

'Hand-me-down' Childrenswear and the Middle-class Economy of Nearly New Sales

Emma Waight

Accepted manuscript PDF deposited in Coventry University's Repository

Original citation:

'Hand-me-down' Childrenswear and the Middle-class Economy of Nearly New Sales', published in: *Sharing Economies in Times of Crisis: Practices, Politics and Possibilities*, pub 2017 (ISBN 9781138959415)

Publisher: Routledge

Copyright © and Moral Rights are retained by the author(s) and/ or other copyright owners. A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge. This item cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the copyright holder(s). The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Waight, E. (forthcoming 2017) 'Hand-me-down childrenswear and the middle-class economy of nearly new sales' in Ince, A. and Hall, S.M. (ed.) *Sharing Economies in Times of Crisis: Practices, Politics and Possibilities*, Routledge: Abingdon.

Book chapter - 'Hand-me-down' Childrenswear and the Middle-class Economy of Nearly New Sales

Community provisioning and middle-class mobilities

Technological innovation, societal changes and the rise of consumer culture are all considered responsible for a society structured more around the individual, than the community (Hovland and Wolburg 2010). In Western societies, the contemporary consumer is more likely to rely on supermarkets or online shopping to fulfil their basic needs (and consumer desires) as opposed to their local family and neighbours who historically would have relied on one another to assist in family provisioning and care work, particularly in times of austerity (Putnam 2000). As stated by Lunt and Livingstone (1992, p.149):

Because money allows the anonymous exchange of goods without dependency ties, it erodes traditional dependency ties within communities, and so market relations tend to take over communities and undermine existing cultural ties.

In recent geographical scholarship this erosion of dependency ties has been a focus of work on mobilities. One in ten UK households move every year and our lives are increasingly dispersed both geographically and across different social networks (Cass, Shove et al. 2005; Holdsworth 2013). This is particularly the case for the middle-classes who are more likely to follow education and employment opportunities across the UK and beyond (Boterman 2012). For the middle-classes then, "mobility undermines connections to family, friends, community and locality" (Holdsworth 2013, p. 144) with busy, mobile lives sustained through a spatially and figuratively wide social network of weak ties, less rooted in locality (Vincent et al. 2008).

In terms of consumer needs, one item that has traditionally been passed through kin and social networks in the community is children's clothing. Gregson and Crewe (1998) talk about the 'moral economy' of second-hand children's wear, referencing the obligations felt by parents to pass on and reuse. Such items are often considered 'nearly new' in any case as children grow out of them before the item has worn out (Gregson and Crewe 1998; Waight 2014). This chapter looks at what has become of the traditional 'hand-me-down' economy in the UK at a time of heightened mobility, coupled with global financial and ecological instability. A 'hand-me-down' is simply a garment or other item that has been handed down after been used and discarded by another. The chapter explores the moral economy of childrenswear using the case study of nearly new sales (NNSs) to access a sample of middle-class mothers. These NNSs are organised nationally by branches of the UK's largest parenting charity as a fundraising activity and service to support new and expectant parents as they buy and sell second-hand/used children's clothes, toys and equipment. Throughout this chapter I situate NNSs as a systematisation of local hand-me-down economies, a way of drawing together otherwise disparate community exchange networks into a locally grounded form.

Whilst the erosion of traditional dependency ties within communities may be seen to limit such community economies, this chapter explores the way in which parents make use of diverse economies to continue to benefit from children's hand-me-downs. The hypermobility of the middle-classes has not had a detrimental affect on their ability to benefit from second-hand economies of childrenswear, but rather altered their consumption practices so that online platforms and NNSs have become the key routes for such provisioning (Waight 2014). Apart from the example of Freecycle, which only offers the exchange of goods without monetary exchange, these new systematised forms of hand-me-down economies, including NNSs, do tend to operate with monetary exchange thus differentiating them from traditional hand-me-down economies.

Whilst second-hand economies can be key in times of economic crisis, multiple notions of 'crisis' are evident in this chapter as taken from a broader research project on second-hand consumption and middle-class mothering (Waight 2014). NNSs are not just a cheaper and more sustainable way of clothing children during challenging economic and ecological times, but, as will be seen later in the chapter, the sharing economy of the NNS also creates a social field in which new and expectant parents can share parenting knowledge and experiences with like-minded others as a way of managing the sense of isolation, anxiety and indeed crisis, entwined with such a pivotal change in the lifecourse.

