



MASTER THESIS

The Fabricated Self – The Role of Clothing in Identity Development

Yvonne Boomsma

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences (BMS)

MSc Philosophy of Science, Technology and Society (PSTS)

Dr. M.H. Nagenborg

EXAMINATION COMMITTEE

Dr. K.N.J. Macnish

Prof.dr. C. Aydin

2 November 2020

Word count: 22.603

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Contents

- Abstract 1
- Introduction..... 1
- Chapter 1 – In what way(s) is clothing technology?..... 3
 - 1.1 Defining technology 3
 - 1.2 Clothing and the act of dressing..... 5
 - 1.3 Clothing as technology 6
 - 1.3.1 Functional vs. visual purposes of clothing..... 6
 - 1.3.2 Appearance and interaction..... 7
 - 1.3.3 Self-presentation and self-expression..... 8
 - 1.4 Dress in relation to social difference..... 9
 - 1.4.1 Age..... 9
 - 1.4.2 Body shape 10
- Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework 11
 - 2.1 Post-phenomenology 11
 - 2.1.1 Technological mediation 12
 - 2.2 Four human-technology relations..... 12
 - 2.2.1 Embodiment relation 12
 - 2.2.2 Hermeneutic relation 12
 - 2.2.3 Alterity relation 13
 - 2.2.4 Background relation 13
 - 2.3 Multistability and mutual constitution..... 13
 - 2.3.1 Multistability 13
 - 2.3.2 Mutual constitution..... 14
 - 2.4 Defining identity..... 14
 - 2.4.1 Interactional identity..... 15
 - 2.4.2 Symbolic interactionism 15
- Chapter 3 –A post-phenomenology of clothes 16
 - 3.1 Applying the four human-technology relations to clothes 16
 - 3.1.1 Embodiment relations with clothing..... 18
 - 3.1.2 Hermeneutic relations with clothing..... 20
 - 3.1.3 Alterity relations with clothing..... 21
 - 3.1.4 Background relations with clothing..... 22
- Chapter 4 – How we shape clothes and how clothes shape us 23
 - 4.1 Mutual constitution of meaning in dress 23
 - 4.2 Multistability of clothing 24

4.2.1 Intention vs. interpretation	25
4.3 The role of clothing in identity constitution.....	25
4.3.1 Technological interaction – interaction <i>with</i> clothes	25
4.3.2 Social interaction – interaction <i>through</i> clothes	26
4.3.3 Macro-perception; broader social structure	27
4.3.4 Clothes as artifacts for self-creation	27
Chapter 5 – Conclusion.....	29
Bibliography.....	31

Abstract

Our identity is constituted in our interactions with and through the clothes we wear, as well as our perception and experience of the world around us. Clothing and its wearer co-constitute each other, as clothes are given meaning by being worn. Simultaneously, the clothes are giving meaning or expression to the wearer's identity as well. However, another dimension needs our attention; the clothes we wear further impact how others perceive us and how they interact with us based on that perception affects our sense of self again. To fully capture the complexity of clothes, this thesis will explicate the following three dimensions. 1) The effect of clothes on a person's self-image. 2) The impact of clothes on the onlooker's perception of the wearer and the interaction between them. 3) The influence of the social structure in which these interactions take place on the way we dress and portray ourselves. So the first dimension is concerned with the individual (I), the second dimension has to do with social interaction (others), and the third dimension encapsulates the broader sociocultural environment (world) in which these interactions takes place. Notably, the individual and the others are also always part of the environment that they are in. Therefore, when looking at clothing, it cannot be seen as a separate thing or technology since it is being worn, being interacted with, and, therefore, deeply embedded in our daily lives. It is impossible to study the meaning of clothes without considering the broader context in which it exists. Our identity, defined as how I experience myself and how others experience me, is constituted and shaped in interaction with the clothes we are wearing (technological interaction), in interaction with the people around us (social interaction), and in interaction with the environment in which we find ourselves. This last one actually encapsulates both technological and social interaction; however, it is more than that; it comprises the entire socio-cultural context in which these interactions occur, including non-living physical things or more abstract concepts. For example, the country in which it takes place, the culture or religion present, or more specifically, the building or room in which this interaction takes place, or the setting in which it is situated. For example, a day at school, a job interview, or a funeral; all situations require different ways of dressing to make a person fit into that specific situation. These requirements are based on social norms and expectations that people tend to adhere to. These social norms and expectations are part of the broader sociocultural context. Furthermore, these norms and expectations might differ for one person or the other, depending on the role that a particular person plays in a particular situation. For example, a child dresses differently on a school day than the teacher. So, not only the environment influences the way we dress, but also the role we have, or are expected to take on, within that particular environment. So in this sense, how we dress ourselves, how we shape ourselves through clothes, is strongly influenced by what others and society, in general, expect from us. Nevertheless, each person does this in his own way, and clothing allows for being creative and challenging these norms, or even create new meanings. Here, the concept of mutual constitution comes in; we are constituted by the social expectations and the degree to which we adhere to them in our way of dressing. So our identity is shaped both by the clothes we wear and the social interactions that they evoke, and by the broader socio-cultural context that influences these interactions. I argue that the social interaction aspect is not sufficiently addressed in Ihde's distinction between micro- and macro-perception, therefore I propose to add another level of perception in between, I call this meso-perception. We are shaping ourselves and creating part of our reality by choosing to appear in the world in a particular way. So there is a mutual constitution of meaning between the wearer, the clothes, and his social environment that takes place in interaction and highly depends on perception. Although clothing seems to be a mundane phenomenon at first sight, by studying it in its broader context, an entire interplay of all these different factors and aspects becomes visible. It becomes clear that clothing is a mediating factor in how we see ourselves and how others see us, something that co-constitutes our perception of self and the world, and other people's perceptions of us. Clothing thus plays a substantial role in who we are in the world.

