Socially Responsible Fashion Practice: Looking Good and Feeling Good

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1. Introduction

Information describing the impact that fast fashion production has upon the environment has accelerated over the last year, with numerous reports in the media and news (cf. Agerholm 2019; Seigle 2019). In 2019, the United Nations reported that the fashion industry is the second most polluting industry in the world (United Nations 2019a). As the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) seek to provide a better and more sustainable future for all (United Nations 2020), understanding how the fashion industry impacts upon the natural environment and resources offers only a partial response. To progress SDG 12 ('Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns'), it is important to establish the barriers consumers experience in performing sustainable consumption and why current production patterns are unsustainable. For over a decade, the fashion industry has been criticised for not assuming socially responsible fashion production, nor encouraging consumers to adopt sustainable fashion consumption behaviours (Centre for Sustainable Fashion 2009; Hearson 2008); neglect for sustainable responsibility was also evident in the Raza Plaza factory collapse that killed 1134 workers (Safi and Rushe 2018). Although this forced Western brands and retailers to insist on health and safety implementations, it does not go far enough to rectify all the issues (Safi and Rushe 2018), such as overlooking neglect for the environment and worker conditions (Ritch 2019). Rather than addressing sustainability and using this as a way to create value, fashion retailers continue to compete with lower prices, endorsing normalised Western behaviours that encourage more consumption (United Nations 2019a).

In fact, it seems that the race to the bottom continues, with Misguided (UK online fashion retailer) marketing a bikini for GBP 1.00 in the summer of 2019 (Abraham 2019): this price does not represent the true cost of the impact that excavating materials and production has upon the environment, or the consequences for those involved in the supply chain (United Nations 2019a; Rivoli 2009). Although some high street retailers have introduced facets of sustainable production—such as H&M's Conscious Collection, M&S's responsibly sourced cotton and both M&S and H&M, along with

Zara, encouraging unwanted garments to be recycled in store (United Nations 2019a; Ritch 2019)—this seems a small concession given the volume of fast fashion garments that are annually produced, sold, and discarded (United Nations 2019a); particularly, as vouchers are offered in exchange to encourage further consumption (Ritch 2019). Academic research has investigated how consumers deliberate fashion consumption from an ethical and sustainable position, and found that consumers are reluctant to sacrifice style over ambiguous allegations (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a; McNeil and Moore 2015). As the fashion industry continues to skirt around the issues of sustainability, fashion-conscious consumers remain unable to express their preferences to avoid the detrimental consequences of fashion production, compromising their pleasure of fashion consumption.

The aim of this chapter is to examine the discord between fashion and sustainability, often referred to as an oxymoron (Black 2008). Framed within social identity theory, tensions between the use of fashion as an identity signaller and preferences to mitigate the detrimental impact fashion has on the environment are illuminated upon. The chapter will first establish the background context, examining the rise of sustainability within mainstream consciousness and the impetus for businesses, including the fashion industry, to address rising concerns. Accordingly, fashion-related behaviours that position the construction of self through commodity signalling and related emotive feelings are considered, along with the potential to link fashion, identity, and altruism within sustainable fashion consumption behaviours. Social identity theory is then introduced, followed by outlining the research agenda and presenting the findings. The chapter concludes with commentary on how the fashion industry can benefit from raising consumer awareness of the ways in which the fashion industry is unsustainable, and the efforts that can be made to adopt socially responsible fashion practice.

2. Background Context

Despite continued interest in sustainability, including that of academics who have examined numerous ways in which to advance the sustainably agenda, the scale of the issues continues to magnify. Whilst consumers report concern for the issues, this is not replicated in the sales of sustainably produced goods (Carrington et al. 2010). However, recent consumer activism, especially from younger people, has illustrated heightened concern, and activists are urging the government and businesses to do more to address sustainability (Read 2019; Wilson-Powell 2019). In this chapter, sustainability encapsulates the definition provided by the World Commission on Economic Development (1987), stating that international co-operation which

prioritises sustainable development is underpinned by equal consideration for the environment, economy, and social wellbeing to ensure 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (ibid: 34). This places equal importance on limiting environmental damage as well as ensuring that people have the ability to create economy and protect their wellbeing. As planetary resources are finite, continued excavation will compromise water supplies and growing crops (United Nations 2020; Rivoli 2009); the climate is already experiencing disruption, with fires, flooding, and draughts, and this has resulted in deaths, disease, reduced cognitive capacity, childhood stunting, and malnutrition (Carbon Brief 2019; Lyon 2019). Recent reports claim that urgent action is required in addressing climate change, as limited time (11 years) remains to halt irreversible damage (United Nations 2019b). To address this broad statement, the SDGs provide a framework to address the global challenges (United Nations 2020). Although the fashion industry is also a major contributor to the global economy, economic growth should not be at the cost of endangering the planet (United Nations 2020).