If we consider second-hand economies more broadly, the cultural and materials turns in geography have led to a significant increase in scholarship on such alternative, informal, or inconspicuous second-hand consumption sites since the early 1990s. Studies of British charity shops (Chattoe, E. 2000; Gregson, Crewe et al 2000; Horne and Maddrell 2002), car boot sales (Gregson, Crang et al 2013), retro or vintage stores (Gregson, Brooks et al 2001), nearly new sales (Clarke 2000) and U.S. garage sales or thrift stores (Harrmann 2004; Medvedev 2012) demonstrated that by studying these diverse sites of consumption we can explore the intimacies of the mundane by reflecting on class, identity and the multiple ethics of consumer practice. By their very nature forms of second-hand consumption vary greatly, from the precarious bric-a-brac stand at the side of the road to the exclusive vintage boutique. Although we have seen an increasing formalisation of charity shops in the UK¹, second-hand retail sites are generally considered informal, exempt from many of the conventions influencing regulated shopping sites (Horne and Maddrell 2002; Gregson et al 1997). And whilst charity shops have remained a key feature of UK-based research on second-hand shopping, childrenswear rarely makes it to these shops because they tend to be passed through private systems of exchange instead (Clarke 2000; Horne and Maddrell 2002).

Previous studies, including my own on motherly-consumption, have found consumers cite common risks associated with buying second-hand/used goods, these being that items are inscribed with an unknown material biography and may be harbouring contaminants, be unsafe or unfit for purpose (Crewe and Gregson 2003; Horne and Maddrell 2002; Waight 2015). Despite these 'risks' second-hand consumption is not a practice restricted to the financially or socially excluded. Indeed, individuals choose to consume second-hand goods for a wide range of reasons (Horne and Maddrell 2002; Crewe and Gregson 2003; Arnould

¹ Charity shops can be found on most UK high streets and rely on donations of second-hand goods from the public to fundraise for the charity's causes, as well as selling a small range of new goods. They are predominantly run on volunteer labour and benefit from business rate reductions.

and Bardhi 2005). These may be political, social, economic, hedonist or moral, but cost-saving or thrift has been found to be the most prevalent (Guiot and Roux 2010; Harrmann 2004). Investigations of motherly second-hand consumption are surprisingly few considering the regularity of finding children's clothing and other goods moving through diverse second-hand economies. A notable exception to this is Clarke's (2000) study on NNSs. Although the NNSs used as the focus of Clarke's study are not the same NNSs used in my own research, I revisit many of the themes she explores regarding motherly consumption but in a different socio-economic climate.

Clarke (2000) was one of the first to study the gendered nature of motherly consumption and notes that it cannot be regarded as a subjective, singular practice but as shaped by a complex web of social norms, expectations, anxieties and desires. Work involved in caring for a child and including consumption practice is one way in which women 'do' mothering. Cook (2008) describes this motherly consumption as 'co-consuming' as women consume on behalf of another, negotiating and prioritising the needs of both her child and herself. Similarly, consumption has been identified for its crucial role in enabling the transition to first-time motherhood, constructing an identity of mother and child through the material before the child is even born (Layne 2000; Layne, Taylor et al. 2004; Prothero 2002).

A parallel to my own research can be seen in the work of Ogle et al. (2013) on second-hand maternity clothing. Like childrenswear, maternity dress is often consumed second-hand and shared through informal economies because it is only needed and used for a short space of time. This, the authors found, incites a desire to re-use rather than waste, a feeling that continues through to the consumption of baby and children's clothing (Clarke 2000; Gregson and Crewe 1998). The women in Ogle et al.'s (2013) study are torn between the desire to be thrifty and the desire to limit disruption to their self-identity. This disruption comes from the various ambivalences they face in dressing their pregnant selves and the limited availability of choice in their second-hand maternity dress, which may be passed on to them from family and friends.

As expectant women become new parents, the negotiations and rationalisations they have had to manage in dressing their pregnant selves become focused on caring for and dressing the child. The risks of consuming second-hand goods (in terms of hygiene, safety and socially constructed stigma) come to the fore, as mothers negotiate the myriad responsibilities of parenthood and want to shelter him or her from harm (Kehily and Martens 2014). Although goods handed down from kin may be more familiar, second-hand items purchased from a charity shop, car boot sale, or NNS comes with a more precarious and opaque past. When consuming second-hand baby goods, mothers have been found to exact a number of strategies to mitigate this risk, including hygiene rituals and complying with institutionalised safety advice (Waight 2015).

