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Abstract

Textiles can evoke an emotional response that is induced by the smell, texture, memory and embodied experiences that are released through wearing, touching and talking about textiles. The textile artefact is our most universal designed object, with the capacity for us to experience it simultaneously with all our senses and emotions. The personal textile archive is a term created for this study to describe textiles that have been taken out of practical use, and have been informally, yet purposefully, gathered together. Textile artefacts within the personal textile archive function as both a treasury of personal, social and family memories, and as a treasury of design details.

A series of interviews were conducted in which participants were asked to discuss their own personal textile archives, in order to uncover the embodied experience that arises through interactions with these sentimental textiles. This rich experience of textiles was explored through the use of qualitative research methods developed from a phenomenological research methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Through a case study in which a couple of English and Punjabi heritage describe their wedding outfits, interviews set and analysed within a phenomenological paradigm demonstrate this method's facility to explore the interplay between design and experience.

Background

As designers, we produce objects and interventions with the natural world that augment the purpose and comfort of user's lives. When we design for textiles, we immerse ourselves in concept, aesthetics, colour, texture, process and story, and our consumers respond to our designs by literally wrapping both themselves and their homes in our designs. Through the process of living with and living within clothing and textiles, our designs become imbued with new meanings, memories and associations.

Fashion and textile design research has been typically examined through socio-cultural theories of the semantics of dress (Barthes 1992, Barnard 2002), from psycho-analytical perspectives (Boulton and Jerrard 2000, Bancroft 2011, Pajaczkowska 2005), through the analysis of innovation, process and technique (Braddock-Clarke and O'Mahony 2005) and from object-analysis and design history perspectives (Taylor 2002). All of these research orientations offer the possibility of unlocking specific viewpoints of fashion and textile design that can be applied to different research contexts to answer specific research questions.

Within the semantic tradition, clothing is interpreted as a form of visual communication, in which categories of clothing and their design details, including garment structure, fabric, and embellishments are semiotic texts to be read and deciphered. This facility to correctly interpret parts of a design, and decipher the feasible meanings within provides a method for understanding textiles as metaphors that represent concepts through the interplay of signifier and signified.

Design history research sets objects within their socio-cultural milieus and traditions of making, through the processes of collection, identification and conservation (Taylor 2002). Through the process of exploring and fleshing out these detailed histories, the processes of collection and identification serve to explain the production and consumption of clothing and textiles in context.

Studies of clothing and textiles set within the physical domain of experience have the capacity to expand the debate beyond the terms of the discourse set within the semiotic, psychoanalytical, technical and design history domains. Textile design research that draws on the most useful aspects of both semantic and design history research, and augments these approaches with the individual's experience of clothing and textiles, has provided fresh insights (Candy 2005). Within research settings, research methods that involve using imagery or artefacts for research participants

to explore have been demonstrated as effective methods to encourage the evocation and description of subjective embodied experience. These forms of research elicit rich data sets that can augment standard design research methods, such as focus groups and questionnaires. Methods including photo-elicitation and cultural probes have been appropriated from the social sciences, and developed by design researchers to investigate complex user engagement with designed objects (Harper 2002; Wyche, Sengers and Grinter 2006).

These methods are established within disciplines that touch upon our interactions with artefacts including design research (Norman 2004), anthropological investigations of material culture, and ethnographic research into the home (Plowman 2003; Pink 2007, 2009). Within the field of design research, the 'Design and Emotion Society's' (2006) set of research tools have established that research tools developed to explore the domains of experience can be as creative as the designed objects and scenarios they are intended to research. (<http://www.designandemotion.org/toolsmethods/>)

Within the fields of anthropology and the social sciences, investigations into textiles and clothing as objects of a person's culture provide fruitful domains for extending the established debates within textile and fashion design. In this way new insights arise through an interdisciplinary approach (Kuchler and Miller 2005, Keane 2005).