Introduction

Human bodies are dressed bodies (Entwistle, 2000b, p.323); we literally cover ourselves in fabrics each day. However, this thesis's title holds a more figurative meaning as well, since fabrication can also be

defined as; to construct, to build, or even as; to misrepresent, to fake, to make up a story. This is why the title is striking for the relation between clothing and identity; it shows that the fabrics we use to dress our bodies allow us to tell different stories about ourselves. It furthermore highlights an aspect of self-creation in identity development, i.e., that a person has, at least to some degree, agency in becoming whom they want to be. The clothes we wear play a mediating role in our interaction with others and the world. Therefore dressing is ultimately a social practice, a link between social belonging and individual identity, between fitting in and standing out (Simmel, 1904, Bauman, 2011). Through dress, people embody certain expressions of the self, while simultaneously shaping and giving meaning to that self.

The relationship between dress and identity has been studied from different perspectives in several fields of study and the connection has been understood in various ways (Powell, Gilbert & Twigg 2009). For a long time, the most dominant way has been in terms of social class; sociologists (Veblen 1889, Simmel 1904, Bourdieu 1984) have demonstrated how clothing functioned as part of class identity. However, more recently, gender has been the central focus of theorists, such as Joanne Entwistle (2000a). Another way in which the relation between dress and identity has been theorized is in semiotic terms (Barthes 1985, Davis 1992); as a system in which clothes operate as a means of communication. Moreover, other studies in the field of social psychology of dress, and fashion and textile (Butler 1990, Finkelstein 1991, Fine & Leopold 1993, Craik 1994, Polhemus 1994) have focused on the role of clothing in the course of self-presentation and self-realization, in which dressed bodies become what Craik (1994) calls 'tools for self-management'. Even though clothing has been a subject of study for decades and many different fields have addressed the topic from multiple perspectives, it has, to the best of my knowledge, never been investigated from a philosophy of technology perspective. Therefore, with this thesis, I take on a radical new approach by looking at clothing through the lens of post-phenomenology. Since I want to address the notion of identity, this particular theory provides a good starting point for my analysis on how we experience ourselves through the clothes that we wear due to its strong focus on (individual) experience of human-technology relations. Because it is in experience, in wearing them, that clothes truly become meaningful. This empirical approach allows for analyzing it in its practical environment of use (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015). Post-phenomenology is a field of study that is predominantly focused on the relations we have with complex technologies such as 'high-tech' machines or other electronic devices. And with technology rapidly evolving and changing, it does seem logical to dive into these innovative new technologies, such as clothing with built-in sensors or haptic stimulation. However, I argue that by doing so, some fundamental aspects would be neglected. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on clothing in its most basic form, as we all wear it each day. Since not only in the form of 'smart' clothing, but also in this basic form, clothing should be considered technology.

This thesis demonstrates how clothing conveys meaning, to the wearer and those he engages with. In other words, I show the meanings clothes can have to us by addressing the ways in which they shape or constitute our identity and how we use clothing in conveying identities to the people around us. Both are essentially part of the same phenomenon, namely; the development of identity. To address this, I draw on a combination of literature from post-phenomenology and identity theories based on interaction to give an interactional account of the relation between clothing and identity. That is, to show that our identities are shaped by 1) technological interaction, of our bodies interacting with the clothing itself through wear, 2) social interaction of our dressed bodies (selves) with the world and the people around us. And, 3) the social structure that consists of all kinds of norms, values and expectations in which these interactions occur. Notably, the focus will be on everyday practices of dressing as opposed to fashion, which I consider rather an artform and available only to a small number of people. The activity of dressing, on the contrary, is part of every person's daily life, and as such, clothing is part of the interaction between people. In dressing the body, we manipulate and supplement it with a wide range of artifacts, including clothes, jewelry, and other accessories. Although the definition of dress encompasses more than just clothing, which is the main focus of this thesis, I

will use the words dress and clothing interchangeably. The act of dressing is described by Twigg (2010) as an everyday bodily practice concerned with clothing the body, which is influenced by numerous factors, such as social environment or context, age, culture, and several other unspoken rules, norms, or expectations that are present within a society.

To investigate this complex relation between clothing and identity, the following research question was formulated: *What is the role of clothing (as technology) in the process of discovering and/or developing a sense of self through interaction with others?*

To clarify this question, three sub-questions were composed: 1) How do the clothes we wear affect our sense of self and our experience of the world? 2) How do we relate to others through the clothes we wear, and how do others perceive us via the clothes we wear? And, 3) how do social norms and expectations influence these interactions and, subsequently, our self-perception?

To answer these questions, first, it is essential to understand in which sense clothing is technology. This is demonstrated in the first chapter by providing a categorization of clothes' functions and purposes. In the second chapter, the framework of post-phenomenology is introduced, which allows for a conception of identity as something that is constituted and developed in interaction with technologies, in this case: the clothes we wear. Subsequently, in the third chapter, Ihde's four human-technology relations will be applied to clothing. Finally, the fourth chapter will reflect the notions of multistability, mutual constitution and the different categories of perception in relation to clothing, providing insight into how we shape clothes and how clothes shape us, in other words, what the role of clothing in the constitution and development of identity.