Nearly new sales as a case study

Despite the perceived risk, one in five parents purchased extra second-hand goods for their children between 2008 and 2012 as a result of the global economic recession of 2008 (Mintel 2012). The rest of this chapter focuses on the ways in which middle-class mothers diversify traditional hand-me-down consumption patterns and find ways to expand their opportunities to acquire used childrenswear both through NNSs and extended social networks. As stated, NNSs run by a national UK parenting charity were used as a case study and route to explore motherly consumption practice. Mothers were chosen as the focus of

study as they remain primary caregivers in the home and manage the consumption, washing and disposal of clothing in the household (Holloway 1998; Waight 2015). Thirty interviews were conducted with mothers in early 2013 across three regions of the UK; Gosport and Winchester in the South and Birmingham in the Midlands. Alongside the interviews ran a broader ethnographic study where I conducted participant observation at fifteen NNSs over the course of eighteen months.

Generally the NNSs run by this particular charity are held bi-annually across the UK through local branches and situated in schools, church halls or leisure centres for just a couple of hours. Organised and staffed entirely by volunteers, the sales allow parents² to buy and sell second-hand or otherwise used baby and children's clothes, toys and equipment, along with maternity clothing. Sales are either table-top or ticketed. Table-top sales required a seller to purchase a pitch (table) and sell their own goods, while ticketed allowed sellers to drop off their wares which are then sorted by volunteers and ordered more akin to a conventional retail site. Both routes included a donation to the charity, and sales superseding this went in the seller's pocket.

In an age of increased geographic mobility for the middle-classes, the sales offer a useful, organised method for the trade of used children's goods within the local community, albeit within a monetary exchange system. Whilst the NNSs provided a point for accessing interviewees, many of the mothers used the sales as one of a range of channels to acquire second-hand goods which were also discussed during interviews. Interviewees were recruited by conducting a short sampling questionnaire as buyers entered NNSs in the three case study regions. Interviewees varied in age range from '20 to 24' to '40+' with nearly half aged '30 to 34'. Two were first time expectant mothers, the others all being mothers to one or two children up to the age of ten.

Two thirds of the participants were educated to degree level or higher, significantly greater than the UK national average of 38 per cent graduate attainment for working age adults (ONS, 2013). All interviewees were white British apart from one participant who was Turkish. It should be said that the parenting charity associated with the sales offers other parenting services known to attract a middle-class demographic such as antenatal classes and coffee mornings. The classed nature of the charity is deep-rooted and partly based on the paid-for nature of many of their services (Waight 2014). Parenting practices in general are commonly considered to be shaped by class, along with the geographical boundaries in which people live (Holloway 2010; Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2014). I therefore view the NNSs accessed for this research as a middle-class phenomenon, shaped by middle-class values and mobilities.

Second-hand economies at times of 'crisis'

Even individuals choosing to avoid second-hand economies for their own clothing are likely to be more amenable to receiving second-hand or 'hand-me-down' clothing for their children (Waight 2014). Most of the middle-class mothers I interviewed had both received and passed on such items. As the following quote shows however, the social or kin ties

² It is not only parents and expectant parents who attend and benefit from the sales. Other buyers include grandparents and even commercial traders.

linking these economies do not have to be close. Hilary used the NNSs to supplement a regular delivery of girl's clothing from a distant relative:

I've had a steady stream of the stuff because she passes it on to her sister, who then passes it on to basically her father-in-law – my father-in-law – this little one's granddad, and he then arrives down with it. In some ways it's a bit like going to a sale but I don't get any choice. I open up the boxes when they arrive and there's this heap of clothes, but her mother-in-law bought a lot of the stuff in Next and Monsoon. All good quality stuff but I couldn't have bought it at full price anyway. So we're gaining from it all. It makes sense, and also I don't worry about it if something gets damaged (Hilary: mother to one, civil servant, co-habiting, aged 40.)