For the researcher interested in the consumer's lived experience of a textile artefact, studies grounded in phenomenology have the potential to supply the researcher with a methodologically established access point for the 'inner-world' of the consumer. There is a broad literature establishing the value of phenomenologically based studies for exploring lived experience within 'wicked-problem' haunted social fields that are practice-based, including nursing, education and psychology (van de Laar 2008; Flensner, Ek and Soderhamn 2003; Ashworth, Freewood and Macdonald 2003). Textile design researchers can draw upon this literature for elucidation on the ways in which users experience textile designs and artefacts.

The 'Personal Textile Archive'

Textiles accompany us on our journey from birth to death, and form our most frequent human engagement with designed forms (Schoeser and Boydell 2002:1). Despite the ubiquity of the clothing and interior textile object, each person's personal set of

experiences and memories that become embodied in their associations with these artefacts is unique (Lerpiniere 2009). These unique experiences provide multifaceted interactions that relate to Ihde's 'hermeneutics of materiality', (1993) which extends the hermeneutic project of interpretation beyond written forms. In the 'hermeneutics of materiality' material artefacts are investigated and interpreted, leading to an understanding of how objects and experience are constitutive elements of our lived experience which make up our 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger 1962). This process of selection and intent continues throughout our lives, through to the formation of what I term the personal textile archive; the body of textile artefacts (either garments or interior textiles) that are kept beyond their practical use for their symbolism or sentimental attachment. The research centres on exploring what forms these 'personal textile archives' adopt, and how these might mediate both personal and family memories and narratives.

Archives function both as a host for important cultural documents, and as a means to define the parameters of the debate (Foucault 2011:145). The archivist creates their mandate through the selection of items within the archive. They define the nature of the discourse, through controlling the range of accepted memories held within. In this way, the archive serves to install the archivist's agency as the gateway for memory, within groups and social networks. As Derrida notes, the archivist is responsible for the,

'physical security of what is deposited, and the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence.' (Derrida 1998:2)

The 'personal textile archive' exists within these same domains of social, cultural and historical importance, but also serves an intermediary for the archivist, between their personal experiences, relationships, memories, sense of identity, and selfhood.

Phenomenology

If designers are to have an in-depth understanding of how their designed products are experienced by the consumer, they must make allowances for the emotive domains of 'multi-sensory modalities' that are constituted and mediated by the senses. (Pink 2007; Desmet, van Erp and Karlsson 2008). Phenomenology's philosophical enquiry encompasses areas as broad as transcendentalism (Husserl 1993,1970) ontology and existentialism, (Heidegger 1962, Merleau- Ponty 1962) and hermeneutics (Heidegger 1969, Gadamer 1969).

From these philosophical positions, which centre on life as it is lived through sensory experience, phenomenology has been used as the underpinning for the development of a formal research methodology. This field has been particularly developed by those in practice-based fields, including psychologists, who see the value of the phenomenological emphasis on the subjective human experience of phenomena. Langdridge (2008) describes the appeal of a phenomenological study for researchers across a range of disciplines, as a type of study that is methodologically sound, yet explores subjective, individual experience from the internal point of view of the individual. Phenomenological research methods enable designers to explore and categorize the broad diversity of user experience of design, whilst still allowing the narrative voice of the user's experience to emerge. Phenomenological research methods are under-explored in the textile design research literature, and represent a real-world opportunity for fashion and textile designers to elicit complex data on the users' experiences of the products of the design process, situating design research in the same multi-sensory world in which they are experienced.

The research method illustrated in this paper has been applied to gain an insight into the experience of each item that forms the personal textile archive, and the narratives used to describe these. These are found within the context of the individual's lifeworld, through data collection 'events' (interviews or diaries) which draw out 'detailed stories, thoughts and feelings from the participant' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009:56).

The model for the data analysis of this study has been developed from the approach of Smith Flowers and Larkin's (2009:56) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, or IPA. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is particularly suited to research that investigates areas of complexity or novelty, as its aim is to explore the social world (Smith and Osborn 2007:53). The assumption in orientating a research study in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is that the analyst values and is interested in investigating the hidden, psychological world of the interviewee, through their 'story', which may extend to the point whereby the 'story itself can be said to represent a piece of the respondent's identity'(Smith and Osborn 2007:66).

