making (Moisander et al., 2010; Aspers, 2008; Oates et al., 2008; do Paço and Raposo, 2010). One reason the participants had an increased affinity with the Global Girlfriend label was the information offered regarding the garment-workers, which described how the money they earned provided for their family (Jones and Williams, 2012).

Meyer (2001) relayed the significance of information which encourages social responsibility and this was evident through the participants' evaluation. Meyer (2001) used the example of Patagonia as building a brand that is fashionable, yet incorporates sustainability as fundamental to their business practice, ensuring '*brand assurance*' (Consumers International, 2007). This ethos is communicated through the catalogues and website; thus, the consumer feels informed and empowered, leading to '*personal satisfaction*' (Smith, 1999: 154). P-20 described an increased confidence on reading why the sustainable retailer Howies selected or rejected producers and offered information as to why production was sustainable, enabling P-20 to assume responsibility for production (Singer, 1979). Similarly, P-9 and P-26 purchased gifts from UNICEF at Christmas time and expressed this heightened their understanding of positive contribution through consumption. This transparent information raises awareness for the issues and also develops trust between the retailer and consumer. This assertion is supported through P-12s narrative, stimulated through reading the Global Girlfriend label, she describes a dress her daughter received as a gift:

*[It had] similar wording about the dye and everything, but it also had a picture of two African women [who] made this dress. The money that they get for this dress goes towards feeding their families and ... helping them be educated. We looked at the label together ... and she was like, oh that's nice. (P-12)*

P-12 described the impact of knowing her daughter's African dress included an aspect of Fairtrade continued to be an additional factor that brought pleasure to both herself and her daughter. They discussed the ladies involved in a manner similar to story-telling. She came back to this story later in the interview when describing her daughter's preference for clothes and explains: '*she really does love that wee dress that came from Africa*' and it is clear that the label has told a story which has created a connection between the child and the dress. The information about production and the people associated increased their feelings of involvement with the garment (Jones and Williams, 2012), similar to the application of '*Romantic Ethics*' (Storey, 1999) due to transferring artisan attributes of production. Further, accessing information about the workers involved within production reduces the distance between production and consumption.

Marx and Engels (2012) initially introduce the distance between production and consumption as diluting understanding of what consumption entails; postmodern commodities are evaluated through utilitarian or aesthetic value transmitted through marketing (Hudson and Hudson, 2003; Belk et al., 2000). In contrast, what P-12 and P-20 experience through connecting with the producers is altruism and spirituality (Holbrook 1999), similar to the option to purchase Fairtrade products; information about the producers enabled an understanding of what consumption contributes to. However, the distance between production and consumption, including the ambiguity of garment-workers' conditions, enabled the participants to focus upon a one-dimensional view of immediate familial concerns (Carey et al., 2008). Further, as identified in previous research, wanting to avoid garment-worker exploitation did not manifest in selecting fashions from sustainable retailers (Bray et al, 2011; Szmigin et al., 2007; Dickson, 2000).

### 7.3.3: Appealing to a higher loyalty

Appeal to a higher loyalty was expressed by P-10 as prioritising managing the family budget, both provisioning for her children (Parsons et al., 2009; Carey et al., 2008) and purchasing fashionable garments. From this, it can be deduced that P-10 is focusing upon the immediate concerns within her lifeworld, encompassing self and her daughters emerging sense of self (Pole et al., 2006; Main and Pople, 2011). Other participants expressed reluctance to compromise their identity for sustainability in Chapter 6 where they postulated that sustainably-produced fashion did not follow fashion trends. Further, throughout the last three chapters exploring the data, price has been a dominant concern for the participants, restricting not only their overall consumption, but their perception that they can afford sustainably-produced fashion. As illustrated in Table 7.2, although P-22 had purchased inexpensive fashion that she suspected had derived from exploitative practice, she resonated this was motivated by finances, which was also expressed by other participants. For example, P-13 explains that she does consider garment-worker exploitation, *'but ... it's needs must. If you are buying clothes for children and you have got to watch your money then ... price is very important'*. Similarly, P-14 asserts:

*We do our weekly shop in Asda: my mother is horrified, because it is Walmart's and they don't allow unions and all sorts of nonsense, which I totally politically agree with. But actually it has shaved thirty quid of my Sainsbury's shopping bill, [laughing] on a weekly basis! When you are on maternity leave and your pay has run out, then that kind of stuff matters. (P-14)*

P-14 expresses that within her own existential lifeworld, the ability to make potential savings on her shopping is appreciated. This was more important as her income had reduced whilst on maternity leave. Thus, familial provisioning is prioritised over a misalignment with moral sentiment, as financial management has a greater impact on her family. In contrast, political concerns are more abstract and distant to her immediate concerns. Further, prioritising the familial finances upon her children reduces to potential to experience guilt through an

inability to sufficiently feed and clothe the children (Dahl et al., 2003). P-27 makes a similar appeal:

*I do have ... reservations about some of the clothing that I buy. For example, I know that the Tu range at Sainsburys, cannot be as cheap as it is without ... reason for it being that cheap. I avoid buying from there except very, very occasionally. They do extremely good winceyette, warm pyjamas, for kids and we live in a very cold house and their pyjamas are priced at £10.00 a pair as opposed to ... £25.00, which just for me is not a justifiable spend, for a six year old. (P-27)*

Similar to P-10, P-27 is applying a number of factors as defence for purchasing pyjamas from the supermarket, albeit at the core is familial provisioning and an appeal to a higher loyalty. She acknowledges the allegations that inexpensive fashion is facilitated by exploitation, however compares pricing from other retailers, whereby the supermarket is used as a benchmark. Thus, the increased price cannot be justified, particularly as she expresses that her house is cold and she needs these winceyette pyjamas to keep her children warm. She also mentions her child is aged six, therefore recognising that the pyjamas have a limited lifespan and will need to be replaced: she does not want to invest more money than required for garments with limited longevity (Orbach and Macleod, 2008). Moreover, she also expresses, as did P-10, that this is not habitual behaviour, purchasing fashion from the supermarket is infrequent and only occurs when necessary. However, the participants did not only use their family as an appeal to a higher loyalty, their consumer-selves were also prioritised. P-17 explains how she can become distracted when shopping for fashion, due to the retail setting:

*When I do find myself in that scenario and I do feel drawn into things. There's definitely a bit of an internal shuffle about thinking through the ethical ... chain to which ... those clothes end up on a shelf. I would also say that there's maybe a not very nice part of me which I let override the nice part of me sometimes. If something's affordable and it's cheap and it's [adopts an accent] and it's really nice [normal voice] then sometimes I will buy it. In some shops on the way in ... I'm aware ... that I have read things or heard things about this shop ... which have exposed, bad ethical practices. I'm still walking in through this door because I know it's cheap and because [adopts an accent] the display is pretty [normal accent] and ...*

*I just want to see what they have got. That is a little trick in my own head, of ... getting myself through the door. It's so messed up [laughing], I know how to play tricks on myself to do the self-gratification thing! But I also know in the back of my head that it probably wasn't made in the right way. If I went back ... to the start of that process ... if I could see the little kids face ... I would never buy it. (P-16)*

P-17 demonstrates the powerful emotion of desire described by Belk et al. (2000) in Chapter Three. The retail environment has drawn P-17 into the moment and the clothes are judged on appearance rather than production. Although she considers sustainability prior to shopping and in the main purchased second-hand clothing for herself, sometimes when shopping with her daughter she was carried away within the shopping environment and applied a 'wilful ignorance' (Ehrich and Irwin, 2005: 275) to the production process. Within her monologue, she begins to adopt an accent and describes the displays and the lights in a theatrical manner. She has found herself drawn into the store, and through the description, it is a dreamlike experience, particularly as self-delusion is employed in entering the store only to browse, despite awareness her behaviour is inconsistent with her moral framework. She adopts a new persona, one which contrasts with her moral alignment and describes a 'trick in my own head'. Because the price is affordable, she convinces herself to make a purchase, however she recognises that she is compromising her moral integrity. P-17 believes she has reached a stage where she shuts down emotionally; desire has obscured her judgement and this enables her to make a purchase which does not align with her moral value. This was also described by P-14 in the above quote that her shopping in Asda is incongruent with her moral sentiment. P-14 expands upon this when evaluating the EJF label describing child labour:

*Child labour ... is something I feel, strongly about. But ... at the moment ... there's quite a lot that I don't think properly now that I have children of my own, because I can't actually bear to think about it. I have kind of shut down that bit of my brain, just because I can't engage with it emotionally. Whereas I have engaged with it emotionally in the past, ... I think that is affecting my behaviour probably. That [is] probably the reason that I can buy vests, three for £2.00 in Asda, is because somewhere down the line, even if it's not children, somebody's been exploited to get that cheapness, available to me. But it's still not an overriding factor over convenience*

*which is horrible. I kind of get a glimpse of what might be happening, ... if it is something that is actually distressing then I switch off, like [I] don't actively switch off the radio, but kind of, my head does something. It's depressing me having this conversation, how much these things matter to me, in theory, and get still don't translate into the way I behave. (P-14)*

A number of participants describe similar feelings of discomfort during the interview, almost as though during their everyday experiences they do not address the issues, but 'switch off' (P-14), 'emotionally shut down' (P-17) or allow other factors to 'override' (P-17) their morals. Such a response reflects experiencing negative emotions (Soscia, 2007) and moral dilemmas (Bezençon and Blili, 2008), which was particularly poignant during evaluating the EJF label, where connotations of child labour were addressed. For example, P-6 stated that: '*Part of me wants to avoid looking at it*' because she knew that she would have to address the issues of concern and potentially change her consumption behaviours. P-11 often found herself avoiding information she found upsetting, further evidence of applying a '*wilful ignorance*' (Ehrich and Irwin 2005: 275) to cope with the wider implications:

*I don't watch or listen to news ... or read the newspapers much because they are all negative. I feel guilty about that. I know I should be more up to date. I even turned on the radio in the car yesterday and .. a baby had been abandoned. Everything's horrible. (P-11)*

P-11 refers to '*everything being horrible*' and '*negative*', feelings that contrast with marketing to encourage consumption, particularly fashion marketing which focuses on the consumer-self, indulgence and frivolity. In particular, P-11 refers to a baby being abandoned and struggling to cope with the implication of rejecting a vulnerable child. This was similar when some participants evaluated the implications of child labour. For example P-7 when reading the EJF label: '*it talks about, [] themes of childhood, lost innocence and hope*', she becomes emotionally involved with the implications (Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Giddens (1991: 51) professes Husserl's assertion that empathy is intensified from a personal perspective, through transferring '*empathetic inference*'. Other participants also felt that the label encouraged a comparison with their own children and those involved in fashion production.



*The thought of kids that are maybe his age, in some sweatshop. I don't know what age they are, but it's still children, so you hear ... working for pennies, assembling garments. It was a horrible thought before I had [my son], but [] it does bring it home more. (P-26)*

*I would have been against child labour before, politically. I might have felt less emotional about it before I was a mum. Since having [my daughter], I find it very difficult to hear stories about cruelty ... and exploitation of children. They actually make me cry now, whereas before ... I had a political stance, but I didn't particularly [have] a heightened emotional response. (P-23)*

The participants express particular concern for child labour, whereby increased empathy is a reflection of the disparity between their children's lifeworld and that of children within fashion production (Bachman, 2000), resulting in an intensified emotional response. Evidently, motherhood had increased the subjectivity of implications of child labour, resulting in an intentness to avoid retailers alleged of child labour (Mohr et al., 2001), as explored in Section 7.1. This was anticipated and is indicative of a contradictory rationale, as identified by Carey et al. (2008) where the participants react solely to retailers alleged of NGOs, yet some continued to purchase inexpensive fashion from supermarkets. This reaction is explained by P-11:

*Companies ... that I know have been in the news for being unethical, then surely if they were continuing to be very unethical well, there would be more in the news about it. So that again sets my mind at rest a bit. (P-11)*

Thus, allegations are both transitory and subject to a 'wilful ignorance' (Ehrich and Irwin 2005: 275), whereby 'needs must' (P-13) and familial provisioning takes precedence. Giddens (1991: 37) suggests this is because the mothering role constitutively focuses consciousness on the 'day-to-day' experience as a coping mechanism. Without specific information and transparency within supply chains, consumers will continue to dilute the implications of their consumption and prioritise their lifeworld concerns.

## 7.4: Conclusion

In Chapter Two, it was noted that little was known about consumers understanding of sustainable concepts within the context of fashion. It seems pertinent that prior to encouraging consumers to engage with sustainable fashion consumption, understanding how sustainable concepts are interpreted is an important first step. It was a specific objective of this research to investigate sustainable concepts in relation to fashion consumption, an important aspect which has been absent from previous sustainable and ethical fashion research. The fundamental issue is that there is a distinct lack of understanding what the issues of concern are regarding the sustainability of fashion production (Bray et al., 2011; McDonald et al., 2009; Yates, 2008; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Consequently, when the participants evaluated sustainable concepts they reverted back to concepts which enabled perceptions of empowerment and certainty: such as Fairtrade and as depicted in Chapter Six, reduce, reuse and recycle. However, some sustainable concepts did not transfer, where lack of knowledge coupled with increased pricing encouraged scepticism that moral values were exploited to increase profits. Without information to guide sustainability, the participants utilised heuristics, such as brand names to predict outcomes, incorporating service attributes and quality as indicative of an ethos of equitable operations. Further, allegations were incorporated into decision-making, evidence that exploitation was considered as morally condemnable.

The narratives illustrate that contextualising sustainability within the context of fashion is required in order to motivate the desire to adopt sustainability. Lack of understanding why fashion production compromises sustainability does not enable consumers to adopt sustainable fashion consumption, thus contributing to the attitude-behaviour gap. This is a reflection that the participants were not primed to include ethical concerns in relation to fashion consumption; there are no stimuli in the retail setting to prompt acknowledgment of ethical issues. It is through availability in retailers, coupled with sufficient information to stimulate

interest, that alerts consumers to sustainable issues and motivates participation in sustainability. Thus, sustainable properties begin to become embedded into everyday behaviours and can be perceived as adding value or reducing connotations that production is harmful. Further, when presented with the relevant information, consumers will not need to rely upon heuristics as guidance (DelViccho, 2001).

This and the preceding chapter have presented the themes which were developed from an in-depth analysis of two participants. The next chapter will bring the thesis to a close through explicitly drawing attention to the contributions to knowledge in the research field and how the data has answered the research aim and objectives.

# Chapter Eight: Conclusion

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## 8.1: Introduction to the conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis and establishes the contributions to knowledge which were developed from the thesis. The chapter is structured into four sections: the first section establishes the contributions to the research field, framed within the objectives of the research; the second conceptualises the participants experience of adopting sustainable fashion behaviours; the third considers the implications for fashion practitioners; and the last section offers suggestions for future research before the concluding comments bring the thesis to a close.

## 8.2: Responding to the research question

This research sought to contribute to deepening understanding of consumers' perceptions of sustainability within the context of fashion consumption. Locating sustainable fashion within everyday lifeworlds was a response to the call to explore actual sustainable behaviours rather than attitudes and intentions (McEachern and Carrigan, 2012). The research explored consumer narratives through three consumer behavioural lenses: negotiating value; evaluating information; and managing allegations of garment-worker exploitation. The overall aim was to **investigate the lived experience of mothers working in a professional occupation when selecting fashion for themselves and their children and determine if sustainability contributes to perceptions of value**. The sample of mothers who work in a professional occupation were selected due to previous literature identifying women as more interested in fashion as well as sustainability. Thus, it was postulated that the sample would purchase fashion more frequently and adopt sustainable behaviours, such as recycling and purchasing sustainably-produced goods. Further, the literature depicted mothers as more engaged with purchasing

organic food and cotton. Consequently, it was thought that as this cohort were already engaged with sustainability in other contexts, they would be more likely to consider sustainability in the context of fashion consumption. The following objectives were developed to satisfy the aim:

1. To explore the experience of fashion within the everyday constructs of the participants lifeworld
2. To consider perceptions of sustainability and how this manifests within everyday experiences
3. To explore the evaluation of fashion selection through the lens of consumer value
4. To understand the role of marketing intermediaries in influencing sustainable behavioural choice
5. To identify how current behaviours contribute to a misalignment with moral orientation and how participants manage a reconciliation

The data was presented over three chapters: Chapter Five explored two selected case study participants to gain a deeper understanding of their lifeworlds; Chapter Six explored how sustainability relates to perceptions of value, from a lifeworld perspective and in relation to the reflexivity of self; Chapter Seven explored how sustainability was understood and interpreted in relation to fashion consumption, including how the participants coped with behaviours that misaligned with their moral sentiment. The salient implications from these chapters will now be considered in relation to each of the research objectives and the literature to establish the thesis contributions to the research field.