Recently, business leaders have been warned about the importance of addressing sustainability. At the Annual Meeting of the International Monitory Fund, Mervin King (former governor of the Bank of England) warned that the world economy is 'sleepwalking towards a fresh economic and financial crisis that will have devastating consequences for the democratic market system' and that recovery from the 2008–2009 recession was slower and less stable than after the Great Depression in the 1930s (Elliott 2019). Further, Mark Carney, the current Bank of England governor, cautioned businesses that unless they moved towards zero-carbon emissions, they would be punished by various stakeholders and would face bankruptcy. Like King, Carney also expressed fears that failure to 'tackle the climate crisis could result in an abrupt financial collapse' (Carrington 2019). There are three implications from those assertions: firstly, consumers remain price conscious as salaries have stagnated in relation to inflation, which has reduced their pricing threshold (Ritch and Brownlie 2016b) and is a consequence of continued financial instability since the recession (Rudawska et al. 2013); secondly, as the current dominant paradigm of production and consumption appears unsustainable for economic growth (Ritch 2016), neither benefiting people as consumers or employees (the race to the bottom and the erosion of workers' rights are now experienced in the United Kingdom—zero-hour contracts, the gig economy, etc. (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu 2019) reducing consumers' disposable income) and certainly not the planet as described previously; thirdly,

this appears to be an opportunistic time for reconfiguring responsible production and consumption.

Despite the fashion industry falling behind the trend for sustainability, consumer awareness is increasing (Read 2019; Wilson-Powell 2019). Other consumption contexts appear more advanced, particularly the current nudge to reconsider single-use plastic (Howard et al. 2019), and more consumers now carry shopping bags, water bottles, and reusable coffee cups with lids to avoid plastic waste. Yet, fashion consumption is more complex; fashion constructs identity (Anand and Kaur 2017), indicating status, lifestyle, and belonging (Goldsmith and Clark 2008). Fashion sends symbolic signals to others that portrays social self (Anand and Kaur 2017) and Nash (2019) found that acquiring new fashion increased self-confidence. Hudson and Hudson (2003) postulate that marketing activities are positioned from the perspective that consumption increases personal satisfaction that contributes to feelings of wellbeing (O'Guinn and Faber 1989). This is evidenced in fashion marketing, which focuses on style, fashion consciousness, and how the consumer will look wearing the garment, improving self-esteem (Díaz-Meneses 2010; Richins 1999). Interest in fashion is a potent precursor to engaging with new styles, something that Díaz-Meneses (2010) explored along with the emotive complexity of fashion consumption; she found that fashion thought to be aesthetically pleasing and with a good fit provided pleasure and satisfaction related to self-actualisation. Niinimäki (2010) also identified that the hedonism experienced with fashion superseded ethical tendencies that were often applied in other consumption contexts. Further, Joy et al. (2012) and Ritch (2015) found that despite adopting sustainable behaviours in some consumption contexts (recycling, buying sustainable food), this did not transfer to fashion. The main differentiation is that fashion is akin to a language—it is a silent communication of identity and values. Although, research has exposed that tensions are experienced through a misalignment of socially responsible fashion practice and sustainability preferences (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a; McNeil and Moore 2015), the industry remains unresponsive. As fashion-interested consumers prioritise fashion aesthetics over ethical or sustainable implications, Niinimäki (2010) believes that all fashion, including mainstream options, should be produced responsibly to satisfy appearance (looking good) and to ensure that consumers feel good about their consumption.

Status, belonging, and self-esteem are also traits that are linked with ethical and sustainability consumption (McGoldrick and Freestone 2008), particularly as social identity links with behaviours that can be influenced by others (Nash 2019; Richins 1999). Griskevicius et al. (2010) found that signalling status and wealth

was experienced from purchasing a hybrid car because they are more expensive, yet have a reputation for lower performance; therefore, hybrid car owners illustrate their willingness to sacrifice comfort and efficiency for wider societal good. 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 where sustainable options encompass both personal satisfaction as well as a response to social responsibility (Smith 1999, p. 154). Similarly, Cervellon et al. (2009) and Zabkar and Hosta (2012) identified elevated status linked to the purchase of organic produce, while Cherrier (2006) found that some consumers use green shopping bags rather than plastic bags to illustrate their commitment to environmental conservation. Therefore, being socially responsible is considered as good citizenship, increasing esteem and leading to altruism (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a, 2016b; Niinimäki 2010). For the fashion industry to assume responsibility for socially responsible production by creating enhanced value that is responsive to current concerns, there are similar advantages that increase consumers' sense of wellbeing and reduce the tensions currently experienced.