With this thesis, I capture the dynamic interplay between self, clothing, others, and the world. To achieve this, I draw on post-phenomenology, or, technological mediation theory, as discussed by Ihde (1990) and Rosenberger & Verbeek (2015). These theories have been used to analyze many different types of technology already; however, it is not clear how it would apply to clothes as everyday technologies that are deeply embedded in our lives. Post-phenomenology will serve as the theoretical framework and will, as such, provide the structure for this thesis. Along the way, I furthermore draw upon literature from the fields of social psychology, sociology, and interactional theories of identity (Aydin, 2012, and Johnson et al., 2014). Specifically, a combination of these theories is adopted to show how clothing is used for self-presentation to other individuals and society on the one hand, and in self-expression, self-creation, and shaping self-perception on the other hand. With this unique combination of theories that have never been applied to clothes before, I offer a radical new approach. This new perspective reveals a complex interplay between individual experience of dressing and dressing as a social performance, i.e., how meanings and identities are conveyed to others and the effect of those on a person's self-perception.

Chapter 1 – In what way(s) is clothing technology?

In this chapter, I demonstrate how clothing is, or can be seen as technology. In order to do this, the first section of this chapter will define what technology is. Afterwards, the second section will go further into clothing and the act of dressing. Finally, in the third section, these insights will be combined to explain in what ways clothing is, or can be seen as, technology.

1.1 Defining technology

Entire books have been written to capture what technology is; although technology is everywhere in our lives, it is quite challenging to capture precisely what technology is. Providing a definition of technology that captures all its facets goes far beyond the scope of this thesis. However, I will provide some basic definitions, which will serve as the starting point for the discussion.

In his book *The Nature of Technology* (2009), Brian Arthur provides three definitions of technology that each point to technology in a different way. His most basic definition of a technology is articulated as

a means to fulfill a purpose. As a means, a technology can be an artifact or a process or method. In the second definition, technology is described in a plural form; as an assembly of practices and components, i.e., bodies of technologies. On this view, a technology consists of and is constructed with other technologies, for example, a computer that consists of all kinds of smaller technologies such as a screen, a motherboard, a processor, etcetera. All of which are created by means of other technologies (machines). In a way, according to Arthur, technology thus creates itself, since technologies arise as combinations of other technologies. This definition can be further developed by Arthur's argument that a body of technology provides a language for expression, meaning that certain technologies can be seen as expressions of 'language,' in which the different components, processes, skills, and knowledge that it comprises serve as the vocabulary. The third definition that Arthur allows is: 'technology as the entire collection of devices and engineering practices available to a culture', a definition that tries to capture technology in its totality.

I disagree with Arthur's definitions of technology on several points. The most basic definition that he provides is too broad and seems to allow too much, in this definition, a hand can be a means to wave for example. Moreover, defining technology as a means to fulfill a purpose reflects a highly instrumentalist view on technology, but technological artifacts are not merely tools. Therefore, in order to articulate a more narrow definition of technology that better captures its complexity, I argue that it is human intervention that sets apart technological artifacts from naturally existing objects. This means that technology does not create itself, as Arthur argues, rather it is always created with human intervention. As such, technologies, or artifacts, can be defined as objects that are made intentionally, in order to accomplish some purpose (Hilpinen, 1992, 2011). This definition originates from Aristotle's (*Metaphysics* 1033a ff., *Nicomachean Ethics* 1140a ff., *Physics* 192b ff.) distinction between objects and artifacts, in which objects are the things that exist by nature, whereas artifacts are things that exist by craft. According to Aristotle, things that exist by nature have their origin in themselves, and those that exist by craft, have their origin in the person who creates it. On this view, there are objects that occur naturally without human intervention, and artifacts that are created with human intervention. In other words, objects just are, while artifacts are thought up (by humans) and created (by humans or by means of machines, which again, are designed and made by humans). On this view, artifacts are by definition technological, therefore, adding the word 'technological' is superfluous and the terms 'artifacts' and 'technologies' become interchangeable.

According to a standard philosophical definition of an artifact, as provided by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Preston, 2020), in order for something to be an artifact as opposed to a natural object, it must satisfy the following three conditions: 1) It must be intentionally produced, thereby excluding all naturally existing objects, as well as unintended by-products of intentional actions. 2) It must involve modification of materials, thereby excluding all naturally existing objects, even when they are used intentionally to fulfill a purpose. And 3) it must be produced for a purpose, thereby excluding intentionally modified objects that are not intended to fulfill a purpose. Although I discussed this definition in light of a human actor who intervenes, that does not rule out the possibility that some things that are made by non-humans, could also be considered artifacts. For example, a bird who creates a nest, this nest does not naturally occur and does serve a purpose, although we cannot know whether it is intentionally made, or whether it is something purely instinctive. Nevertheless for the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on artifacts in which humans are the intervening actors. Nowadays, the word technology is mainly associated with highly advanced electronic devices such as smartphones and computers, or machines for production or construction. However, more simple things should be considered technologies as well, according to the definition that I have established above. For example, relatively simple artifacts such as a toothbrush or scissors.

Building on this definition, technology can furthermore refer to the process of becoming; something coming into existence through the interaction of an actor with materials or objects in the world. In that sense, technologies are part of who we are as human beings. As we are the creators and the users, through techniques and skills, we create technological artifacts, which we then use to making our lives

easier or for improving our (natural) abilities or even creating abilities that we did not have. As such, technologies allow us to adapt to, and deal with the world we live in. With technology, we can become something that we are naturally not, or accomplish something that we cannot do with our bare hands. As such, technologies can be seen as a way of dealing with the world around us. Through the use of technologies, we attempt to control the world around us.