Hilary is the epitome of the mobile middle-class as she moved south for her husband's job, away from family and close friends. As far as I could tell the two women above had never met. Rather, the clothes parcels are the only (fairly) regular link between them. It would probably be easier for the owner of the clothes to donate them to a charity shop (or throw them away) but instead she keeps hold of them to pass them to her sister who in turn can pass them down the chain to someone who she knows can make use of them. The clothes thus link the women, and their families, together. It could be seen as an example both of not wanting the goods to be wasted (perhaps Monsoon³ is too good for the charity shop), and an act of kindness, in helping a distant relative in a similar position.

Hilary demonstrates that children's clothing can still be handed-down through networks but that these networks are not necessarily locally grounded. Of clothing that was handed-down such items predominantly went to friends and relatives rather than neighbours. At other times the NNSs were described as being particularly helpful for new parents who lacked the social network needed to benefit from the hand-me-down economy either because they lived far from friends and family, or they were the first in their peer group to become a parent. In this case the nearly new sales filled a gap when there was no access to the informal hand-me-down economies others take for granted by re-localising these second-hand economies.

A key cultural difference however, between socially networked hand-me-down economies and NNSs is the inherent risk inscribed by the 'unknown'. Unless it is a table-top sale (where buyers can at least speak to the sellers), buyers at nearly new sales have no idea where their second-hand purchase has come from and who has been using it. This does not mean that attendance to the sale is entirely random however. Like any social event, participation is enabled and structured by strong social networks (Trotter 1999). Indeed, half of all those attending the sales nationally had been previously involved in the parenting charity, many others were friends of those who were. Mothers choose nearly new sales over other forms of second-hand consumption in order to minimise the risks invoked by second-hand goods because they are engaging as part of a homophilous group. We could view this as an example of 'embedded behaviour', the idea that many human behaviours are not conducted alone but rather are the result of interactions with other agents (Trotter 1999, p.15). This shared social field, I argue, enables the sales to offer a 'safer' alternative to the likes of charity shops or car boot sales, which are oft which considered 'dirty' or at least, riskier due to the sense of the unknown (Maddrell and Horne 2002, Gregson and Crewe 2003). Another

³ Monsoon is a mid-market high street clothing store in the UK known for their evening wear and embellished accessories.

benefit of the sales over both informal hand-me-down economies and charity shops is the breadth of choice available and efficiency incurred by having a dedicated space to buy second-hand childrenswear. This perceived convenience factor will be discussed later in the chapter when I explore the tension of thrift juxtaposed with excess.

In addition to shopping, the NNSs offer a social space for parental bonding and learning. The intimacy invoked by the baby items for sale allow parents to use these items to negotiate the complexities of parenting as a point of reference for discussion and to reflect on their own identity, values and practices (Waight 2015). The addition of the material as an object of interest and common intermediary further facilitates bonding amongst attendees who are not previously connected. This is particularly true in the case of the volunteers, for whom the shared experience of sorting and organising goods provides a basis for conversation as discussion shifts from what they are selling/hope to buy, to broader conversations about their family, home and career.

We could situate the concept of second-handedness as undesirable by drawing on the notions of risk, dirt and hygiene yet some mothers viewed the fact that an item had been used by another as a recommendation that it was in fact, useful. This was described by Maggie:

If it's at the sale it's like someone else is saying 'this is good, I've used this, this has worked'. So that's better than buying blindly off the internet if you know someone else has had good use out of it (Maggie: married, 30-34, full time mum).

Literature to date focuses on the fact that second-hand goods have been disposed of by another, so for that person they are *useless*. Maggie's discussion shows that it could be seen as a recommendation that it is in fact, *useful*. As such she is putting implicit trust in the association to a group of people whilst in actuality she may not know where that item has come from. She would not be able to draw on this homophilous association at charity shops or car boot sales for example, two places considered further along the disposal hierarchy than NNS and thus more likely to offer *useless* goods.

NNS are dynamic economies with the same group of people often selling and buying. Buyers consider all kinds of issues when faced with a potential purchase. These may be related to need, value for money and quality. Sometimes though, mothers demonstrated broader awareness of the second-hand economy and before making a purchase weighed up the potential resale value as well as use-value. As a first-time mother, Kate, quoted below has yet to dispose of any baby goods but describes her intention to sell goods on once she no longer needs them:

I haven't sold anything at the sales yet myself but I think if you buy brand names they will always sell on again if I want to sell them, which I will I think (Kate: mother to one, retail manager, married, aged 25-29).