However, as the current marketing message to fashion consumers focuses more on enhancing appearance and status—values that are consumer orientated (pro-self) —than on wider social concerns that include production practice (pro-social) (Hudson and Hudson 2003), nudging consumers to consider sustainability is required. Fashion production is somewhat obscured, not only from being located in developing countries that are geographically distant and culturally diverse but also because consumers have limited understanding of what fashion production entails; for example, consumers are unaware that pesticide use to increase cotton production depletes the soil of fertility, that dye disposed of negligently impacts on water supplies (Rivoli 2009), or that the complexity of tracing supply chains means that allegations of exploitation cannot be rectified (Ritch 2019). When fashion brands are criticised for neglecting responsibility, the response is to blame the supply chain and purportedly rectify workers conditions/pay or apply a cultural context (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a). The facelessness of the garment workers dehumanises their experience (Lyon 2006), leading to consumer disconnect. This temporal gap is a consequence of overseas production, where cultural employment experiences and expectations are somewhat abstract; Western consumers struggle to relate to the workers' experience in developing countries, or make sense of what is an appropriate salary (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a). Additionally, sustainability can also be described as abstract, especially as the detrimental consequences of climate change seem futuristic and will be experienced more quickly in developing countries than for

Western consumers (Stern 2006), who need to temper their consumption practice. Issues around sustainability are also complex; it is easier for consumers ignore the severity of the consequences, especially when a sacrifice of preferred consumer values is required.

Fashion consumers using mainstream markets have little option to prioritise their sustainable preferences, other than the small efforts of some high street brands or choosing sustainable fashion brands which are more expensive and less convenient to access. Other options are voice or exit (Hudson and Hudson 2003) but, again, this requires a sacrifice in appearance which would impact on esteem and confidence. Yet, there are many ways in which value can be created within production, from information on 'who made my clothes' (the annual Fashion Revolution campaign in response to the Rana Plaza disaster) to recycled fibres that 'close the loop' of production, consumption, and disposal; both of these offer aspects of socially responsible fashion practice that includes the emotive complexities of fashion and further endorse positive feelings of looking good and doing good. To explore the mutual benefits of socially responsible fashion production and consumption, social identity theory provides a framework to examine the values transmitted through commodity consumption. Although social identity theory has been previously applied to fashion, this has not included sustainable fashion.

2.1. Social Identity Theory

Upon reflection, it is unsurprising that social identity theory offers the opportunity to frame the findings; the sampling characteristics of this research captured a narrow demographic of social grouping (professionally working mothers). Social identity theory can explain the relationship between consumers and their social environment, as well as how they perceive their consumer group, emerging from attitudes and beliefs (Bartels and Hoogendam 2010); this could include whether sustainability attributes are deemed important for consumption practice and how fashion and appearance signal 'same social category' (Tajfel and Turner 1979, p. 59). Within this, identity formation relates to how someone chooses to place themselves within society, informing appearance, lifestyle, and practices that may include a political stance (Liu 2019; Badaoui et al. 2018). Social categorisation is a cognitive process that segments and classifies people, is used to inform self-reference and the construction of self, and offers a sense of belonging to the social world (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Belk (1988) illustrated the use of possessions as constructing self and signalling one's self-orientation to others. Social group membership (whether conscious or not) signals self-concept through efforts to belong within social identity

groups and conform to expected practices and performances (Liu 2019). This will include fashion selection, linguistic articulation, ideology, and related cultural lifestyle attributes that indicate intergroup belonging (Badaoui et al. 2018; McNeill 2018).

The accepted culture and behaviour which is inherent to the chosen group (Badaoui et al. 2018) is also symbolic of social class and status (Belk 1988) that offer feelings of self-esteem (Stryker and Burke 2000). The emotive involvement found in belonging (Bartels and Hoogendam 2010) and the altruism experienced from being a socially responsible consumer (Moisander 2000) cannot be overlooked. For example, certain attributes are related to assumptions of mothering, such as being caring and nurturing (Ritch and Brownlie 2016b), and this might include educating children on being good citizens through caring for the environment and workers within the supply chain (Ritch and Brownlie 2016b). Furthermore, experiencing an inability to perform to the expected ideals of the social group can lead to reduced self-confidence (Liu 2019). Bartels and Hoogendam (2010) found that social environment was an important aspect of encouraging green (sustainable) consumerism, and that there was a modest relationship between different aspects of environmental behaviours; this infers that positive feelings for sustainable practices extend into other consumption contexts. They also found that compliance with sustainability was related to increased social mobility (Bartels and Hoogendam 2010). Therefore, understanding what motivates participation in social group settings and the meaning derived from social identity (McNeill 2018) offers marketing managers opportunities to create meaningful marketing activities. Moreover, a better understanding of how to comply with sustainable behaviours increases confidence, and altruism will help to better position social marketing.