However, technology and its development is often, if not always, unpredictable, despite human intervention and intention, technologies are not neutral means to an end, rather they are mediating between the user and their experience and behavior (Verbeek, 2005). As such, technology cannot be seen as a separate entity or thing because it is always embedded in a broader context of use. This context is essential to consider, since the meaning and use of a technological artifact always arise within a particular context and is therefore always influenced by that context. This means that the same technology's function and meaning can vary; for example, a hammer can be a tool in one situation and a weapon in another, which depends on the overall context; the person using it, how it is used, the time and place in which it is used and the purpose for which it is used. In other words, technologies are always used within a certain social structure, and how they are put to use depends on the norms, values and expectations that make up this social structure. Technologies are, or should be, in the first place, useful or valuable to humans, and what is useful or valuable depends on the situation or context in which a person or a group of people finds themselves.

In that sense, it is quite contradictory; we use technologies in trying to control or get a grip on the world we live in. However, we cannot control technologies themselves; there are always unforeseen consequences or new ways of use that could not have been predicted. Since technologies are so deeply embedded in our lives as part of our surroundings and part of ourselves, technologies mediate our perception *of* and behavior *in* the world (Verbeek, 2005), shaping how we see the world and how we see ourselves.

1.2 Clothing and the act of dressing

Clothes come into being by constructing textile materials into a particular shape, using all kinds of tools, techniques, skills, and knowledge. However, clothing truly becomes meaningful when being worn. Therefore, the main focus will be on the activity of dressing, why we dress as we do, and the implications of that. According to Joanne Entwistle (2000b), clothes and other forms of dress transform bodies into something “recognizable and meaningful to a culture”; they are “the means by which bodies are made ‘decent’, appropriate and acceptable within specific contexts”. This all has to do with social expectations for behavior and appearance that emerge from the social structure in which we find ourselves (Bicchieri, 2010). As such, dressing is predominantly a social activity. The activity of dressing is part of each person’s daily routine; it is a way of presenting ourselves to the world and the people around us. Our appearance relies strongly on the clothes we wear since they cover up most of our bodies. In interaction, this appearance, and thus the clothes we wear, are being interpreted, and it is these interpretations in which meanings are established, and on which most initial opinions and beliefs about a person are based. Not only does our way of dressing have an impact on other people’s perception of us, it also plays a significant part in the construction of our self-image. Through dress, we fabricate ourselves, literally, by covering our bodies in fabrics, and figuratively, by ‘building’ or ‘creating’ our self, or at least a particular image of that self.

In a broader context, the way we dress is influenced by both temporal and spatial factors. The fabrics, colors, and fits vary from time to time, these days more rapidly than ever. As such, clothes are an expression of the zeitgeist. Moreover, the ways of dressing may vary greatly depending on the geographical, social, and cultural environment in which it takes place, depending on the social structure present in that specific place.

1.3 Clothing as technology

Since I have demonstrated that technologies, or artifacts, in their most basic definition, are objects that are made intentionally, through modification of materials, in order to accomplish a certain purpose and, that clothing is made intentionally through modification of materials, and are intentionally used for many different purposes, among which self-presentation and warmth, I conclude that clothes should be seen as technologies. Clothing is even one of the oldest human technologies, initially used to adapt to the environment and survive in the world. Another way in which clothing complies with the definition of technology is that it can serve different purposes and hold different meanings depending on context; the person wearing the garment (and their age, body shape, and gender, for example), the way it is combined with other pieces of clothing, and, the particular time and place in which it is worn. Furthermore, clothes are constructed through modification of materials and employing all kinds of techniques, skills, machines, tools, and knowledge; hence, it is made with the use of other technologies and consists of other technologies. For example, a pair of jeans is made using all kinds of technologies, such as machines to plant and harvest the cotton, a weaving loom to create the fabric, scissors, and a sewing machine to put together the garment, and a washing machine to give it the right wash. Additionally, it is a combination of all kinds of technologies, such as the fabric, the zipper, and the button (closure), which again are made using technologies. Furthermore, there are all kinds of techniques, skills, and know-how involved in making a garment, such as; designing, dyeing, pattern making, and sewing.

Moreover, in viewing technology as the process of becoming, a garment is an artifact in that it is first conceived in thought and then constructed or produced. It comes into existence through the interaction of humans and materials. In that process of interaction, not only clothing is produced, but by wearing that clothing subsequently, a person's identity is being built; it is the becoming of personal identity, the fabrication of a self. This shows the inextricable connection between identity and artifacts, clothes in this case, through interaction. In other words, through the process of dressing, a mutual constitution of meaning takes place. The wearer gives meaning to the garment, through how they wear it and who they are as a person, but at the same time, the garment can give expression to the wearer's personality. This process always takes place within a social structure that also strongly affects the meaning of a garment as well as the wardrobe choices someone makes. These concepts of social structure and mutual constitution will be further developed in the next chapters.

1.3.1 Functional vs. visual purposes of clothing

Since we use clothes to fulfill a particular purpose, this section will elaborate on the different purposes that clothes can fulfill; for example, warmth and protection or self-presentation. Clothing, first and foremost, serves the functional purpose of protecting the human body against the elements. It offers warmth and protection to our bodies, thus enabling us to deal with the world in ways that the naked body cannot. For example, covering our bodies in warm fabrics allows us to survive in cold weather, while summer clothes may protect us against sunburn, and protective work gear can prevent us from getting injured.