### **8.2.1: Experiencing fashion within the everyday lifeworlds**

The first research objective sought to explore how the participants experienced fashion within their everyday lifeworlds, to '*clarify the conditions in which understanding takes place*' (Gadamer, 1975, cited in Schwandt, 2003: 304). This includes two areas of research which have received limited academic attention: fashion consumption from the perspective of working mothers; and, selecting fashion for their children. The benefit of the phenomenological approach underpinning this research was the opportunity to apply a specifically focused

lens to the data. Thus, the data is framed within the everyday experience of working mothers, which in itself is a contribution to knowledge. Further, the research uncovered an under-explored phenomenon: post-pregnancy transition emerging from being imbued in motherhood to renegotiating self within external lifeworlds.

The research identified that motherhood had altered fashion experiences. The participants approach to fashion had evolved, primarily as their notions of self-identity changed; this was a combination of adapting to the role of motherhood along with physical changes. Consistent with the fashion consumption literature, the participants sought fashion to express notions of self and identity. Fashion depicting their sense of self remained important, not only to present themselves socially as active agents, but for their own sense of self-worth.

Previous research exploring the evolution of self through pregnancy found that the participants experienced a shift in their focus from external worlds to internal, that of the family. Smith (2007) and Bailey (1999) explored women's transition through pregnancy and the initial months after the birth; they found that the experience altered perceptions of self. This research extends this theory as indicating that nuances of self-identity are ongoing after childbirth and throughout the child's development. As the child matured, their needs changed: the child moved from being vulnerable and physically dependent to negotiating their own sense of self within a socially constructed world and experiencing socialisation. Simultaneously, the participants were beginning to turn their focus to external worlds and their notions of self-identity were constantly evolving, not only to reflect fashion trends, but also as their lifeworld evolved: the mothering role was less demanding and they adopted an individualistic approach to participating in activities external to the family.

The participants did not seek evolving fashion trends, fashion was reactively used to locate themselves in society and mainly they wanted key fashion garments to indicate their participation in the external world. The premise of fashion as self-indulgent and frivolous contrasted with their everyday lifeworld.

Consequently, opportunities for egocentricity became infrequent, resulting in their preference for an augmented experience which offered an opportunity to escape from the mundanity of their everyday lifeworld; this has not been identified in previous research. As primarily their lifeworlds centred on the family, fashion consumption provided an opportunity to focus on themselves and was used to bolster their esteem. Maintaining fashion trends was, for some of the participants, representative of their continuation to care for their appearance expanding upon knowledge identified within fashion consumption research. Fashion supported nuances of self, infused with individual style, and the participants were reluctant to further modify their sense of self after experiencing change induced through pregnancy and reduced opportunities for participation in the external world.

Because much of their time included childcare, opportunities to play with fashion were less relevant; childcare required clothing that was suitable for child centred activities. Within this, it was perceived important not to lose themselves within the drudgery of their lifeworlds. External activities provided opportunities for fashion consumption and more care for their appearance; however, time and finances had reduced, resulting in the participants negotiating personal constructs when evaluating fashion consumption. Further, for some of the participants, fashion consumption was less satisfying as pregnancy had altered their body-shape and reduced their confidence. Negative feelings about their body ensured that fashion consumption was counterproductive, as fashion no longer contributed to feeling of self-esteem and was subsequently rejected.

Consequently, the research contributes to the field of fashion consumption for consumers who are reluctantly referred to as older consumers, another research field under-researched (Naderi, 2011). The research identifies that reduced involvement in fashion consumption does not equate to reduced involvement in fashion as expressing identity, rather it is reflective of reduced opportunities for fashion consumption and experimenting with semblance.

Further, it illustrates that other factors are evaluated within fashion consumption, such as expressing identity and orientation; extending Lin and Xia (2012) view that chronological age is as important for fashion consumption behaviours as actual age: this research postulates that fashion involvement is not age specific, rather fashion orientation is motivated by participating more frequently in social activities.

Understanding the self-importance of fashion for identity formation transferred to understanding that their children were also active agents in the external world. The research contributes through recognition that autonomy and socialisation was important for the children's development, therefore the children's fashion preferences were included when selecting new garments. The participants with older children expressed pleasure as their children began to experiment with fashion. This created opportunities for the participants to furnish closer relationships with their children through a shared experience of fashion consumption. Although the participants guided their children, often stipulating occasions where there was little choice such as wearing a school uniform, it was accepted that the children wanted to align with their peers. Thus, the participants expressed a reluctance to manipulate the children's fashion selection amid fears this would lead to their children feeling ostracised from their peers.

As fashion was used to portray their sense of self, and was subject to a number of restrictions post-motherhood, such as reduced time to shop for fashion, reduced finances which induced guilt when spending the familial budget on themselves and changes in body-shape, the participants were reluctant to make a further sacrifice to include sustainable production. Concurrent with the literature (for instance: Bray et al., 2011; Hiller Connell, 2010; Valor, 2007; Joergens, 2006) sustainable fashion was not perceived as fashionable, appropriate for work or aligning with their sense of self; consequently, it was not sought. Similar to their personally constructed approach in selecting supermarkets, such as location, price and choice, the participants selected a



fashion retailer based upon an alignment of style, anticipated pricing and knowing that the fashion would fit their body-shape. However, within mainstream supermarkets the participants identified sustainable options which were selected depending on the choice and their budget at the time. This option was not available for fashion and the participants believed that they would need to seek fashion produced sustainably, potentially from the internet.

The diversity of personal constructs of style supports the assertion made in Chapter One that mainstream adoption of sustainably-produced fashion is required to satisfy the multitude of styles required within the consumer market. Shaw and Tomolillo (2004) and Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al. (2006) believe that MNO's have the potential to introduce sustainable concepts, such as Fairtrade and organic, to fashion supply chains. This is not only supported within this thesis, but viewed as the most likely means to reduce the vast detrimental consequences of fashion production on both the environment and workers involved in production. Although demographically the participants were similar, their style preferences differed. This is reflected in the preferences of different fashion retailers patronised by the participants. Thus, there is no typical consumer seeking sustainable fashion and sustainable fashion is required to appeal to a cross section of styles, sizes and shapes, as well as suitable for a multitude of occasions, such as work and social activities.

Further, the participants preferred the convenience of shopping on the high street, often combining fashion consumption with food, particularly for their children's clothing. Selecting from independent retailers or via the internet was viewed as less convenient, especially when sizing was inconsistent and clothing may need to be returned. Furthermore, the participants sought low pricing for the children's fashion and MNOs are better placed to offer competitive pricing through economies of scale (Allwood et al., 2006; Bhate, 2006). Moreover, the research advances previous understanding of consumers' perceptions of sustainably-produced fashion as it captures perceptions of the inception of sustainable fashion within mainstream market contexts, reconceptualising the

participants consciousness for fashion sustainability. Fashion retailers who acknowledge these concerns and make the effort to adopt sustainability at the core of their business practice have the opportunity to position their business as a market leader (Goworek, 2011; do Paço and Raposo, 2010; CSF, 2009; Prothero and Fitchett, 2000).

### **8.2.2: The role of sustainability in everyday lifeworlds**

The thesis proposed in Chapter One that the mainstreaming of sustainably-produced food, and increasingly other products, such as household cleaning products, and toiletries (Szmigin et al., 2007; Cherrier, 2007; Cowe and Williams, 2001) had whetted consumers interest and awareness for sustainability (Jägel et al., 2012). This research illustrates that sustainability is increasingly prevalent in the context of the mass-market (Ozcaglar-Toulouse et al., 2006), exemplifying a change in consumers' values (Shaw and Riach, 2011), whereby it is not only actively ethical consumers who are intent on adopting sustainability: the participants selected sustainable products when available, affordable and aligning with their lifeworld values. Further, Chapter One also established that the research sought to understand why consumers make decisions to adopt sustainability in some contexts, but not others.