2.2. Research Agenda

The research adopted a broad approach to better understand how sustainability is 'thought through' (Szmigin et al. 2009, p. 379) and how it is existentially experienced within families, with a specific focus on fashion. The premise was to examine how sustainability was perceived in theory and practice, as well as how this differentiated between consumption contexts. This approach was considered necessary as other contexts (the food industry, reusing plastic bags, recycling, etc.) are more advanced in addressing the sustainability agenda that the fashion industry (Ritch 2015). Although the previous literature has attempted to identify demographic and psychographic factors that increase the propensity for sustainability practice, there is little consensus regarding the defining characteristics that result in sustainability involvement (Bray et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, lifestyles encapsulate similar characteristics which establish commonality (D'Souza et al. 2007). The extant literature has reported that sustainability was more important for certain social groups. Firstly, women are considered as being more proactive in implementing sustainability in the home (do Paço and Raposo 2010), which could be a consequence of women still carrying out a higher percentage of household tasks, including consumption, within some family dynamics (Cappellini and Yen 2016); secondly, motherhood has inspired consideration for the world in which children encounter (Prothero and Fitchett 2000), and as sustainably produced food is marketed as kinder towards the environment as well as providing a healthier diet, this has led to mothers reporting preferences for sustainable production, particularly organic, which is grown without the use of pesticides (Atkinson 2014; Cairns et al. 2013); finally, attainment of higher education is thought to increase the level of interest in current affairs, including concern for climate change and human rights (Kriwy and Mecking 2012). Therefore, the sampling approach of convenience and snowballing (Anderson et al. 2016) was adopted to focus on those three characteristics, seeking mothers who worked in a professional occupation as this determined higher education attainment. Initially, five participants were approached and interviewed, with each asked to recommend another five potential participants. In total, 28 participants were interviewed for between 60 and 90 minutes, all of whom lived in Edinburgh and the surrounding Lothians; however, some were originally from other countries and brought with them experience of different levels of sustainability practice.

After gaining ethical approval from Queen Margaret University, phenomenological interviews (Thompson et al. 1989) provided an opportunity for an exploratory inquiry to examine everyday lifeworlds (Smith et al. 2009). The aim of phenomenological interviews is to understand the phenomena 'as lived', beginning with a broad question to explore the lived experience (Thompson et al. 1989) that is not based on prior hypothesis (Guillard 2018). Therefore, the interviews began by asking "How does fashion come into the home, for you and your children, and what factors are important?" After this question had been discussed with additional probing questions, in order to manage the direction of the interview and encourage discussion around sustainability, garment labels that contained facets of sustainable production were introduced as primers (Pink 2005). This included fabric made from recycled plastic bottles (M&S); fabric made in an eco-factory (M&S); organic cotton (M&S); enzyme-washed garments (John Lewis); t-shirts made from sustainable cotton sources, with the label and logo of the t-shirt in support of avoiding child labour in cotton production (Environmental Justice Foundation). The informants were contacted with

a request for an interview, and basic demographic information that would support analysis was collected, including age, family structure, occupation, and weekly number of hours worked. Those factors were considered likely to impact on their ability or engagement to adopt sustainability.

The informants were all professionally working mothers, spanning accountants, lawyers, academics, and teachers; work patterns ranged from 12 h per week to full-time. They were aged between 28 and 48 years, and most cohabited with the fathers, with two being single mothers; the number of children in the household was between one and four. Data interrogation followed Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al. 2009), which included the data being considered through three lenses: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. To achieve this, a table was formulated with the participant's narrative before being analysed descriptively—unpacking what was said; linguistically—how it was said (for example, the participants sometimes whispered as though relaying a secret); and conceptually—what do they really mean (for example, a participant spoke at length about a furniture retailer who constantly advertised a sale, but what she really meant was that she was uncertain what the true price was, was it the pre-sale price or sale price, and she questioned the integrity of price tactics).

The process began with an in-depth analysis of two informants who were selected due to their reconceptualisation of value after becoming a mother. P-10 began to focus more on sustainability, in a similar way that Prothero (Prothero and Fitchett 2000 reacted after bringing a child into the world and questioning what kind of world the next generation would inherit. P-20 also was concerned about the health implications of pesticide use in food production, and the family followed an organic diet. Related to fashion and identity formation, it was provisioning that expressed values; immersed in the home while on her third maternity leave, P-20 was less concerned about her attire as most of her time focused on nurturing the children. This is unsurprising, as Giddens (1991, p. 11) suggests that familial change culminates in 'establishing a new sense of identity'. Familial change was also experienced by P-20, who had returned to study and found her time juxtaposed between part-time work, university, and the home. She considered her appearance for each activity, adopting the accepted norms for each activity to illustrate her sense of belonging. However, the financial restrictions she experienced meant she had to suspend her ethical values, and although previously a vegetarian, she found herself buying non-free-range chicken to provide nutritious meals for her children. Consequently, those two informants illustrate that fashion, identity and appearance are related to situational constructs: internal (invested in the home and child-rearing) and external

(participation in external activities, such as work and study), and selected fashion that was appropriate for each activity. Once themes had been developed, the other transcripts were analysed for supporting narratives.