However, according to Ian King (2015), "our understanding of dressing the body should not be restricted to assessments of warmth, or simply descriptions as outer layers of appearance; but rather, as layers of meaning that emerge from the 'body' outwards and toward the experience of 'being-in-the-world'". So, in addition to the functional purposes that clothes serve, they always possess observable characteristics that often serve purposes of appearance. As their name suggests, such visual purposes revolve around the looks of the clothes rather than their functionality. As such, clothes not only function as a shield for the body but rather they are an extension of the body (Cixous, 1994). These visual purposes all have to do with managing appearance in one way or another. The practical functionality aspect is focused on the individual body, maintaining the right temperature, and offering protection and comfort. The visual purposes, on the other hand, are more geared towards others and thus play a substantial role in social interaction. Both the functional and visual aspects of clothing have to do with adaptation to different contexts, respectively, to natural environments and social

environments. The functions of appearance will be the focal point for the remainder of this thesis; the multitude of factors involved will provide numerous fascinating angles that allow for rich philosophical analysis.

1.3.2 Appearance and interaction

In wearing certain shapes, colors and textures, and revealing and concealing parts of the body, clothing is used for self-expression and shaping appearance for others to see. As such the clothes we wear shape our interactions with others, as social interaction (almost) always occurs between dressed people. The particular ways in which clothes shape our social interactions are subject to underlying social and cultural norms and values that are disclosed in, often unspoken, rules, and expectations of what is appropriate dressing. What is considered appropriate also depends on aspects such as age, gender, social role, and body shape. Furthermore, in dressing there are conflicting desires of belonging to a group on the one hand, and expressing individuality by standing out on the other hand (Bauman, 2011). Becoming part of a social group, and dressing in a similar manner, can also be a way of avoiding to define one's individual identity, a way to cope with not knowing who they are. Becoming part of such a group and adopting their lifestyle and way of dressing, means that one no longer has to doubt who they are, thereby closing off the identity abyss and no longer feeling the need to define themselves.

These examples show the social aspect of dressing and the strong influence of others on our way of dressing. As such, social interactions are a matter of expectations and these expectations emerge from the norms, values and laws that are present within a given sociocultural context and are related to a person's social status, which is the position that a person occupies within a society or social group. A status defines how a person relates, or should relate to others. Social status can be a gender or an occupation, or, for example, a citizen, a mother or a child. Individuals usually fulfill multiple social statuses at the same time, for example, a citizen of the Netherlands can also be a parent, a child, a police officer and a coach at a sports club. Social statuses exist in a hierarchy, in which some are more valued than others depending on the existing culture and the norms and values that are present within that culture. I call this particular culture with its norms and values the broader sociocultural context in which social interaction takes place. A social status comes with a set of behaviors, obligations and privileges; this is the role that a person with a particular social status performs. As such, roles are based on the expectations that we have for ourselves and that others place on us. If a person holds the status of a police officer, people expect or even demand that he or she performs the roles that come along with it. Social interactions thus play a crucial part in who we are and how we experience the world.

According to Erving Goffman (1956), social interaction is about maintaining a performance, he compares social interaction to a play performed on stage in front of an audience. On his view, people literally perform roles for each other, and the point of social interaction is always, at least to some degree, to maintain a successful interaction that is in line with expectations. As such, how it looks to others, how it is perceived and experienced by others is highly important. To satisfy the 'audience', people try to control the information that others receive about them, Goffman calls this impression management. Impression management is rooted in communication; in what you say, but also in how you behave and your way of dressing. On this view, clothes can serve as what Goffman calls props; objects that can help a performer in conveying a certain impression to the people he interacts with. If you want to look professional, wearing a suit can help you convey that image to others. Hence, clothes are technologies for impression management. As such, clothing allows for embodying a certain role, and, in doing so, they can help in convincing others that you hold a certain status, that is part of your identity. In this sense, clothes allow us to fabricate an image of ourselves for others to see, managing other people's perception of us, and creating a social identity.

According to the theory of the socialized actor, social norms affect action by becoming part of a person's goals and preferences (Bicchieri, Muldoon & Sontuoso, 2018), however, most behavior is embedded in a network of personal relations and a theory of norms should also consider this specific

social context (Granovetter, 1985). Therefore, the existing social norms and the expectations of others that come along with them constitute our ideas about what appropriate dressing entails.

As I have shown, the reason for decorating, expressing, or presenting the body in any other way often involves others. The daily activity of dressing is done mainly for others to see and engage with. Visual purposes all revolve around appearance, and since human bodies are, for the most part, covered in clothes, clothes make up a large part of a person's appearance. This focus on appearance might seem superficial at first, but one cannot deny that it plays a dominant role in modern social life; since what we see influences our way of interacting with each other. Especially when it comes to first interactions, the visual features are the first signs upon which we base our opinions and beliefs about another person. Through their appearance, we try to acquire information about a person, i.e., their personality. Moreover, as the clothes in which we dress our bodies make up a large part of those visual impressions, from this perspective, the clothes we choose to wear can serve as technologies with the purpose of managing or altering our appearance. This means that clothes are artifacts for self-presentation, as they represent an identity for others to see and engage with. Even if a person would not engage in social interaction at all, the clothes they wear would still affect their perception of self, since they dress their bodies each day, interacting with the clothes, and in doing so, they are fabricating a particular self-image.

This focus on appearance seems to imply a perspective of objectification. According to Harrison and Fredrickson (2003), self-objectification occurs when people perceive and describe their bodies mainly as a function of appearance, rather than a function of accomplishments. Such an attitude is visible in large part of our culture; take, for example, the expectation of a pregnant woman getting back into shape as soon as possible after giving birth. Such expectations are present in our society and imply that we indeed see the body mainly as a function of appearance. This attitude towards our bodies is also apparent in the current day's social media culture in which we always want to, and feel the pressure to look good. Here, it is not about what you have accomplished, as long as you can make it appear as if you are successful. We show only what we want people to see. Similarly, with clothing, we use it to express our identity or personality to others. However, we dress in a way that only reveals certain aspects of ourselves, expressing only those qualities that we want others to believe we possess, which can vary depending on the situation, and the specific norms and expectations that exist within that situation. Thus, what we decide to show others through our wardrobe choices, might not be our decision, because it is strongly influenced by social expectations. On this view, clothes are used as technologies for shaping our appearance, to manage other people's perception of us.