Research Participants

The characteristic that defined the appropriateness of the interviewees for the study was their engagement with the practice of selecting and keeping textiles beyond

their practical purpose, for sentimental reasons, thus forming their own personal textile archives. The research participants were selected through word of mouth, and were followed up with a questionnaire. The questionnaires determined that they were willing to participate, and that they were relevant to the study through the criteria of having items which formed a personal textile archive.

Standard operating procedure

In common with the procedure for conducting a phenomenological interview, the interview questions were developed to allow for the authentic voice of the participant to appear. The questions were based on Ashworth's (2003a, 2003b) 'Fractions of the Lifeworld' method. These are a series of fields which are intended to explore the participant's inner world in a thoughtful and phenomenologically oriented manner. No list of concepts can ever fully represent the complete constituted exploration of human experience, but they formed an excellent starting point for discussion. The fractions are: discourse, project, sociality, temporality, selfhood, embodiment, and spatiality.

Selfhood is concerned with questions of how a given situation impacts upon a person's sense of social identity and agency (Ashworth 2003a). Sociality explores how a given situation occurs in relation to others (Ashworth 2003a). Embodiment explores with how an event or situation will engage the physical body, including gendered embodiment, emotional embodiment and issues relating to disability (Ashworth 2003b). Temporality relates to how an individual's experience of time is affected, from the smallest moment of time through to one's sense of lifelong autobiography (Ashworth 2003b). Spatiality relates to the interaction with a specific location and how relevant and important this is in understanding the context of an experience (Ashworth 2003b). Project relates to the actions that constitute the activities that are undertaken for their contribution to one's life, from the day to day or regularly scheduled event, to the extraordinary event, and how these relate to the overall context of the individual's life (Ashworth 2003b). Discourse relates to the terms in which one discusses and describes life experience, and how these terms define the situations or events described (Ashworth 2003b). In relation to the study on the personal textile archive, these '7 Fractions' served to maximize the opportunity for eliciting responses with as wide an engagement with being-in-the-world as possible. For example, the question designed to invite a response on the subject of embodiment was, 'Is there a sense you associate with this piece, such as the smell, look or touch?'

Though the research questions were designed with a 'fraction' each in mind, it was envisaged that the answer given by the participant might explore another fraction, or none. This is encouraged as a demonstration that the questioning is sufficiently 'light touch' to allow the research participant's own authentic voice to emerge, rather than forcing participants' responses to fit any given hypothesis.

Case study

For the case study, separate interviews of approximately 1-2 hours each were conducted with a recently married couple, in which their two pairs of wedding outfits – one typically Western in style, and one typically Punjabi - were part of their own personal 'personal textile archive'. Parminder, the bride, is British, of Punjabi Indian heritage (her parents were immigrants to Britain during the 1960's) and Paul, the groom, is White British. Both were born and raised within 20km of their current residence in the British Midlands. The value of the interview that is grounded in phenomenology is demonstrated through the rich and concrete descriptions that were elicited from the research participants. These descriptions evoke the multi-faceted, complex and at time contradictory emotions and experiences that constitute the threads that are woven together in any given experience. Through the interview and analysis process, a web of interlinking embodied memories of the four wedding outfits was revealed, detailed in Table 1.