3. Informant Perceptions and Discussion

This chapter focuses on the themes around identity, appearance, fashion consumption, and misalignment of ideology. The analysis identified that the informants conceptualised their identity as threefold, as captured in Figure 1:
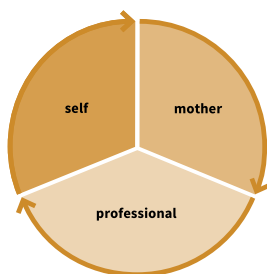

Figure 1. Conceptualisations of identity formation. Source: Own illustration.

Figure 1 not only describes concepts of identity formation, but also illustrates the main functions that constituted their everyday lifeworlds, as a point of reference to how they managed time, responsibility, and finances. As professionally working mothers, the informants expressed multiple identities, which, as found by Bartels and Hoogendam (2010), is unsurprising given their dual roles. In terms of time and managing a myriad of responsibilities (childcare, household duties, and work), this impacted on their ability to evaluate consumption, including sustainability implications. All of the participants had at least one child under 12 years for whom they were responsible for care giving and consumption. Although most of the participants were in a couple, from the interviews, they assumed main responsibility for their children. Often, as identified in other research (Carrigan and Szmigin 2006), this resulted in opting for practice that was convenient; for example, purchasing fashion in the supermarket as they were there purchasing food, despite allegations of garment worker exploitation. Even though the informants worked in professional occupations, money was still contentious, and their disposable income had to cover household management, fashion, and activities for themselves and their children. Therefore, they adopted a different approach to accessing fashion for themselves and their children; given the children's continuous growth, they sought value for money and the low prices of budget fashion retailers and supermarket

fashion resulted in a reduced threshold of how much they were willing to pay (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a, 2016b).

Previous research has reported on how fashion and sustainability was perceived and managed for their children (Ritch 2019; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a, 2016b; Ritch 2015). Therefore, this chapter takes a different approach to focus on how the informants managed their own fashion consumption to align with their conceptualisations of self, mother, and professional. Social identity theory is utilised to examine how fashion signals family values, including status and ideology through consumption practice. The interviews began by asking the informants how fashion came into the home for themselves and their children. Those approaches to fashion consumption are considered first, as those discussions led the interviews. The analysis revealed that fashion involvement had been reduced, which is unsurprising given their multiple responsibilities; however, as a result of fashion shopping becoming less frequent, the experience provided heightened emotive hedonistic feelings (see Table 1, column one). After this discussion had been exhausted, the sustainable fashion garment labels were introduced to guide the discussion towards sustainable fashion. It was clear that motherhood was already considered demanding; although this was accepted by the informants, it contributed to an unwillingness for further sacrifice (see Table 1, column two). However, despite the numerous barriers to sustainable fashion consumption (price, limited styles and sizes, not following fashion, lack of high street availability, and uncertainty regarding the implications), there was delighted surprise that some high street stores were addressing socially responsible fashion practice as well as feelings of guilt at the thought of contributing to exploitative practice (see Table 1, columns three and four).

3.1. Approaches to Fashion Consumption

The recognition that children's continued growth necessitated clothing consumption already put a strain on the household budget and, of course, the time to shop. Despite shopping in the supermarket for the children's clothes as a means of convenience and because of lower pricing, purchasing fashion for themselves led to preferences for a pleasurable shopping experience. Often, this was an activity around their birthday, Christmas, or when an event dictated a new garment (see quote 1). In this sense, fashion consumption is considered a self-indulgent treat, and due to the infrequency of such occasions, time was taken to enjoy the event and children were not included in the shopping trip. There was also a preference for upmarket fashion stores that sold higher quality garments, and had luxurious fitting rooms and sales staff that were more attentive, as also identified by Niinimäki (2010).

Table 1. Informant narratives that support preferences to look good and feel good. Source: Own data.