In response to the second objective, the participants' illustrate that consumer consciousness for sustainability is evolving to include fashion behaviours; subconsciously transferring sustainable concepts which protect the environment from other contexts, despite the fashion industry's lack of recognition for the environmental consequences. This was more prominent in post-consumption behaviours than actual consumption, and this research postulates the reasons are threefold: the participants' lacked knowledge of how fashion comprises sustainability (Hiller Connell, 2010; Morgan and Birtwistle, 2009; Fisher et al., 2008; Hustvedt et al., 2008; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007); the fashion industry has not acknowledged sustainability (CSF, 2009); and finally, it was post-consumption where the participants expressed confidence in applying

known sustainable behaviours. It is this third point that makes a further contribution to the research filed.

Confidence in transferring sustainable behaviours was evident in the participants' narratives, whereby sustainable concepts of minimising landfill, making the most of resources, reuse and recycling had transferred to post-consumption fashion behaviours. Consequently, sustainability is better understood in terms of protecting the environment than equality of all human-beings, as was postulated in Chapter One. This was evident in the participants' engagement with reducing plastic bag consumption, illustrating the '*social phenomenon*' (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009: 292) of evolving behaviours which are indicative of social change (Rogers, 2003) amid concern for sustainability. The thesis contributes to understanding consumer behaviour by establishing that as sustainability becomes entwined within consumption contexts, subconsciously sustainable behaviours simultaneously transfer and extend.

In Chapter One, it was noted that Downing et al. (2004) recognise that sustainable post-consumption behaviours are more prevalent than sustainable consumption. The thesis postulated that this may signify the potentiality of expanding sustainability to the context of fashion, including consumption behaviours; however, the data analysis found little guidance for fashion sustainability. Thus, there was confusion over sustainable concepts and behaviours. For example, textile recycling is lesser known; only one participant benefited from textile door-step collections and there was uncertainty whether footwear could be recycled. Nevertheless, the practical transferral of recycling clothing suitable for re-wear to either networks or charity shops and some participants were aware that charity shops accepted '*rags*'; similarly, worn clothing was often used by the participants for cleaning. Thus, the research contributes to understanding why post-consumption sustainable behaviours are more commonly adopted by consumers.

Confidence for adopting post-consumption sustainability is an important contribution and can be illustrated by feelings of empowerment: the

participants could evaluate post-consumption behaviours, incorporating what is known about sustainability; in contrast, the market structures imposed by the fashion industry contrasts with sustainability, where planned obsolescence is encouraged and socially acceptable. This is most likely the reason that the participants focus primarily upon post-consumption behaviours, as currently mainstream fashion retailers do not address or assume responsibility for sustainability. Adopting a sustainable stance was to counteract social structures, as depicted in the narratives; this contributed to the participants perceiving that their consumption behaviours were less detrimental, as they used social norms as a point of reference. It has not been previously acknowledged in the sustainable literature that consumers judge the sustainability of their behaviours against other consumers. The participants' repudiation of planned obsolescence and their intentness to reuse and recycle translates as the sustainable mantra of reduce, reuse and recycle; thus, illustrating both the potential to extend sustainability into other consumption contexts and the participants' desire to minimise the detrimental consequences of their behaviours. This is an important factor, as postulated in Chapter One, sustainable themes and concepts require the empowerment of all agents to be successfully executed.

The research uncovered that for most of the participants, sustainability was adopted as an everyday behaviour and applied to a number of contexts; whether this was a response to motherhood is debatable, as only a few participants acknowledged that having children had changed their approach (most notably, P-20). It is most likely that the integration of sustainability into everyday lifeworlds was a response to marketing intermediaries and evolving social norms. Nevertheless, motherhood had inspired changes in relation to sustainability, including both opportunities and limitations. For example, mothering networks established post-pregnancy were influential for the participants in terms of mutual support, advice and information. The importance of close networks was also something identified by Smith (2007), however this research extends knowledge of Smith's (2007) work to recognise

the inclusion of influencing sustainability within these networks, such as the purchasing of organic food, social boycotts of unethical organisations and the passing of used garments. Further, the role of educating the children in sustainability was not identified in the literature review, yet was an important aspect for the participants. Although the participants did not want to push their moral sentiment onto their children, they took pride in explaining how their children informed them of sustainable behaviours, such as recycling and Fairtrade products. This was viewed as developing their awareness for the wider world, through extending notions of citizenship to consider the global consequences, an aspect not previously identified within the literature.

The research also indicates that concern for the environment and societal well-being are interchangeable, contrasting with the position of Wells et al. (2011) who postulate that consumers are either concerned by the environment or political activism. The participants illustrate concern for the environment, encapsulated within sustainable behaviours, such as used clothing networks, recycling, and avoiding plastic bags. Notions for sustainability are encouraged by campaigns to highlight the consequences of continued reliance on scarce resources and the potential for reuse and recycling, evolving to become social norms. Concern for societal well-being was evident through the majority of the participants selection of Fairtrade food, motivated through a preference to ensure equitable production. Moreover, concern for garment-worker exploitation was evident in the favourable response from the participants' review of the Global Girlfriend label. The participants '*conscious and deliberate*' (Crane and Matten, 2003) selection of sustainably produced food (organic and Fairtrade) illustrates that everyday cultural practices are evolving to include sustainability through shared meanings (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006), expanding previous knowledge of ethical consumption. Although a few participants expressed more concern for one or the other, this was not typical and a result of personal constructs.

However, one feature identified within the data was uncertainty over whether recycling contributed to sustainability; some of the participants expressed that as recycling was an additional process, it was therefore unsustainable. Similarly, Hiller Connell (2010) and Hudsvedt and Bernard (2008) identified that cotton was perceived as sustainable as it grows naturally. However, consumers are unaware of the consequences on the environment and the cotton farmers of using pesticides. Such expert knowledge is obscured for ordinary consumers who cannot obtain the relevant information to evaluate the overall impact (Giddens, 1991). This is an example of the sort of information consumers require to fully inform their decision-making and offer guidance as to why their consumption either supports or harms the environment.

A final point of interest includes the participants' affinity with recycling. There is the potential to further capitalise upon this recycling behaviour, both through encouraging consumers to recycle all garments and also to manufacture fashion made from recycled fibres (Fisher et al., 2008). The participants expressed admiration for the PET fleece, due to re-diverting waste from landfill into something useful. If anything, it was the description of polyester that was viewed as disconcerting for the participants. This has the potential to expand upon the recycling of textiles, which is currently lagging behind the recycling of other materials (DEFRA, 2009b), particularly as it was noted that the quality of recycled goods was improving.

Encouraging consumers to recycle garments validates behaviours concurrent with their current awareness and understanding. This could extend to downcycling damaged or worn garments. However, the participants were unaware of the M&S campaign with Oxfam (which consumers can exchange M&S clothing with Oxfam for a £5.00 voucher; Cochrane, 2013); therefore, fashion retailers will have to employ a creative campaign to raise consumer awareness. This could include an in-store exchange, perhaps through rewarding consumers with points, similar to the green points available in supermarkets for taking a bag when shopping (Yates, 2009), to offer a financial incentive for

recycling waste. Moreover, retailers assuming responsibility for the garments they produce links with the Closed-Loop Business Model (de Brito et al., 2008; Allwood et al., 2006).

### **8.2.3: The interplay of values in fashion consumption decision-making**

Objective three sought to explore what values were considered when purchasing fashion. One of the contributions identified in analysing values in relation to sustainable fashion consumption was the location of value in sustainable production. This was especially evident when describing preferential values within gift-giving, due to the symbolic transferral of the increased value implicated within equitable production. The importance of sustainability when selecting gifts constitutes a further contribution to knowledge. Symbolic value was particularly notable in seeking gifts for babies and children; the omission of pesticides was an attractive prospect, not only as it was perceived to contain additional tactile qualities, also because sustainable properties were considered as pure and virtuous. Further, sustainable products were often found in charity outlets, so consumption contained additional value of making a charitable donation. Furthermore, the novelty of sustainable products being transferred from waste was perceived as novel and innovative, contrasting with the homogeneity of mass-production. As sustainable products are less prevalent on the high street, sourcing gifts was less convenient, requiring greater involvement; this also transfers sentiment through illustrating the investment in sourcing a suitable gift. However, perceptions of increased pricing led to sustainable production as being less relevant for everyday consumption, due to value placement.