In this quote, Kate does not refer to the direct use-value of the goods at all (unless you consider her reference to quality), but rather focuses purely on the commodity value. This is a strategy used by other mothers in order to justify the expense of consumption and manage the financial burden of parenthood. Brand names are considered to hold their value because they are good quality as well as retaining a symbolic value tied up in certain covetable labels.

Selling is a laborious process though and seems barely worth it for the money alone (at least for the middle-class group). The mothers described how they prepared the items for sale; washing, ironing, pricing and generally divesting them of their previous biography so that they were ready for a new owner. This is a chore that has to be fitted in around existing roles and responsibilities, as this mother explained:

One motivation has been the money however I regard it as a very ineffective way to raise money because it's a huge amount of work to raise a small amount of money. So it's irrational that I sell at the sales and I'm glad I'm now at the point where I don't feel obliged to. I used to feel like I ought to (Karen: mother to two girls, 'homemaker', lives alone, aged 40+).

Karen's concern that she ought to participate in the sales as a seller links to the ethical and social obligations found to underpin the middle-class mother's participation in the sale. A desire to support the charity and their peer group encouraged selling, buying and volunteering. In arguing that the sales are an inefficient way to make money, or to produce economic capital, Karen is suggesting that the sales are part of an altogether different economy. Rather than considering the nearly new sales in purely economic terms, they can be conceptualised as a moral economy built on the mutual reciprocity of the community in giving and taking from the sale.

Karen was a keen environmentalist so also felt a moral duty to ensure any of her used items did not go to waste. However, it would have been easier for her to give these items to her local charity shop, or to other community members through the Freecycle group she moderated. Her obligation then is social. She spoke, as many other mothers did, about the desire to give back to the sale; the charity itself through the fundraising potential, and the parents who frequented them. The sale relies on this sense of reciprocity in order to be a success; otherwise it may lead to a disparity with more buyers than sellers. In this sense the sale semi-formalises the traditional hand-me-down culture, creating an efficient space for local parents to pass around second-hand goods as part of an informal economy to which they belong.

Moralities of thrift

The previous section described the way in which NNSs link local parenting networks and facilitate an expanded economy of neighbourly second-hand exchange. There is a tension however, between whether this constitutes frugality, thrift, or, is simply an opportunity for over-consumption. Part of the sale's success is realising that twenty-first century parents desire a degree of choice, partly due to the increased pressures on time, and partly due to the marketization of childhood (Martens 2010). It was certainly the case at the NNSs that buyers left with bags' full of items, many of which are spontaneous purchases or duplicates of items they already had.

Indeed interviewees spoke about buying extra clothes for playing in the garden or attending nursery (unsuitable places for 'best dress'), extra games and puzzles for further stimulation (building on the child's cultural capital) and extra equipment to keep at the grandparents' house. One participant discussed the need for multiple pairs of wellington boots:

If they go to nursery they need a pair at nursery and then you never remember to bring them home, so you need another pair for home, you might have another pair at granny's house too so you end up with three pairs of wellies in the same size and they wear them for half an hour to splash in a puddle and then not again for a few weeks (Amanda: mother to two, special needs teacher married, aged 40+).

Amanda describes how the NNSs allow for her to buy extra goods in order to make everyday life easier. She is not, what Williams and Windebank (2002) would call, an 'excluded consumer'. The ability to own such extras is not a luxury available to everyone and could be construed as part of the modern day economy of convenience. In such case, when goods are little used, it is deemed foolish to buy items full price because children grow out of things so quickly and second-hand items still have plenty of use-value. This could be why many customers cite cost-saving as their primary reason for purchasing second-hand goods as they are saving money on the cost price of individual items. Looking at their consumption practices as a whole however, they are purchasing more than they need in order to clothe and care for the child, so it could still be suggested that in some instances they are spending more money than they may need to.

It could be argued that the NNSs are not reaching those most in need of cheap, second-hand childrenswear but rather servicing the 'false needs' of the middle-class (Marcuse 1964). That said, there are multiple iterations of need and for mothers trying to do the right thing by their families how can one define what constitutes true need when social and cultural obligations are so complex (Evans 2011; Hall 2015). In addition, studies by Gillies (2007) and Ponsford (2011; 2014) on working-class and/or young mothers suggest that these 'excluded consumers' may not want to participate in such economies and are socially excluded even from these alternative spaces of second-hand consumption.