These wedding outfits facilitated the interplay between self-identity and culture; for Paul the experience of a new culture, and for Parminder, links between her 'English' and 'Punjabi' identities. Through describing their wedding outfits, the couple explored facets of their own and their spouse's culture, the negotiation between their personal expectations and external cultural expectations, and the role of fantasy, based on the playful adoption of characters and narratives from cinema. These facets came together to demonstrate the role of the wedding garments as mediators between Parminder's and Paul's own sense of self and the cultural phenomenon of the contemporary British wedding. Four wedding outfits were described within the two interviews, as they were married in typically 'Western' style dress, and changed after the evening meal into Punjabi wedding outfits. For Parminder, the outfit she described as her 'English style' wedding dress was a strapless floor length white wedding dress, with a full hooped skirt, a train and a long veil. The surface of the dress was embroidered, beaded and embellished. The other outfit was a 'lengha' suit, a 3 piece Punjabi bridal outfit consisting of a circular gathered embellished and embroidered

skirt, cropped embroidered and embellished top with a lace up back, and a heavily embellished head-scarf ('chuni'). (Figure 1) For Paul, his outfits (Figure 2) were a Western style 3 piece beige suit worn with a pink shirt, and tie, and a Punjabi groom's outfit. The Punjabi outfit consisted of a long embellished and embroidered ivory and gold tunic-style top, a long red scarf with gold embroidery, a loose churidar style pair of trousers and embroidered gold and ivory slippers.

Through the phenomenological analysis of the interviews, themes arose that related to the entire process of their involvement with the four outfits, from acquisition to consumption, and from consumption to storage. These included memories of preparing to acquire the outfits, through wearing the garments on the day, and subsequently viewing the garments, as they were taken out of storage, in their course of their day to day lives, or for the purpose of the research interview. Key design details

	Lengha	White Wedding	Beige Suit	Punjabi Wedding Suit
ARCHIVING				
The physical archive	X	X		X
Archive objects as symbols	X	X		X
Material value of archive	X	X		X
Photographs and the archive	X	X		
EMBODIMENT				
Comfort				X
Discomfort				X
Posture			X	X
Embodied memory	X	X		
Emotions	X	X		
IDENTITY				
Playing a role	X	X		X
Positive self-identity	X	X		
Identity difficulties				X
Transformation				X
CULTURE				
Wearing culture	X	X		
Symbolising culture	X	X		
Links with tradition	X			
Cultural difficulties	X			X
TEMPORALITY				
Representing a specific time	X	X		X
Era	X	X		X
DESIGN				
Design elements				X
Colour				X
Embellishment	X	X		X
Design and embodiment	X	X		X
Styling	X	X		
Design stories	X	X		X
SCHEMES & PROJECTS				
Planning	X	X		
SOCIAL DOMAINS				
Relationships				X
Friendship	X	X		X
Family	X			
Family difficulties	X			
Links to the maternal line	X			
LOCATION				
Real location		X		X
Imagined location		X		

Table 1, Master Table of Case Study Interview Themes

Figure 1, Parminder's
Wedding Lengha



and how these
added or subtracted to the quality of their experience of the garments and the value
that is added by the individual through memory and their personal interaction were
discussed.

When we explore
how a person
interacts with a
designed object,
we explore how
a subject and an
object 'constitute'
each other – we not
only interact with
the objects around
us, but through
their presence we
determine our own
sense of being-in-
the-world (Verbeek
2005). This is what



Figure 2 Punjabi groom's suit detail

Daniel Miller (2009:60) labels a 'dialectical theory of material culture' whereby through using an object for a specific function (such as 'tunic-wearing') this makes us realise ourselves as belonging a 'tunic-wearing society'. Objects,

'help you gently to learn how to act appropriately. This theory also gives shape and form to the idea that objects make people. Before we can make things, we are ourselves grown up and matured in the light of things that come down from the previous generations.' Miller (2009).