The research set out to explore what constitutes fashion consumption value, within everyday lived experiences and as reflected in the current consumer market-place. Throughout Chapters Five, Six and Seven, the participants deliberated values which were interrelated, interchangeable and dependent on the particular situation; this often led to personal moral dilemmas (Bezençon and Blili, 2010; Dolan, 2002) and tensions, as satisfying one value often meant

the exclusion of another. This was evident in Chapter Six, whereby the most important value of aesthetics was established as initially attracting the participants to fashion. Coupled with perceptions that sustainable fashion was neither fashionable, available of the high street and would be more expensive, led the participants to an acceptance that ethical value was absent from fashion consumption decision-making.

Value was deliberated from a lifeworld perspective and primarily perceived through a purposive lens, depending upon what the garment was for and how long it would be required. This expands upon Fisher et al.'s (2008) finding that value is reflective of price and paying more results in efforts to maximise the lifespan; value and anticipated lifespan were evaluated prior to consumption. As fashion consumption needs were individually assessed and dependant on the situation, different values were prioritised. This explains the contrasting values applied to their own fashion consumption and that of their children. To summarise: for the children's fashion, efficiency was prioritised and manifested in a utilitarian approach, along with a reduced capacity for excellence; as they purchased fashion for themselves infrequently, aesthetics and excellence were sought, coupled with fashion inspiring feelings of esteem and spirituality preferentially within a hedonistic experience. Throughout the narratives, ethical value was disregarded; this was appropriated to low consumer consciousness for sustainability in the context of fashion consumption.

Recognition of a trade-off was reduced as primarily the participants perceived a distance from ethical issues embedded within a myriad of perceptions, such as fashion consumption occurring infrequently and selecting fashion from established UK retailers with higher price points (for themselves). Immediacy in decision-making was sought, hence the focus on the most pressing lifeworld concerns. This resulted in evaluating products at the time of purchase, as was evident in selecting Fairtrade produce due to familiarity of interpreting the logo as depicting equitable production. Further, satisfying immediate consumption concerns ensured the participants did not dwell upon reviewing consumption



that may contain negative connotations, as they focused back to the salience of their familial responsibilities.

Similar to Jägel et al.'s (2012) application of Means End Theory to fashion consumption, the participants were unable to reach valued states of being through their fashion consumption. The participants had little option to adopt anything other than flexibility, due to lifeworld restrictions and established market structures. Ethical value was suspended as the participants adopted a flexible approach to manage their current lifeworld (Parsons et al., 2009; Szmigin et al., 2009). Furthermore, the participants assumed that the compromise was transitory, recognising that the children's needs would evolve and that their hectic lifeworlds would subside as the children become increasingly independent. However, it was post-consumption that the participants felt able to balance their behaviours with ethical value. For example, the mothering networks which passed used-clothing contributed to a number of values, as did recycling and taking a bag shopping.

The research aim was to determine whether sustainability contributed to perceptions of value and this was evident in Chapter Six. Appendix 16 presents a table illustrating how passing children's clothing in mothering networks and reusing plastic bags satisfies all of the values. In contrast, the participants were aware of the conflict between lifeworld values and moral value when purchasing clothing from supermarkets, despite responding to efficiency (time was scarce within their hectic lifeworlds) and excellence (the familial income had to cover all the households needs). This resulted in an appeal to a higher loyalty: that of familial provisioning. A unique contribution from analysing the value typology is the inclusion of lower value placement for children's clothing. This enabled the participants a certain freedom to allow their children to play without concern for damaging clothing, illustrating the salient concerns which featured prominently in their everyday experience. When the participants negotiated values within their personal constructs, this included valuing childhood free from responsibility for sustainability. Although reduced value,

involvement and longevity contrast with sustainability, in recognising where value for this cohort is located is the first step in defining the social problem prior to identifying an effective solution (Rogers, 2003). There is the potential for expanding used-clothing within formal and informal markets, along with further experimentation with sustainable fibres, such as reclaimed fibres or bamboo.

The value of enabling the children to be carefree is an important contribution from the research and it should be recognised that this contribution is perceived as relevant to the cohort and influenced by their individual lifeworlds. It was unexpected that the participants would include allowing the children freedom from responsibility and enabling their socialisation over concerns for sustainability. This could be reflection that previous research has not explored familial lifeworlds through the lens of sustainable fashion consumption, focusing on younger consumers more concerned with fashion consumption (for example, Joergens, 2006) or committed ethical consumers (such as, Shaw et al., 2006, 2007; Shaw, Newholm and Dickson, 2006). Although the research is similar from that familial perspective of Carey et al. (2008) which depicted familial concerns as impeding upon sustainable consumption, this did not include the specific focus on fashion consumption.

Placing value on the children's childhood, although perhaps obvious, is a distinctive characteristic of a mother and has not previously been identified as a barrier to sustainable fashion consumption. Further, this does not imply that sustainability cannot be encouraged within this cohort, particularly when fashion can be recycled (passing hand-me-downs and downcycling) and the participants also expressed value in encouraging the children to develop moral values, including their socialisation of recycling and concern for equitable trade, as described in their knowledge of Fairtrade production. Nevertheless, it was apparent that to manage the associative guilt of their consumption which contrasted with their moral value, the participants applied heuristics or neutralisation techniques.

#### 8.2.4: The role of marketing intermediaries as influencing sustainability

Objective four sought to understand the extent that marketing intermediaries have influenced consumers' involvement in sustainability. As was postulated in Chapter One, sustainability is now established within the food sector, with some supermarkets adopting '*choice editing*' (Goworek, 2011) and limiting options to be either Fairtrade or free-range. The participants expressed confidence with sustainability in the context of food, due to mainstream access and pricing that was only marginally more expensive. Further, they felt able to explain why making sustainable choices was important to them, from a personal perspective such as superior quality and taste or avoiding pesticides, or through considering wider implications, such as equitable trading.

In Chapter One Downing et al. (2004) identified that sustainable behaviours outwith consumption contexts (such as recycling) have been more successful; the participants articulated that this was due to understanding why sustainability was compromised and how their individual behaviour contributed to the solution. This was also evident for rejection of plastic bags. Coupled with support from local authorities and retailers' provision of recycling facilities, rewarding consumers with '*green points*' and campaigns that seek to inform and '*nudge*' behavioural change (Thaler and Sunstein, 2009; Yates, 2008) the participants indicated sustainable behaviours were convenient to adopt and had evolved to become social norms. Furthermore, the rationale behind intentness to adopt sustainable behaviours was often influenced by visual imagery (Kahneman and Tversky, 1982c), such as the TV programme that documented the experience of caged chickens or visual images of landfill.

Despite understanding sustainable concepts in the circumstances described above, this did not necessarily transfer to fashion contexts. This thesis supports previous research by agreeing that the fashion industry has neglected to inform consumers of how fashion production compromises sustainability or has made viable sustainable alternatives available to consumers (CSF, 2009; Shaw et al.,

2006). Consequently, consumers' consciousness for fashion sustainability is low. Nevertheless, as sustainability has become integral to consumer lifeworlds, the participants attempted to transfer characteristics they assumed as representative to sustainability as signifying sustainable production, making a further contribution to knowledge. This practical use of heuristics illustrates that the participants were attempting to align their fashion consumption with moral sentiment and would welcome any information that would make decision-making easier, as identified by Hustvedt and Bernard (2008). Further, previous quantitative research has identified characteristics, such as retailers' reputation (Shaw et al., 2006) or store-related attributes (Chen and Wong, 2012), as increasing confidence that retailers can be trusted to be sustainable. The benefit of a phenomenological approach has enabled the contextualisation of those previous nuances to be better understood.