Ponsford (2014) argues that the ability of young mothers to provide for their child/ren while managing on a low income provided an important basis of self-worth. In experiencing the anxiety of being, and be seen to be, a good mother, materiality is the main route through which mothers can display their competence publically. Ponsford (2011, p.541) clarifies:

Consumption emerges as an important site for oppositional strategies through which the young women who took part in this study seek to re-image themselves as respectable carers and deflect negative associations of poverty away from their children.

These young women desperately tried to remain within known exchange networks, either informal (friends, family) or in purchasing items brand new. Second-hand goods from charity shops or similar were simply not acceptable, seen as a marked sign of poverty and bound by negative connotations of being teased during their own childhood (Ponsford 2014). This trait was evidenced in a younger expectant mother I managed to interview who had just attended one NNS to date and clearly had an issue with buying second-hand clothes although had attended the sale to have a look around and buy small, token items (such as a pregnancy book). She said:

When you have this little person you want everything to be new but you can't have everything new (Faye: expectant mother, shop assistant, co-habiting, aged 25-29).

Faye had gained from hand-me-down clothing from close friends and family, whom she still lived near in her hometown of Gosport. For her, she felt comforted by the notion of knowing where these items had come from. In contrast, the practice of thrift was a source of pride for the more middle-class mothers I spoke to. Whilst still anxious to be a good mother, these mothers do not place such high regard on displaying good mothering through the child's dress.

Other interviewees recognised the environmental benefits of using second-hand goods. This was described by Karen who we met earlier in the chapter who says, "I just like to not consume more than is necessary." Karen was unusual in citing this as her primary reason for buying second-hand baby goods but nevertheless environmental notions did surface in a number of interviews. In many cases this was not related to environmental concerns, but rather a general sense that the items themselves will 'go to waste' if they are not reused when they still have useful life left in them. There was also a sense that another child should have the chance to use an item, if it had been useful to the participant's own child, and/or gave them pleasure. This correlates with the work of Gregson and Crewe (2003, p.198) when they explain:

Reuse then, was not – as we had imagined it to be – a politicised practice. Rather it was constructed more as a conservation practice, where preserving and/or extending the lives of things has come to matter rather more than thinking about the connections of such practices to the conditions of commodity production.

Miller (1999, p.132) states, 'thrift has been found to represent the central ritual in the transformation of shopping from spending to saving'. This suggests that consumers still desire to shop, but that the focus of their consumption is to spend as little money as possible in order to procure the things they desire. Thrift is categorised by social competition, something Miller (1987) documents as far away as Trinidad, describing 'the rivalry between female relatives wanting to demonstrate their skills by buying the same goods cheaper than someone else'. This form of competition transpired through my own research with shoppers queuing long before the sale started in order to get ahead of the crowd and snag the best items. This allowed mothers to 'keep up with the Jones' without spending large amounts of extra money, although money is nevertheless being spent and is therefore different to non-financial hand-me-down economies.

These observations directly correlate with Miller's (1999, p.137) early ethnography on family consumption. He says:

There seems very little evidence to suggest that in most cases thrift is actually a means to save money. In many cases it is equally the justification for spending more money.

Thrift is central to household management as a way of justifying and moderating consumption. Where money is saved in one place, it is spent elsewhere. Thrift involves having knowledge of markets, demonstrated at the nearly new sales by the mothers who researched the going-price of toys, clothes and equipment both new and used, online and at the sales. Thrift therefore, requires an element of skill and is a way in which women 'do mothering'. As a skill, it can be learnt and improved upon, shown clearly in the way participants spoke about the strategies they enacted at the sales, developed over repeated visits and through drawing on their social and cultural capital. Indeed, it is the mobilisation

of these forms of capital that enable success within the field of the nearly new sale and why social class plays a fundamental role in structuring forms of attendance.

Concluding remarks

By considering the NNS as a diverse economy, they are modelled as a route for semi-formalising the traditional culture of hand-me-downs in order to fit the contemporary middle-class lifestyle in an era of boundless spatial mobility. As the sales attract a homophilous group, the oft-perceived precarious act of second-hand consumption is diverted away from the unknown and pulled back into an arena of localised shared social networks. The material then, provides a route to bond otherwise disparate community ties; a practice described by Clarke (2000) as 'mother swapping' due to the sharing of experience, information and expertise attached to the physical act of sharing used clothes. Access to this network is shaped by class, as indeed is need, as working-class parents are more likely to live close to and rely on kin and social ties. The NNS then can be viewed as a way for middle-class parents to manage the 'crisis' of parental responsibility, perhaps living far away from their close friends and family.