Looking Good—Esteem	Appearance Sacrifice	Feeling Good	Feeling Bad
1. I actually bought a really nice dress. It was quite expensive, [it was] for my 40th birthday and I bought a nice pair of shoes. I spent quite a lot of money and it was quite fashionable. I wanted to look good, it was my party and [laughing] I was getting back into being a bit more fashionable! (P-18)	**4.** The way that you look is sadly quite important, [not just for] myself [but] also for my partner. I don't want my husband thinking that his wife looks like a bag of old spuds. It would be inconsiderate if I didn't make an effort, because he is very appearance conscious [laughing]! (P-27)	**7.** 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. (P-25)	**10.** The thought of kids in some sweatshop. I don't know what age they are, but it's still children, so you hear, working for pennies, assembling garments. (P-26)
2. I have three sets of clothes. Smart casual, 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 wear quite quirky clothes. The clothes that I sew, the fabric or the pattern will be quite unusual. I probably dress quite oddly for a 44-year-old woman! I'm just unconventional. Quite often when I am not at work, I have my hair in bunches or plaits. Because that's me. I have fun with it and I enjoy it. (P-28)	**5.** I hated the idea of totally letting myself go after the children. So, I make sure that my hair is cut fairly regularly to maintain 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]! I have spent large amounts of my time on the floor, almost as an antidote to being at home, I think, I am not going to be in my pyjamas [or] tracksuit bottoms and a floppy top, I'll try and wear something that makes me feel I am more of a grown-up and not just a stay-at-home mum who doesn't give a shit [laughing]! (P-14)	**8.** I am not one for wearing [slogans], but I thought I don't mind people knowing that this t-shirt I am wearing is about the environment. (P-7)	**11.** Money is quite an issue for us, there's [six] 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)
3. I have my own personal style that is important to me. I would only wear things that, matched my own style (P-22)	**6.** When I am not [at work], I wear [casual clothes]. My children are still so young, I end up with yoghurt smeared all over me. (P-27)	**9.** I like the idea of recycled. It's looking at ways that we consume, and continue to consume, then dispose of [the product]	**12.** 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)

It was clear that the fashion shopping was considered an activity to focus on themselves, in contrast to work, chores, and childcare that constituted their everyday lifeworlds. Fashion shopping also 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. Consequently, the informants pursued fashion consumption as a form of escapism from the mundanity of their everyday lifeworlds, resulting in them responding to stimuli in the marketplace and being aesthetically attracted to fashion which they perceived would enhance their appearance. In addition, it was important that their appearance reflected their personal style and work status (see quotes 2 and 3), not only enhancing belonging to social groups but also reflective of their capability and confidence.

This fashion from premium retailers was more expensive, which aligned with their status of having a professional occupation; the clothes had a superior design and increased quality, which meant that the garment lay on their bodies better (fit) and tended to last for longer. Longevity suited their needs as the frequency of their fashion consumption had reduced and they tended to wear clothes for longer (because they were 'hopefully not growing bigger', P-10!); this also led to preferences for more classic designs rather than fast fashion, especially for work. Fit was important, especially as their body shape had changed during and after pregnancy, multiple pregnancies for some; the lack of craftsmanship in inexpensive fashion often led to a poor fit (see quote 12) whereas higher quality garments fit their body shape, providing confidence, positive feelings, and comfort. A further rationale for spending more on fashion for work was that time at home with the children often involved messy activities, such as playing games on the floor or feeding small children (see quotes 4, 5, and 6). Therefore, garments which were more comfortable that they did not mind getting dirty were preferred.

Clothing for the day was dictated by the activities that were planned, with a different wardrobe for work, play, and socialising. For example, P-10 had returned to study, and was uncertain how a 'lady of a certain age' who was studying should dress, given that she was older than the student cohort and also a mother. She dressed less in professional work clothing and although she felt that some fashions were too young for her, she adopted a more casual approach which still differed from the clothing that she wore when playing with the children. She was also aware of the signal from her fashion-related commodities, stating that she selected a larger cotton tote bag to carry round her books and folders, but felt uncomfortable that this bag

had the Primark logo on it; as this brand had alleged worker exploitation, it did not align with her awareness of social issues. Similarly, P-28 worked as a drama lecturer and led a creative industries business. She felt that her appearance should reflect her creative tendencies, as an expression of her character, but also required clothing that would allow comfort for drama expression (see quote 2). Again, this differed from the clothing she wore when with her children and she also felt that at the school gate, status was expressed through fashion, claiming that the 'yummy mummies' had a certain dress code.

3.2. Reluctance to Sacrifice Self

As described previosuly, fashion consumption for themselves had been reduced, and this was considered necessary given that their children's wellbeing and the household took precedence, as found by Carrigan and Szmigin (2006). In itself, this was considered a sacrifice, to ensure the children were well looked after, albeit a temporary one that would change as the children became more self-sufficient. This included the financial management that focused on putting the children foremost by providing clothing and experiences that would create family memories. Bettany et al. (2010) postulated that sacrifice within a caregiving or household management is socially expected from mothers, and this was not questioned by the informants; however, a further sacrifice to include sustainability implications was not entertained. Rationales were offered during the interview for this reluctance, covering infrequent consumption; work needs; the lack of supporting information; and, the lack of availability in their preferred fashion retailers. Connolly and Prothero (2003) situate sustainable consumption as 'giving up and losing out'; this was the opinion of all of the informants and the words they used to describe sustainable fashion included 'frumpy' (P-4), 'obscure' (P-13), 'arty-farty' (P-15), and 'comfy clothing' (P-18). This was not how the informants wanted to present themselves externally and, in particular, it was not suitable for work; this indicates that their social environment dictated adherence to certain norms of dress (as supported by Liu 2019; Badaoui et al. 2018; McNeill 2018; Bartels and Hoogendam 2010) and a sense of belonging within their multiple lifeworld identities.