The participants transferred sustainable concepts in the contexts that they had been primed to do so; for example, despite reduced marketing intermediaries and facilities for recycling textiles, the participants adapted their own sustainable constructs, such as maximising the lifespan of textiles through mothering networks. In the consumption context, stereotypical characteristics of sustainable food, such as philosophies of trust, price and quality were transferred in an effort to reduce uncertain outcomes. However, this did not transfer to all aspects of sustainable fashion; for example, the participants struggled to determine the value or benefits of organic cotton and carbon neutral fashion production. Confused by the purpose, the participants tried to make sense of the information by applying '*logic and meaning*' (Devinney et al., 2007), such as the logic applied to purchasing organic food. Due to the dearth of information to guide consumers concerned about for the sustainability of their fashion consumption, the participants had incomplete information (Newholm and Shaw, 2007). They struggled to apply the same rationale to organic cotton as they could for organic food, particularly as laundering was considered to remove pesticidal residue. Without understanding the salient issues that sustainable status alludes to, and thus the positive contribution of purchasing

sustainable-fashion, the participants felt ill-equipped to meaningfully include sustainability within fashion decision-making.

The research sought to understand how consumers evaluate their contribution to sustainability and has contributed to the field by unpacking how sustainability is defined and what information consumers require to embed a solution (Rogers, 2003). Another benefit of a phenomenological approach was the opportunity to view the narratives through an interpretive and idiographic lens. Contextualising the data within a heuristic lens has enabled a new perspective of how consumers understand sustainable principles and transfer sustainable concepts. Therefore, the research contributes to knowledge through examining perceptions of sustainability and how this is meaningfully applied within fashion consumption decision-making. The benefits of this include a greater understanding of consumers concerns for sustainability, the type of information that is required to motivate consumers to adopt sustainability, and how sustainability is diffusing into socially acceptable behaviours.

To motivate consumers to purchase sustainably-produced fashion, awareness of the negative consequences must be coupled with explicating the positive contribution of sustainable-fashion consumption. However, without awareness the participants' were able to neutralise their contribution to exploitative behaviours through neutralisation techniques as fashion retailers neglect to acknowledge what constitutes fashion production.

#### **8.2.5: Reconciling moral sentiment with behaviours**

Despite increased engagement with sustainability, this has not progressed to the context of fashion, as asserted in the literature and empirically acknowledged within this research. Although consumers have increased awareness of sustainability in other contexts, along with viable sustainable alternative options in mainstream retailers, reduced consumer understanding of what constitutes fashion production and the detrimental consequences upon the environment, does not enable consumers to make informed sustainable

decisions when purchasing fashion. As postulated by Dickson (2000) in Chapter Two, the increase of NGO campaigns alerting consumers of garment-worker exploitation had alerted the participants to the salient issues. The participants expressed suspicion that garment-worker exploitation, including child labour, may have been utilised to produce fashion, however were uncertain how to implement concern into their consumption behaviours. This resulted in the development of personal constructs to avoid fashion derived from exploitative practice, as well as diluting their contribution to exploitation to alleviate guilt by association.

Objective five sought to identify how consumers view their responsibility for the garment-workers involved in the production of the fashion they purchase and identified that exploitation was incongruous with the participants' moral sentiment hence, the inclusion of a section exploring how consumers reconcile moral sentiment with their actual behaviours. Framing the narratives within the Techniques of Neutralisation was a novel approach, which previously has not included sustainability within the context of fashion consumption. The benefits of this include understanding the role that consumers expect retailers to play and the kind of information that they seek. Further, the neutralisation techniques have contributed to knowledge by enabling the compartmentalisation of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsic attributes are contained within an appeal to a higher loyalty, whereby pressing lifeworld concerns reduced the participants' inclination consider sustainable fashion consumption. Extrinsic concerns exhibits the participants' confusion to contextualise what constitutes exploitation or to determine the best outcome for garment-workers, including enabling developing countries to improve their economy, due to a myriad of cultural constructs.

The participants' narratives include feeling overwhelmed by capitalistic market structures where their individual contribution seems insufficient to cope with the magnitude of poverty and exploitation. Thus, behaviours were not consistently viewed as a trade-off, due to uncertainty to what constitutes

fashion production and exploitation; the participants experienced an inability to reconcile behaviours with moral sentiment due to disempowerment and impotency. Uncertainty is further intensified as retailers attempt to contradict NGO claims (Bray et al., 2011; McDonald et al., 2009; Yates, 2008; Rogers, 2003; Gabriel and Lang, 1995). Despite awareness of garment-worker exploitation, the participants were uncertain how to evaluate allegations and reverted to the most pressing concerns within their lifeworld, as identified in previous literature (Iwanow et al., 2005). These feelings of disempowerment contrasts with their certainty of how their individual behaviours of reduce, reuse and recycling contributed to reducing environmental degradation.

The research was designed around notions that motherhood inspired an increased interest in sustainability, through concern for the environment remaining fertile for future generations (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) and empathic feelings for the exploitation of children. As fashion production is one of the main industry's to employ children in production (Kolk and Van Tulder, 2002a), it was suspected that sustainable concepts would play a bigger role in fashion consumption behaviours. Further, it was postulated in Chapter Two that motherhood may eradicate the detachment described by Iwanow et al.'s (2005) participants. This was true when the participants considered their consumption may derive from child labour, however did not extend to empathetic feelings of garment-workers, who could be mothers attempting to provide for their families. Nevertheless, the participants were primarily motivated to avoid fashion they suspected derived from child labour, through the application of heuristics and diluting their contribution through neutralisation techniques.

The participants assumed that fashion retailers would be embarrassed by the allegations, illustrating that the participants perceived utilising garment-worker exploitation, particularly child labour, as unacceptable or morally wrong (Callen-Marchione and Owenby, 2008; Shaw et al., 2007). Consequently, the research contributes to the field by illustrating the disparity between the values and beliefs of consumers versus retailers, implying a further contribution not

previously identified in the literature: the participants assumed that fashion retailers alleged of exploitation would address and rectify the allegations to avoid a reoccurrence. This perception was constructed to alleviate guilt and focus on lifeworld management; for the participants to investigate further would have further complicated lifeworld management behaviours.

For example, in response to the studies examining consumer willingness to pay (Hustvedt and Dickson, 2009; Hustvedt and Bernard, 2008) Chapter Two argued that responsibility for fashion sustainability should not be forced upon consumers through paying a premium. The reasons for this are twofold: the participants were already sceptical that sustainability was used to increase prices and this does not foster trust between consumers and retailers. Further, increased pricing excludes all consumers from participating in sustainability, which Hiller Connell (2010) postulated was an ethical question in itself. This was experienced by some of the participants who described guilt when purchasing fashion they suspected derived from exploitative practice. Further, the participants did not want to exacerbate the conditions of poverty endured by the garment-workers, expressing a preference for equitable trade. This was evident when the participants evaluated the Global Girlfriend label; reading about the producers facilitated altruism and confidence of what constituted fashion production. This not only supports Fisher et al.'s (2008) assertion that retailers should be proactive in alerting consumers of what constitutes production, but also illustrates that marketing intermediaries have the potential to both alert consumers to the issue of garment-worker exploitation and empower consumers within their decision-making to align fashion consumption with their moral sentiment. Whether this is something that fashion practitioners can address when sourcing production is dependent upon greater commitment and investment.