Work on diverse, alternative, non-capitalist economies is growing but more consideration is required to understand how local second-hand economies fit within these. Theories on alternative economies have surfaced since the cultural turn including feminist post-capitalist critiques (Gibson-Graham 1996), moral sharing economies (Gold 2004) and more-than-capitalist economic practice (Fraser 2014). Second-hand exchange networks play a key role in these economies, encouraging sharing, sustainability, thrift and a social bonding and as such should be seen as a key route for future research. The notion of whether NNSs facilitative cost-savings and sustainable consumption in turbulent economic or ecological times is up for debate. But by structuring the discussion around these narratives, mothers have demonstrated that the sales and second-hand consumption more generally do support their consumer needs as middle-class mothers in an ever commercialized world where parenting practices are often up for scrutiny. (5511 words)

References⁴

- Arnould, E. J. and Bardhi, F. (2005). "Thrift Shopping: Combining Utilitarian Thrift and Hedonic Treat Benefits." *Journal of Consumer Behaviour* 4(4): 223-233.
- Boterman, W. R. (2012). "Residential mobility of urban middle classes in the field of parenthood." *Environment and Planning A* 44(10): 2397-2412.
- Cass, N., Shove, E. et al. (2005). "Social exclusion, mobility and access." *The Sociological Review* 53(3): 539-555.
- Chattoe, E. (2000). "Charity shops as second-hand markets." *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 5(2): 153-160.
- Clarke, A. (2000). 'Mother Swapping' The Trafficking of Nearly New Children's Wear. In, (eds.) P. Jackson, M. Lowe, D. Miller and F. Mort. *Commercial Cultures, Economies, Practices and Spaces*. Oxford: Berg Publishing: 85-100.

⁴ I am grateful to the ESRC and NCT for co-sponsoring this research through the Doctoral RIBEN scheme and would like to thank Dr Kate Boyer and Dr Nick Clarke for aiding the development of ideas in this chapter.

Cook, D. T. (2008). "The Missing Child in Consumption Theory." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8(2): 219-243.

Evans, D. (2011). Thrifty, green or frugal: reflections on sustainable consumption in a changing economic climate. *Geoforum* 42(5)

Fraser, N. (2014). *Behind Marx's 'Hidden Abode': Towards an Expanded Conception of Capitalism*. Invited lecture: Centre for Citizenship, Globalisation and Governance. University of Southampton.

Gibson-Graham, J.K. (2006) *Postcapitalist Politics*. London: University of Minnesota Press

Gillies, V. (2007). *Marginalised Mothers: Exploring working class experiences of parenting*. Routledge: Oxon.

Gold, L. (2004). *The Sharing Economy: Solidarity Networks Transforming Globalization*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Gregson, N., Brooks K. and Crewe, L. (2001) Bjorn Again? Rethinking 70s revivalism through the appropriation of 70s clothing. *Fashion Theory*, 5(1).

Gregson, N., Brooks K. and Crewe, L. (2000). Narratives of Consumption and the Body in the Space of the Charity Shop. In. *Commercial Cultures, Economies, Practices and Spaces* (ed) P. Jackson, M. Lowe, D. Miller and F. Mort. Oxford: Berg Publishing, pp. 101-123.

Gregson, N., Crewe, L. & Longstaff, B. (1997) Excluded spaces of regulation: car-boot sales as an enterprise culture out of control? *Environment and Planning A*. 29 1717 - 1737.

Gregson, N. and Crewe, L. (1998). "Dusting Down Second Hand Rose: Gendered identities and the world of second-hand goods in the space of the car boot sale." *Gender, Place & Culture* 5(1).

Gregson, N. and Crewe, L. (2003). *Second Hand Cultures*. Oxford: Berg Publishing.

Gregson, N. and Crang, M., Laws J, Fleetwood T, and Holmes H (2013) Moving up the waste hierarchy: Car boot sales, reuse exchange and the challenges of consumer culture to waste prevention. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 77

Guiot, D. and Roux, D. (2010) 'A second-hand shoppers' motivation scale: antecedents, consequences, and implications for retailers', *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 86, No. 4, pp.355-371.