This concept is adeptly illustrated by Parminder's situation of her own wedding dress within the context of her maternal lines; in describing how she felt when she wore her Punjabi wedding outfit, she described feelings of 'timelessness' in which she could be from 'any era' - her mother's era, or her grandmother's, stretching back into an imagined landscape of historical India. A rich landscape of imagined terrain in which Parminder located herself at the end-point of a maternal line was evoked. Against this backdrop Parminder imagined how her female ancestors would have worn their wedding lenghas. To maintain this link, she attempted to emulate a timeless style of wearing the 'chuni' or head-dress, that was not too modern, and not too old-fashioned for her wedding. When asked if the lengha reminded her of a particular place, Parminder drew upon an imaginary location, rather than a geographical one, from the classic Indian film, *Laila Majnu*. In this setting she was in the role of Laila, the beautiful girl betrothed to a Prince who drives her true love to become a 'Majnu' (or 'madman') insane with unrequited passion,

'I imagine like an old 'Laila Majnu' film. You know, where he is so besotted with her, and she is being carried in a carriage with men carrying the carriage, you know what I mean? And very old fashioned weddings when there were no vehicles and people traditionally carried you in a little carriage. And you just imagine being whisked away in that- if you can be, being carried by men- to your new home. The men in your family would carry you in that to your new home and it could be for miles and miles, you know? It was like you were a special ornament being delivered to somebody else's home.' (Parminder, 2009)

When Parminder wore the lengha, themes arose of embodiment and culture, and she felt compelled to 'dance and dance'. The lengha suit embodied the whole of Punjabi culture to her; with links between dancing, culture and music. It represented,

'The wedding, the children, the respect, the gossip, the religion, everything, the food, but the music, I think it's mostly the music for me'. (Parminder, 2009)

For Parminder, when she wore the lengha, she embodied all the characteristics of the Punjabi culture that she had been brought up within. If clothing is a means through which we ground ourselves in and embody a culture, (Welster 2011:235) Parminder's selection of the lengha to celebrate the evening festivities of her Western style wedding situated her within the Punjabi diaspora – selecting this cultural expression, for this cultural event. Though no longer able to take a full part in her birth culture, due to family estrangement, through the project of selecting, buying and wearing her lengha suit, she was able to put her culture on and experience it again on her wedding day.

For Paul, the Punjabi groom's suit also evoked a physical embodied response, and acted as a means of physically 'trying on' his bride's culture. He spoke with warmth and enthusiasm about his Punjabi suit, in contrast to the beige Western style suit, which he only mentioned once, in an unfavourable comparison with the comfort of the Punjabi suit. In wearing the Punjabi suit, he felt transformed, and the suit represented the opposite of everything he thought he was, or ever would be. He delighted in feeling 'glamorous' and 'Bollywood' and admitted that he had dressed up and pranced about his bedroom in the outfit, 'many a time'. In wearing the Punjabi suit he felt opposite to his day-to-day self, and this was reflected in his physical demeanour, it was,

'a shoulders back, chest out, legs akimbo, 'look at me aren't I clever' kind of suit.' (Paul, 2009)

Through the process of wearing clothing, the boundary between one self and another becomes apparent (Entwistle 2003:133). Through wearing the Punjabi groom's suit, Paul becomes aware of a change in his posture, and the transformative powers of dress.

One of the unexpected themes that arose within both interviews was the recall of feelings of sadness or regret that both Paul and Parminder also associated with their Punjabi wedding outfits. For Parminder this was described in vivid detail as she recalled the trip to buy both the outfits for her and for Paul, on her own with her baby son. As she held the lengha in the interview, she recalled a moment she hadn't anticipated prior to going shopping. She had chosen to go alone with her baby on

the bus, in the way in which one would typically approach a shopping trip. As she was browsing the outfits in the Indian bridal shop, she had had a realisation that the staff in the shop were being 'quiet' with her. She recalled thinking,

'hang on a minute, how must this look?' and then I felt sorry for myself, because I just thought, there is no mum there, no sister there, and I am too Westernized maybe for them because I have a kid in tow as well, so what must they be thinking of me?' (Parminder, 2009)

The feeling that dawned on her was of being culturally adrift, and of a poignant sense of the family who were not present. Through not following the Indian tradition in shopping for the lengha suit with her mother, aunts and sisters, Parminder set herself apart as different to the other brides in the shop, a difference that was all the more extreme for her shopping with her baby in tow.