1.3.3 Self-presentation and self-expression

Now that I have demonstrated that appearance is highly influential in our daily social interactions with the people around us and that clothing can function as a technology with the purpose of shaping that appearance, I will go further into the specific visual purposes that clothing can have. Crawley (1912) presented an early anthropological approach to the study of dress by perceiving clothes as both an expression and an extension of personality. Clothing can be deliberately used for self-presentation or self-expression. Although both self-presentation and self-expression are about how we present ourselves to others, a distinction should be made. The first one, self-presentation, is rooted in extrinsic motivation and takes into account social expectations, as such it reflects concerns with how one is perceived by others (Goffman, 1956). In other words, the concept of self-presentation indicates "conscious and unconscious strategies for controlling or managing how one is perceived by others in terms of both appearance and behavior" (Dolezal, 2015). Self-expression is, by contrast, a way of expressing an inner truth or beliefs about oneself or the world, which is, therefore, more intrinsically motivated. However, it is usually the case that these are tightly intertwined when looking at the daily practice of dressing. According to Goffman (1956), "we adopt certain styles of ordered bodily behavior as determined by the broader social order". As such, expressing oneself (through clothes) always carries within it a notion of impressing others. Building on Goffman's work, Dolezal (2015) suggests that an individual is "continuously – and constitutionally – engaged in implicit and explicit strategies to

manage how the body is presented to others". In these practices of self-presentation and self-expression through dress, our identity is constituted. So there is a mutual constitution of meaning between the person, the clothes they are wearing and the people they interact with. This mutual constitution of meaning will be further developed in the second chapter.

We have a tendency to adhere to the norms and expectations that are present in a given setting, and we can choose to reveal and conceal certain aspects, not only in the literal sense of revealing and concealing our body through clothes but by dressing a certain way, we also can choose to reveal or conceal certain aspects of our identity. This is not to say that I view the body as distinct from the self or identity, but rather to show that the body is part of the self, and by zooming in on dressing, it becomes clear that it is. The way of dressing does not only show others the body in a certain way but also automatically communicates something about one's personality, whether it was the wearer's intention or not. A person's appearance and especially their clothing, speaks; it tells others something about you. It is seen as a reflection or representation of the person that you are. Clothes can furthermore hold symbolic meaning, but what exactly do clothes communicate, i.e., what do they represent or express? These questions will be discussed in the following section.

1.4 Dress in relation to social difference

According to Breward (2000, in Twigg, 2010), the vital role of clothes in establishing social differences is often unacknowledged, as is evident with gender. Clothes are used to define and naturalize gender, making gender apparent and obvious. Other aspects of a person that are defined and made visible are, for example, social group or status and religious beliefs. The particular way a person dresses allows others to read the social group they belong to. Clothing thus reflects several influences, for example, economic and sub-cultural ones. By wearing luxury brands or high-quality clothing, a particular social status is expressed. Moreover, religious beliefs are often signified through dress as well, take, for example, the hijab, worn by Muslim women, or the yarmulke in the tradition of the Jewish religion.

1.4.1 Age

Age and phase of life are connected to clothes because they affect the ways of dressing. Rules and norms that are often unspoken, are coming to the fore when investigating age in relation to dress. For example, older women's clothing is often associated with muted, dull colors like grey, dark blue, and beige (Lurie, 1992), looser fit (Goldsberry et al. 1996), and more concealing, e.g., longer skirts, more decent necklines, etcetera. In doing so, covering up more of the body, which can be seen as suggesting, or even reinforcing, the idea that the prime of their life is definitely over and that they should dress accordingly. Furthermore, such clothes imply that they should not show too much skin, in contrast to younger women, who have more freedom in their clothing choice without being judged negatively. Beauty standards of youth and smooth skin lie beneath this.

First, I will discuss the colors of clothing and their meanings in different contexts. The muted and 'quiet' colors can signify multiple aspects or characteristics. In a work environment, for example, these colors are associated with professional dress. When worn by older women, clothes in such colors evoke different meanings. This appears to be part of what Twigg (2010) calls "a more general practice of toning down". These colors are perceived as opposed to bright colors, which are known for drawing attention. Such bright colors are often perceived as unsuitable or unflattering for older women, implying that they should not be drawing too much attention to themselves because their older bodies are not to be seen as obviously or loudly as young ones. An entire chapter could be written on the meanings that colors are associated with, but that does not fall within this essay's scope. The example given above mainly illustrates that color is one of the qualities that give meaning to clothes in social interactions. These meanings can differ, depending on the particular social environment in which they are present.