Having established the emergent contributions from the research, these will be presented holistically in a visual conception. It was postulated in Chapter Four

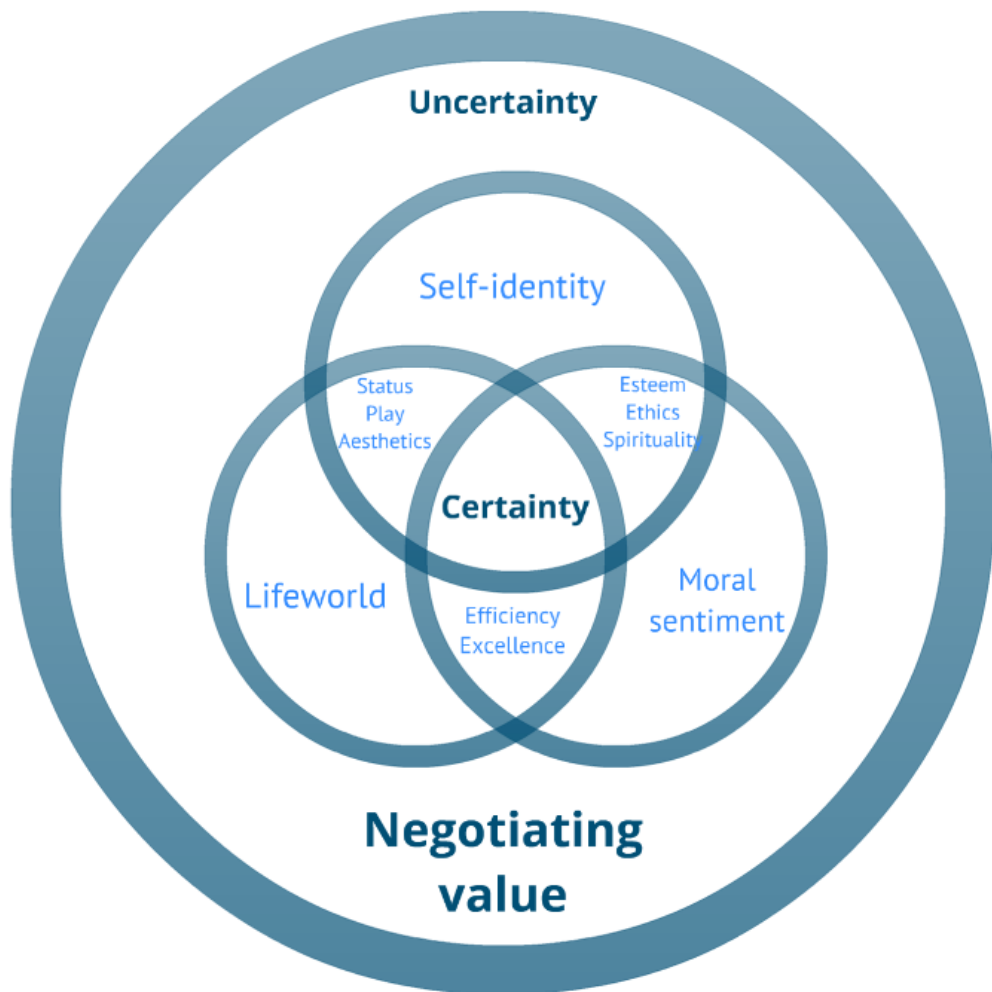


that the research would culminate in a conceptual framework encapsulating the participants' lived experience and this will be explained in the following section.

### **8.3: Conceptual framework**

The data analysis enabled the development of a conceptual framework (Figure 8.1) illustrating the interplay of values experienced within the participants' lifeworld. This is presented within this chapter as it represents a holistic overview of how the participants perceive their ability to incorporate fashion sustainability within their everyday experiences. The main contribution of this research was that the participants illustrate their desire to be sustainable, extending sustainable behaviours from actively ethical consumers to mainstream idealism. The research indicates the participants were motivated to incorporate sustainable principles, particularly when it is convenient and did not include a sacrifice; expansion will depend upon viable alternatives and increased guidance (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000). This optimum of behaviours aligning with moral sentiment is located in the centre of the figure, supported by certainty that their individual behaviours contributed positively to the wider sustainable agenda. The three overlapping spheres within the figure indicate the salient characteristics of the participants' lifeworld where values are negotiated. Holbrook (1999) stipulated that the evaluation of value types were individualistic and this was illustrated in the idiographic descriptions of the case study's lifeworlds.

Figure 8.1: Negotiating value



The participants' narratives identify concern was appropriated when the participants understood the behaviours that compromised sustainability (Jones, 1991); therefore, understanding the detrimental consequences of behaviours increases intentions to adopt sustainability. Smith et al. (2009) describe intentionality as the connection between consciousness and reflection. This was depicted in Figure 3.4 as recognising the moral issue and making a moral judgement (Rest 1986, cited in Jones, 1991). Within Figure 8.1, sustainability was considered within the decision-making process when the participants had sufficient information and viable alternative products to choose from. This is where this research parts from Rest's model (Jones, 1991). The participants were unable to resolve moral concerns or act upon their moral judgements due

to capitalistic market structures and lack of reliable information. Thus, within value negotiations, trade-offs were experienced depending upon which value was most salient. This oscillated between self-identity, moral sentiment and lifeworld management.

The research has identified contexts in which sustainable fashion behaviours satisfy a number of consumer values; for example, reduce (rejecting planned obsolescence and plastic bags), reuse (passing used-clothing), and recycling. With regard to consumption, certainty was expressed through the Fairtrade and reading about the producers in the Global Girlfriend label. These examples illustrate how the participants were reconstructing their lifeworlds to accommodate values prevalent within social norms, as these sustainable behaviours were also adopted by their peers groups (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). In contrast, current fashion market structures leave consumers experiencing uncertainty, unsure of what fashion production comprises of and unable to signal their moral sentiment, leaves little choice but to sacrifice moral sentiment in a trade-off to manage lifeworlds or notions of self.

#### **8.4: Implications for fashion marketers and managers**

The research aim included exploring the role that consumers expect from fashion retailers to address sustainability and how marketing intermediaries are evaluated, which Weise et al. (2012) posit is a gap in knowledge. The participants were increasingly aware of sustainability (Weise et al., 2012; Carrigan and de Pelsmacker, 2009), partially due to retailers acknowledging and responding to consumer concern for sustainability within mainstream markets (Weise et al., 2012; Carrington et al., 2010; Allwood et al., 2006; Shaw et al., 2006; Carrigan et al., 2004). Therefore, this thesis illustrates further potential to '*nudge*' consumers to consider sustainability in the context of fashion consumption, harnessing knowledge and increased consciousness of sustainability in the context of food. The participants sought labelling to increase their consciousness of sustainability and also offer a broad assurance

that neither garment-workers nor the environment have been exploited to provide them with fashion.

It was often difficult to maintain focus on fashion, as the participants displayed an increased confidence in their ability to purchase sustainably-produced food, such as Fairtrade, organic and locally produced food. It was useful to engage with nuances of transferring sustainability to food as contrasting with fashion. This illustrates how support from business and public policy can influence and motivate sustainable behaviours. Having presented the labels denoting sustainable concepts, such as fabric derived from recycled plastic bottles, organic cotton and garments which were not produced under exploitation, the participants described how these concepts were easier to implement for food consumption. Further, the participants expressed confidence in recycling and reducing their reliance on plastic bags, yet this was less evident within the context of fashion consumption. Furthermore, the inclination to adopt sustainable behaviours was evident in certain fashion consumption behaviours, such as passing used children's clothing within their networks, shopping in charity shops.

Thus, the data contends that the '*optimal location*' described by Holbrook (1999:2) within the consumer market-place is acknowledging consumers concern for production and sustainability. Contrasting the food and fashion sectors, the fashion industry is not keeping pace with consumer preferences (Shaw et al., 2006). Marketing managers who seek to attract significant market segments, such as families (Solomon and Rabolt, 2009), could acknowledge how sustainable production contributes to optimum parenting, as the research illustrates that similar lifestyles and characteristics have implications for adopting sustainable behaviours (D'Souza et al., 2007). Further, the research supports the assertion from Fisher et al. (2008) that well-considered marketing intermediaries and convenient facilities encourages sustainable consumer behaviours. As advanced by Thaler and Sunstein (2009), and empirically

acknowledged in this paper, the framing of the information can '*nudge*' consumers to reconsider their behaviours.

As the research demonstrates the potentiality to position sustainability as a core ethos for competitive advantage for fashion retailers, this offers retailers an opportunity to align with current trends in consumer preferences. This could include choice editing (Goworek, 2012) which has the potential to expand upon heuristic assumptions that certain retailers include sustainability within production. The overall benefit would be that consumers would not have to check each product individually, but have a broad assurance that the retailer is working towards integrating sustainability at the core of business practice (Meyer, 2001), thus aligning with consumers' values and beliefs (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001). This was evident when the participants described preferred retailers, such as the Body Shop and the Co-Op; similarly, P-7 had identified Fairtrade t-shirts in Dorothy Perkins and when she needed new fashion, this was the first fashion retailer she visited. Just as consumers are '*structured*' (Moisander et al., 2010) to make consumption choices through marketing, albeit from a consumer value perspective (Hudson and Hudson, 2003; Belk et al., 2000), consumers could also be '*structured*' to consider the sustainability of their consumption, through guidance and information.