For Paul, a theme arose which related to cultural sensitivities and not wishing to cause offence. When Parminder asked him to wear the Punjabi suit, he was concerned about offending her family, even though the couple weren't certain whether any of her siblings would attend. In the interview, as he described the suit, amongst recollections that could be categorised within the themes of embodiment, transformation, location and temporality he suddenly recalled 'a sting in the tail', when he had transgressed cultural norms and offended Parminder's friend. In the absence of Parminder's mother at the wedding, this friend had taken on the role of dressing both the bride and the groom, and was insisting that Paul had to drape the long scarf in a particular way, which Paul was disinclined to do. As Paul described,

'apparently, swearing at elder Asians is not the done thing, and I swore at her, told her to go away, so there's a bit of a sting in the tail. I'm still overcoming that particular issue.' (Paul, 2009)

Key to their experience of their wedding outfits, were the design details. For Paul, the key details recalled of the Punjabi suit were external signifiers of dramatic glamour, 'on the right side of bad taste', which included the gold embroidery, the sequins, and visual references to Bollywood. For Parminder, the key design features of the lengha suit were the colour, and she describes how prior to going to purchase it, she could visualize the exact shade of red she wanted, and her success in obtaining it. Central to her description of what she wanted was balance between beauty and simplicity, a delicate design that was heavily weighted from the embellishments, and

the different possibilities of transformation that could arise through how the outfit was styled: in particular, the position of the headscarf on the head could reference any era - from ancient, in which the entire face was covered, as her grandmother would have worn it, to the hair and forehead being covered, as a 'traditional' bride such as Parminder and her mother would choose, to very 'modern' with the scarf just hanging off the bun. In reference to her white western-style wedding dress, Parminder drew upon 'external' narratives – stories selected from cultural forms, rather than 'internal' narratives of personal events. As she prepared for her shopping trip to buy her white dress, her visual reference for her bridal gown and hairstyle came through references to films she had watched as a child, which set the scene for her fantasies of a 'perfect white wedding'. Through the filter of film, Parminder chose a 'Cinderella' dress, based on her experience of growing up watching Disney's version of the Cinderella tale. Cinderella represented not only the style of dress, but a wider narrative in which the story ends with a 'happy ever-after' wedding. In contrast, for her hairstyle, Parminder held in her mind's eye an image of 'Holly Golightly' and the ways in which her hair and tiara represented her happy, carefree life. When the completed bridal look came together, the dress was a reference to Cinderella, but the tiara and hairstyle were pure Holly Golightly, and for Parminder this duo of design references worked harmoniously to help her create her starring role as the 'perfect' bride.

Conclusion

Clothing and textiles tell the stories of our lives: our affinities, ties, social milieus, affiliations and links with family are woven and knitted into their forms. To interpret a style of dress or an individual garment, it is necessary to draw upon the details within the garments, the semantic signifiers, elements of the design and clues from the process of manufacture. These elements of interpretation set the garment within its social, geographical, temporal and cultural contexts. However, without the rich social data that arises through understanding the context in which clothing and textiles are used, this information will be by definition one-sided: through empowering the theorist, the user, and by extension the designer, are disregarded. Through augmenting the design and manufacturing data and details with the user's experience of the textile or garment through using methods to uncover the symbolic nature of the garment's meaning for the individual, our understanding of clothing and textiles becomes multi-dimensional and enriched. Through using the interpre-

tative phenomenological interview as a method to capture the inner voice of the participant, thereby uncovering their experience of their wedding outfits, a rich and embodied interplay of signification through the garments is revealed. The process of conducting phenomenological interviews brings forth the biographical nature of the garments into focus, as loci for memory and narratives relating to the self. This method of grounding and interpreting the interview through phenomenological theory and practice allows a direct conduit into previously unspoken, natural emotional reactions to design. This is intended as an addition and supplement to the existing design research toolbox. Through describing objects as they are experienced, the user's authentic voice appears, giving a unique window to the experience of design.

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List of figures

Figure 1: Parminder's wedding lengha

Figure 2: Punjabi groom's outfit detail