In this sense, fashion depicts occupation. Those who worked in law or for the government felt that their attire related to their position and chose more formal wear. There was a sense of competing with, whilst also being influenced by, others in the workplace. From a similar perspective, it was important that the children were smart for school and wore the required uniform as this was a visible statement about complying with the school values, and that the children were cared for in the hope that

this would increase the care that their children received in school. Another important aspect of looking good in the external world was a sense of still being part of society, reflecting current fashion trends provided a sense of relevance and keeping up with societal conformity. For example, many stopped purchasing fashion whilst they were pregnant, but had looked forward to playing with their appearance afterwards. As such, fashion represents participation in an external world that differentiates their internal world. Care for their appearance was evident in their self-preservation, as a reflective counteraction of the self-imposed stay-at-home activities of motherhood (see quotes 4, 5, and 6). 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 informants indicates this is ongoing as they emerge from their identity revolving around the home to focusing back to themselves when their children required reduced care. As the children became more independent, the informants began to turn their gaze back to themselves and external activities, often reinvesting in their career, such as increasing their working hours or seeking promotion. This reflects that fashion is also used for self-worth, as well as self-care and confidence, expanding social identity theory to be related to self-preservation and belonging to wider social consideration.

3.3. Sustainability Ideology

When evaluating the sustainable fashion labels, there were many positive comments (see quotes 7, 8, and 9). The increase in concern for sustainability led to feelings of belonging to a movement that was gaining traction and adopting sustainability preferences as practiced in other consumption contexts, such as Fairtrade and locally produced and organic food, along with recycling household waste. These behaviours were also influenced by peers, swapping stories about lifeworlds and sharing mothering tips. There was also surprise that fashionable garments in high street stores were produced in ways that were socially responsive. This increased their perception of the garments' value, and despite claiming previously that they had not purchased garments that were produced sustainably, many had purchased garments made from recycled or organic materials, as well as garments that indicated who made the clothes. They reflected back on those purchases, expressing altruism and pride (see quotes 7 and 8). These statements forged their moral ideology and were also used as a visual tool to construct self as caring, contributing to esteem by providing altruistic feelings, similar to previous findings (Zabkar and Hosta 2012; Griskevicius et al. 2010; Cervellon et al. 2009; Cherrier 2006; Moisander 2000; Smith

1999). There was an expressed moral obligation to 'do my bit' that also reflected self-identity and accepting socially responsible practice.

This illuminates upon the transitioning of production and consumption norms as evolving to recognise that everyone plays a role in socially responsible actions. It also contrasts with the narratives around guilt and negative feelings when unable to practice consumption that was suspected to have derived from exploitative practice (see quotes 10, 11, and 12). Fast fashion production is bereft of socially responsible practice, with little alternative to negate better provenance. Although consumers can opt for options of voice or exit (Hudson and Hudson 2003), consumption is still necessary especially for food and children's clothes, and the informants' narratives reflect their perception that sustainable production and consumption is a luxury that not everyone can afford (see quote 11). P-20 was an isolated case due to her focus on sustainable produce; however, she was on maternity leave with her entire focus on household provisioning. The other informants juggled work, children, and household management, leaving little time for consumption, never mind tracing production implications. Yet the evidence from quotes 10, 11, and 12 as well as wider discourse was that their inability to follow through with socially responsible practice was incongruent with their social identity; it did not align with their knowledge of current affairs and related attitudes, beliefs, practices, and performance. It is here where fashion retailers and brands can encourage and enhance sustainability production processes.

4. Concluding Comments

Although this research reports on a narrow cohort, both geographically and demographically, the aim of existential phenomenology is to adopt a focused lens to better understand lived experiences (Thompson et al. 1989). The purpose of such an approach is to 'advance theoretical arguments' (Szmigin et al. 2009, p. 229) by focusing more acutely on specific contexts. Nevertheless, the findings may propose some generalisability to concurrent themes discussed by participants, similar to 'replication logic' found within experiential research (Creswell 2009, p. 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, p. 65) suggest, even a single case can be representative if the analysis 'capture[s] the interactions and characteristics of the phenomenon'. Therefore, it could be assumed that the findings may be applicable to professionally working mothers in Western countries, who will negate similar lifeworlds juxtaposed with managing work, family, and home, as well as expectations for mothering and professionalism

that dictate conformity in certain settings. Comparability will come from exposure to similar media discourses around fashion production and sustainability, along with access to multinational fashion retailers alleged of exploitation (of both the environment and workers) in Western cities.