Should the fashion industry integrate sustainability, this could be perceived positively by consumers, particularly as Jägel et al. (2012: 391) conclude that consumers are looking for '*win-win situation*' of aligning fashion and style with moral value. This research suggests a '*quick-win*' as most pertinent, as the participants sought cues at the point of purchase to signpost sustainability, however lacked the time and expertise to meaningfully evaluate sustainable terminology in the context of fashion-production. This is supported in research by Newholm and Shaw (2000) who believe that '*less is more*' in terms of labelling. Consequently, the research offers fashion practitioners advice on what sort of information is sought by consumers and what aspects of sustainability are of concern.

## 8.5: Future Research

As the research was exploratory, the conclusions are tentative. However, the research does present further opportunities for future research which would further develop understanding of consumer behaviour in relation to fashion and sustainability. Firstly, the research explored limited perceptions of sustainable fibres, such as bamboo (which is carbon neutral), biodegradable fibres and recycled fibres. This was limited within the current study due to the lack of sustainable fibres utilised in fashion production. Further, it was difficult for the participants to fully evaluate sustainable fibres without being able to comment on tactility and appearance attributes. However, sustainable fibres are unlikely to be harnessed by fashion retailers without consumer acceptance, therefore exploring perceptions is necessary. Some of the participants described previously purchasing bamboo, hemp and PET garments, where price and tactile qualities were acceptable. Future research could include garments for participants to evaluate to obtain greater understanding of the acceptability.

Secondly, although the research did not seek to explore children's involvement in fashion, it was acknowledged within the participants narratives as they discussed selecting fashion for their children. Some children were more aware of their appearance and had very definite ideas of how they wanted to present themselves (Main and Pople, 2011). There was no specific age identified as implying self-awareness, nor did this research contribute to this topic other than identifying the participants had different approaches to delegating fashion choice to their children. The literature depicts that children learn to manipulate their parents preferences to influence consumption (Kerrane et al., 2012), however this did not focus on fashion consumption or the adoption of sustainability within familial environments.

This would be an interesting topic to expand upon for future research and could include interviewing children and parents separately to explore autonomy in fashion selection and the meaning behind choice for both parties. For example,

this research identified that the children's visual appearance reflected the family's status and orientation, which was manipulated to be advantageous in certain settings. Further, it was particularly notable that the participants with older children (in addition to the research criteria of pre or primary school aged children) often had fractious negotiations over fashion selection. For example, older teen-aged children appeared to have more requests for designer clothing and shopped in value fashion retailers which made their mother uncomfortable. This negotiation of fashion selection would make useful further research, through seeking to understand how teenage girls deliberate their fashion choice amid contrasting needs to align with peers and their mothers' efforts to appeal to their moral sentiment.

Thirdly, much of the fashion literature has focused upon younger fashion consumers (Naderi, 2011). Due to the neglect of research investigating fashion involvement of different life-stages, this research has contributed to recognising that fashion and notions of self-communicated through appearance remains important to females beyond the age of forty. This is confounded by research by Lin and Xia (2012) who postulate that women purchase fashion for the age they perceive themselves to be. For example, P-11 expressed feeling misrepresented when shopping in M&S due to the maturity of other consumers. The participants in this research select fashion retailers who they want to align their identity with, this included recognition of others who patronise the same retailers. Consequently, understanding how this manifests through fashion retailer selection and fashion consumption would make an useful research study.

Fourthly, some of the participants were actively involved in selling clothes their children had grown out of alongside other baby paraphernalia. It is said that the consumer market of selling expensive goods which are required for a short time is increasing, a consequence of the economic downturn. Second-hand sales, such as Jack and Jill sales which sell baby paraphernalia, are increasingly popular. Similarly, eBay is recognised as contributing to the sustainable agenda by encouraging reuse of consumer commodities (DEFRA, 2009b; Harrison, 2009;

Fletcher, 2008). Further, the reliance on hand-me-down children's clothing expedites the potential for developing a used-clothing market within both informal and commercial formats. Understanding the extent of this movement would be an interesting contribution to consumer behaviour research, particularly through exploring the role of values, including commitments to sustainability, as contributing to second-hand market structures.

Allwood et al. (2006) suggest repairing fashion is a sustainable behaviour, which can extend to using unwanted fashion to make new garments. P-10 described how repairing badly produced fashion was a trade-off for purchasing inexpensive fashion, often even before they were worn, and she made the effort to extend longevity. She also noted that dressmaking skills were less prevalent in society. Further, the desire to repair is motivated through valuing the garment, which is less likely if new consumption is more accessible. If the repair cost more than buying a new garment, for example P-10 described repairing her daughters school trousers that cost £3.00, then repairing remains unlikely. However, inspired by the popularity of cookery programmes, particularly the current cupcake culture which is a fashionable trend, the BBC commissioned a sewing programme '*Great British Sewing Bee*'. Exploring the potential influence of promoting sewing skills may transfer to repairing or altering garments to maximise the fabric's longevity and would offer a pertinent opportunity for future research.

Finally, the data has the potential to be viewed through a variety of theoretical lenses, for example Hustvedt et al. (2012) consider the adoption of sustainable laundry techniques through framing the data within Rogers (2003) Diffusions of Innovations Theory. The data presented within this thesis suggests that society is undergoing reconstruction to include sustainability as a characteristic of behavioural decision-making and the participants are at varying levels of participation, depending upon their notion of moral agency and particular lifeworld. As the data implies that sustainability is a fashionable trend, illustrated through recycling behaviours and taking cloth or jute bags shopping,



it would be useful to frame adoption of sustainable behaviours within Rogers (2003) Diffusions of Innovations Theory. The added advantage would be to determine the extent sustainable behaviours are inspired by concern for sustainability (the environment or social equality) or whether sustainability is influenced by social norms. In Chapter Six, P-17 expressed the social convention of taking a bag shopping, suggesting it was as socially unacceptable as driving under the influence of alcohol; similarly, P-3 likened not purchasing Fairtrade coffee as an antisocial behaviour, again using the analogy of drink driving. A future study could explore the fashionability of sustainable behaviours within personally constructed social networks.

## 8.6: Concluding comments

Unlike other research that explores consumer behaviour in the context of sustainable fashion, this research has made a valuable and interesting contribution to understanding how consumers deliberate, understand and apply sustainability to fashion consumption. Niinimäki (2010) concluded that fashion designers, producers and retailer need a better understanding of consumers sustainable values to progress sustainability within the marketplace. This thesis has helped to progress understanding through illustrating the participants application of sustainable concepts within the context of fashion consumption. The three frameworks (value typology; heuristics; and neutralisation techniques) have been useful in developing theory (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) of how consumers deliberate and evaluate both fashion consumption and their responsibility to sustainability. The data and subsequent analysis has offered insight into how these *'decisions are thought through'* (Szmigin et al., 2007: 379). The advantage of utilising garment labels as primers to stimulate discussions around fashion sustainability helped to replicate facets of the consumer environment and better understand the consumers perspective (Hirshman, 1993). This enabled the data analysis to *'discover new knowledge'* (Vindigni et al., 2002: 634), such as transferring sustainable concepts from the context of food, where sustainability is better established. This has helped to

conceptualise sustainability within actual consumer behaviours and enabled the research to identify areas which will contribute to the progression of a sustainable fashion industry.

Prothero and Fitchett (2000) postulated over a decade ago that motivating consumers to engage with sustainability was crucial, however the evidence from this research is that through awareness and the availability of viable sustainable products, consumers are motivated to adopt sustainable behaviours. Paradoxically, despite the participants expressing an increased awareness of sustainability in the context of garment-workers rather than environmental concerns, they still felt unable to address those concerns, due to ambiguous and conflictive information. In contrast, they describe sustainable post-consumption fashion behaviours that address environmental concerns. Consequently, it may be more pertinent to suggest that motivating fashion retailers' to respond to consumers concerns for sustainability is currently the bigger problem. Nevertheless, the thesis has made a number of contributions to further enhancing the research field of consumer decision-making, through better understanding how consumers deliberate sustainability within the context of fashion consumption. It is hoped that this will make a valuable contribution to improving the existence of social inequalities by encouraging fashion retailers to capitalise upon increasing perceptions of value underpinned within progressive sustainable business models.

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