According to Twigg (2010), it is through moral discourse around dress that such age-ordering is maintained, which relates to the social norms, values and expectations that I have discussed in the

previous section. Dress is often spoken of in terms of decency or appropriateness, showing that we distinguish between 'good' and 'bad' ways of dressing. Twigg (2010) perceives dress as "part of a set of wider processes around disciplining the body, constraining and enabling its expression, making it subject to the discourses of morality. She claims that dressing appropriately is part of successful engagement with the social world. An interesting example to discuss here is the saying: 'mutton dressed as lamb', a phrase upon which tv-shows such as 'Hotter than my Daughter' have built their entire concept. In this tv-show, middle-aged women are given a make-over, as requested by their child, because they dress inappropriately for their age. This old-fashioned saying describes older women who try to appear much younger by adopting 'young' dress-styles but fail in their attempts. The reason for their lack of success in appearing younger than they are, can be found in the mismatch between an older body and a young style, which makes it inappropriate. Such a judgment is rooted in the rules and norms, which are often not explicit, constituting a moral ordering of dress. From this, it becomes clear that we distinguish between 'young' ways of dressing and 'old' ways of dressing. However, there is no exact demarcation point after which old styles should be adopted, and young styles are no longer appropriate. When does a person move to buying and wearing 'old people's clothes'? Such a change does not happen overnight; rather, it slowly changes, which also has to do with the lack of a clear distinction between young and old. Furthermore, what is perceived as young and perceived as old depends on more factors than the wearer's age, such as their looks and behavior. Besides the restrictions imposed on dress, through norms, dress-codes, and other implicit rules, people make clothing choices according to numerous personal preferences that can be traced back to lifestyle, income, and aesthetic factors.

Moreover, it is interesting to look at the motivations that these 'mutton dressed as lamb'-women have to dress this particular way. For example, with the 'Hotter than my Daughter' moms, the reasons for dressing the way they do are almost always rooted in insecurities and the need for acceptance. Here, the need to be seen and recognized by others becomes visible, in which their clothes are used for the purpose of attracting attention to themselves. Another reason that is often given by these women is to resist the moral ordering, to deliberately go against the norms in order to change them, or in order to stand out. However, this also seems to be rooted in insecurities and the strong need to be recognized. Such behavior implies that they are unwilling or unable to admit that they are aging and are looking for ways to take control over that process, adopting a 'you are as young as you feel'-attitude.

1.4.2 Body shape

Another aspect that reveals the implicit norms and rules with regards to dress is body shape. When a thin adolescent (with a body that adheres to the beauty-standards) wears a short skirt or a top that reveals her belly, and the setting is appropriate, for example, on a beach, most people accept it. However, when an overweight adolescent wears a similar outfit, she can expect reactions of disgust, as if she bothers people with the shape and looks of her body. This is an interesting comparison, for it suggests that good-looking (in this particular culture; thin) bodies have more right to be revealed or shown off than bodies that do not adhere to the existing beauty standards. The goal here is not to make a normative point or to be activist, in that all bodies have an equal right to be revealed and that our beauty standards need redefinition; instead, it is meant to illustrate that dress-codes and other social norms and values that involve clothes and dress choice are implicit in our judgments of others and thus also play a role in our interaction with these others. It furthermore shows that in interaction, the visual aspect of how the body looks makes up a large part of the image formed of a person, especially on a first impression.

Recognizing that all these factors of age, body shape, social status, and religion, are social factors, or become social factors as soon as they are expressed through clothing, highlights the notion of interaction that is central to any society. Crucial to this interaction is the visual aspect; however superficial it may seem, appearance is an integral part of the impressions we form of each other and is one of the first factors on which we judge and evaluate a person.

In dressing, our clothes become an extension of our bodies, modifying its shape and presenting it in a certain way. Through the clothes we wear, we express and give shape to who we are. As such, clothes function as expressions of identity and act as a recurring means through which we signal who and what we are to the people around us (Twigg, 2010). According to Tseelon (1995, in Twigg 2010), clothes are social technologies in which conceptions of identity are grounded in the visual. However, this identity is always expressed within a particular social and cultural context, in which meanings are assigned to the clothes. Therefore, clothing is also a part of how cultural expectations are converted into detailed requirements concerning appearance. According to Alison Lurie(1992), “to choose clothes, either in a store or at home, is to define and describe ourselves”.

I have now demonstrated that the clothes we wear provide a powerful means for signaling or concealing certain aspects of ourselves and are, therefore, to be seen as technologies with the purpose of managing our appearance.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical framework

After having established that clothes are artifacts that are intentionally used for the purpose of managing appearance, post-phenomenology will be employed as a theoretical framework to structure the discussion. Since I want to address the notion of identity, this particular theory provides a good starting point for my analysis on how we experience ourselves through the clothes that we wear due to its strong focus on (individual) experience of human-technology relations. Because it is in experience, in wearing them, that clothes truly become meaningful. Post-phenomenology is a field of study that is predominantly focused on the relations we have with complex technologies such as ‘high-tech’ machines or other electronic devices. Applying this theory to something as mundane as clothes is therefore radically new.

I mainly draw upon the work of Don Ihde (1990) and Rosenberger & Verbeek (2015). First, the different human-technology relations, as distinguished by Ihde, will be discussed, as well as other key terms such as mutual constitution and multi-stability. Subsequently, after introducing post-phenomenology, in section 2.4, the concept of identity will be defined. Since this thesis provides insight into the role of clothing in identity development, it is crucial to establish a clear definition of identity and provide insight into how it is constituted and developed. For this, I draw upon literature from the field of social psychology and the work of Ciano Aydin (2012) on identity, allowing me to define identity as: how I perceive myself and how others perceive me. And furthermore, as something that is being constituted and developed in interaction with the things and people around us, respectively, technological and social interaction.

2.1 Post-phenomenology

The philosophical perspective of post-phenomenology emerged from a critical analysis of both classic phenomenology and the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS). It combines the empirical orientation of STS with the normative and conceptual orientation that is central in philosophy of technology. Classic phenomenologists approached technology as a broad, social, and cultural phenomenon, corresponding to the third definition of technology, that tries to capture technology in its totality, provided by Arthur (2009), as discussed in chapter one. Over the years, this approach was increasingly experienced as problematic (Feenberg, 2000; Ihde, 1993). According to Rosenberger & Verbeek (2015, p.10), the main reason for this is that those analyses were “losing touch with the actual experiences people have of the roles of technology in human existence”. In other words, classic phenomenology falls short when the goal is to explain how human beings experience technology and how that experience affects their interactions. As such, it does not reflect the contemporary emphasis on locality and context-dependency, according to which humans can never directly access reality; rather, their experience is always mediated (Verbeek, 2005). It is precisely the notions of experience and mediation that lie at the heart of post-phenomenology or mediation theory.