Consequently, this research contributes to wider debates around how to encourage consumers to engage with responsible consumption and production. Previous research has examined ethical/sustainable fashion behaviours and found there is a reluctance to sacrifice style when they are uncertain of how fashion production compromises social responsibility (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a, 2016b; McNeil and Moore 2015). This contrasts with other consumption behaviours that respond to preferences to assume social responsibility practice (Ritch 2015; Joy et al. 2012; Niinimäki 2010), using production as a means to create value, such as Fairtrade, information on workers in the supply (Fashion Revolutions 'Who made my clothes?' campaign) and responsible disposal (that would help close the loop of the production and consumption cycle). As fashion marketing focuses on pro-self attributes that enhance identity, esteem, status, and belonging (Hudson and Hudson 2003), it is unsurprising that little consideration is given to pro-social attributes; rather, production and supply chain management are hidden behind a veil of mystery (Hudson and Hudson 2003). The chapter sought to consider if fashion identity and socially responsive practice can be aligned, and through adopting the theoretical lens of social identity, found that sustainable consideration emerges within social environments (Bartels and Hoogendam 2010), social categories (Tajfel and Turner 1979) and social identity groups (Liu 2019; Badaoui et al. 2018; McNeill 2018) with expected practices and performances (Liu 2019) that include an awareness of social issues (Kriwy and Mecking 2012) and efforts for social responsibility.

However, this research also illustrates that this cohort of professionally working mothers, who already an experience identity crisis with body and lifestyle change, are reluctant to further sacrifice the infrequent opportunities they have for self-preservation. That does not mean to say that they do not experience tension between the choice of looking good and feeling good (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a; McNeil and Moore 2015). Tensions are indicative of wider protest, where consumers are clearly articulating their concern that governments and businesses are not doing enough to address socially responsible practice (Agerholm 2019; Seigle 2019; Read 2019; Wilson-Powell 2019). Consequently, consumers have to navigate a marketplace where there are few alternatives to deviate from production and consumption norms due to the prevalence of mainstream fashion retails and brands' continuation to focus on reducing production costs. The oxymoron

of sustainable fashion (Black 2008) is perpetrated by the abstraction (Lyon 2006) and ambiguity of both fashion production (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a) and the consequences of continuing to ignore the effects of irresponsible practice. All of this indicates that consumers require education and support from fashion retailers and brands to determine how fashion production compromises socially responsible behaviours. Fashion retailers and brands could do more to present socially responsible practice that creates value through repositioning educational marketing that addresses the issues and providing information on responsive production. By introducing transparency of production through marketing, such as 'Who made my clothes', to provide information of the workers lifeworld's, and closing the loop of production and consumption, as evident in garments made from recycled materials, there is an opportunity to increase feelings of self-esteem and altruism (Moisander 2000; Stryker and Burke 2000). This could be promoted through videos on websites that provide an insight into supply chain management and harnessing mainstream media programmes, such as the BBC documentary 'Fashion's Dirty Secrets'.

Acknowledging concerns would go a long way to address the elephant in the room—because consumers are increasingly aware of production allegations and experience guilt in contributing through their consumption (Wiederhold and Martinez 2018; Ritch and Brownlie 2016a; McNeil and Moore 2015). Given the evidence from previous research that has identified consumers experiencing altruistic feelings from socially responsible consumption (Zabkar and Hosta 2012; Griskevicius et al. 2010; Cervellon et al. 2009; Cherrier 2006; Moisander 2000; Smith 1999); blending looking good with feeling good could emerge from knowing that fashion consumption has contributed to social and economically responsive practice. Given the momentum of expressing concern, it could be argued that it is somewhat fashionable to demand social responsibility from government and business. Surprisingly, the fashion industry has stagnated in being responsive to this new trend (Safi and Rushe 2018; Centre for Sustainable Fashion 2009; Hearson 2008), evident in the span of literature accessed for this chapter. Moreover, given both the alarm around the consequences of climate change and lack of recovery from the global economic crisis from over a decade ago (Elliott 2019; Carrington 2019), this presents a timely opportunity to consider value chains within production to transition into mainstream consciousness for socially responsible production and consumption. It is unsurprising that younger people are protesting, especially as they are responsible for addressing the impact of the economy and climate change (Read 2019; Wilson-Powell 2019); younger people are already disenfranchised with employment security, the stagnation of salaries and an inability to get on the housing market (MacDonald and Giazitzoglu 2019). This potentially

could make them more discerning in holding businesses to account. Therefore, as King advocates, it is clear that more intelligent thinking is required to progress a socially responsible and responsive economy (Elliott 2019). This would involve a shift in fashion-related values from focusing on pro-self attributes to including pro-social contributions that enhance the social capital of fashion practice (Ritch and Brownlie 2016a; Niinimäki 2010; Moisander 2000).

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