Hall, S.M. (2015) Every ethics of consumption in the austere city. *Geography Compass* 9(3)

Harrmann, G. (2004). "Haggling Spoken Here: Gender, Class and Style in US Garage Sale Bargaining." *The Journal of Popular Culture* 38(1): 55-81.

Horne, S. and A. Maddrell (2002). *Charity Shops; Retailing, Consumption and Society*. London: Routledge.

Holdsworth, C. (2013) *Family and Intimate Mobilities*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Hovland, R. and Wolburg, M. (2010) *Advertising, Society, and Consumer Culture*. Abingdon: Routledge

Holloway, S. L. (2010) 'Local Childcare Cultures: Moral geographies of mothering and the social organisation of pre-school education', *Gender, Place and Culture*, 5(1)

Holloway, S. L. and Pimlott-Wilson, H. (2014) "Any advice is welcome isn't it?" Neoliberal parenting education, local mothering cultures and social class." *Environment and Planning A* 46(1), 94-111.

Kehily, M. and Martens, L. (2014) "Selling infant safety: entanglements of childhood preciousness, vulnerability and unpredictability". *Young Consumers*, 15 (3).

Layne, L. L. (2000). Baby Things as Fetishes: Memorial Goods, Simulacra, and the 'Realness' Problem of Pregnancy Loss. In, (eds) H. Ragone and F. W. Twine. *Ideologies and Technologies of Motherhood*. London: Routledge.

Layne, L. L., Taylor, J. S. and Wozniak, D. F. (2004). *Consuming Motherhood*. London: Rutgers University Press

Lunt, K. and Livingstone, S. (1992) *Mass consumption and personal identity*. London: Open University Press.

Martens L. 2010. The Cute, the Spectacle and the Practical: Narratives of new parents and babies at The Baby Show. In *Childhood and Consumer Culture*. Tingstad V and Buckingham D (Eds.). Palgrave MacMillan

Medvedev, K. (2012) It is a Garage Sale at Savers Everyday: An ethnography of the Savers thrift department store in Minneapolis. *Exchanging Clothes: Habits of Being II* C. Giorcelli and P. Rabinowitz, London: University of Minnesota Press, p. 230-254.

Miller, D. (1987). *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Miller, D. (1999). *A Theory of Shopping*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mintel (2012). *Baby and Nursery Equipment January 2012*. London: Mintel Group.

Ogle, J. P., Tyner, K. E. and Schofield-Tomschin, S. (2013). "The role of maternity dress consumption in shaping the self and identity during the liminal transition of pregnancy." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 13(2): 119-139.

ONS (2013). *Graduates in the UK Labour Market*. London: Office for National Statistics.

Prothero, A. (2002). "Consuming Motherhood: An Introspective Journey on Consuming to be a Good Mother." *Gender and Consumer Behavior* 6: 211-226.

Ponsford, R. (2011). "Consumption, resilience and respectability amongst young mothers in Bristol", *Journal of Youth Studies*, 14(5) 541-560

Ponsford, R. (2014). "I don't really care about me, as long as he gets everything he needs" - young women becoming mothers in consumer culture. *Young Consumers*, 15(3): 251-262.

Putnam, R. (2000). *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community* London: Simon & Schuster.

Trotter, R. T. (1999). Friends, Relatives, and Relevant Others: Conducting Ethnographic Network Studies. In, (eds) J. J. Schensul, M. D. LeCompte, R. T. Trotter, E. K. Cromley and M. Singer. *Mapping Social Networks, Spatial Data and Hidden Populations*. London: Sage: 1-49.

Vincent, C., Braun, A. and Ball, S. (2008) Childcare and social class: caring for young children in the UK. *Critical Social Policy*, 28(1)

Waight, E. (2014). *The Social, Cultural and Economic Role of NCT Nearly New Sales: Second-hand consumption and middle-class mothering*, Unpublished PhD thesis, the University of Southampton: UK

Waight, E. (2015) 'Buying for Baby: How Middle-Class Mothers Negotiate Risk with Second-Hand Goods' in, (eds). E. Casey and Y. Taylor *Everyday Life and Intimacies of Consumption*, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Williams, C. and Windebank, J. (2002). "The Excluded Consumer: A Neglected Aspect of Social Exclusion?" *Policy and Politics* 30(4): 501-513.