Post-phenomenology studies the relations that arise between human beings and technological artifacts (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015). The focus is, first and foremost, on “understanding the roles that technologies play in the relations between humans and the world and analyzing the implications of these roles”. (Rosenberger & Verbeek, 2015, p.31). Adopting a post-phenomenological perspective furthermore allows for investigating how, in the relations that arise around a technology, a specific world is constituted, as well as a specific ‘subject’. However, an exceptional quality of post-phenomenology is a critical view of modernism's subject-object dualism, from a post-phenomenological perspective; the human subject is always interrelated with the objects around them. This is also where meanings are established; technological objects only truly become meaningful when someone experiences them, through interaction.

2.1.1 Technological mediation

Philosopher Don Ihde was one of the first to investigate how technologies play a role in how humans relate to the world that they are in and that they are part of. All post-phenomenological studies have in common that they do not approach technologies as merely functional and instrumental artifacts, but rather as mediators of human experiences and practices. On this view, technologies are not merely tools or a means to an end; instead, they organize how we perceive and experience the world and how we behave. Technologies help to shape who we are and what the world is for us. The mediation of human- world relations has two dimensions: on the one hand, technologies shape how human beings are (behave and interact) in their world. On the other hand, technologies shape how the world appears to them and is experienced by them. So in the first case, technologies help to shape human actions and practices and the way we organize our lives. In the latter, technologies help to shape perception and experience, i.e., how the world becomes meaningful to us.

2.2 Four human-technology relations

Don Ihde's (1990) technological mediation theory distinguishes four different human-technology relations: alterity, background, hermeneutic, and embodiment relations. Understanding these different relations will provide more insight into the experiences and actions that the relations bring about. In analyzing human-technology relations, Ihde further distinguishes two dimensions of experience, or, perception; micro-perception and macro-perception. Micro-perception refers to the individual bodily experience of sensory perception. In contrast, macro-perception refers to the historical, cultural, and anthropological dimensions of experience, and is concerned with sociocultural interpretation and understanding (Ihde, 1990). Although Ihde makes this distinction, he also emphasizes that they are inextricable; there can be no micro-perception without macro-perception and vice versa. In the following paragraphs, all four human-technology relations will be addressed one by one, after which other key terms for this framework will be discussed, such as mutual constitution and multistability.

2.2.1 Embodiment relation

The embodiment relation is one in which the user ‘merges’ with the technology, the person who embodies the artifact, perceives and experiences the world through this artifact, as if it were part of their body, the technology thus functions as an extension of their self (body and senses). Ihde makes use of Merleau-Ponty's (1962) well-known example of the blind man's cane, in which the technological artifact, being the cane, becomes an extension of bodily perception. It allows the blind man to sense his environment through the cane.

A schematic representation of this embodiment relation looks as follows: (human – technology) → world (Verbeek, 2015).

2.2.2 Hermeneutic relation

The term hermeneutics can be defined in the most basic sense as interpretation. According to Ihde (1990), the hermeneutic relation entails a particular interpretive action that is needed within a technological context, a perceptual activity that is similar to the process of reading. This suggests the

need for a particular 'language' for something to be 'read'. Therefore in a hermeneutic relation, the technological artifact in question requires interpretation for which a particular language is needed to 'read' and understand what it means. One example that Ihde provides is a thermometer, for which particular 'language' is required for 'reading' the thermometer.

The hermeneutic relation, as discussed by Ihde, describes the relation of a person with the world through technology; the artifact in itself provides a representation of the world. So we perceive the technology as part of the world instead of as part of ourselves. We do not look through it to perceive the world; instead, we look at it directly, allowing us to perceive otherwise unperceivable information about that world. In the thermometer case, the thermometer itself becomes the object of perception while simultaneously referring to the temperature, which could otherwise not be perceived.

A schematic representation of this hermeneutic relation looks as follows: human → (technology-world) (Verbeek, 2015).

2.2.3 Alterity relation

In the alterity relation that Ihde poses, the technology is seen as a 'quasi-other'. Rosenberger & Verbeek (2015) take the ATM as an example for this type of human-technology relation, in which the user directly engages with the machine as a technological 'other' that is distinct from themselves and the world. Technologies with which we have an alterity relation are often explicitly designed to mimic human interaction.

A schematic representation of an alterity relation takes the following shape: human → technology (world) (Verbeek, 2015).

2.2.4 Background relation

The background relation is a type of human-technology relation in which the technology shapes our experience without us being consciously aware of that influence. The technology is working without a person actively interacting with it, or even be aware of it. The technology becomes part of the environment, part of the world in which we find ourselves. These technologies do not play a central role in our experience of the world; it is only when the technology or technological system stops working that we become aware of its role. In a way, these technologies are present and absent simultaneously; they shape our relation to the world in the background. Examples of technologies with which we have background relations are a refrigerator or a thermostat, which both operate without a human actively interacting with it, or even be aware of their operation. We only explicitly become aware of it when it stops working; when we notice that our food is not cold or the room gets too cold.

Schematically represented, a background relation looks as follows: human (technology/world) (Verbeek, 2015)

2.3 Multistability and mutual constitution

2.3.1 Multistability

According to Rosenberger and Verbeek (2015), one of the key questions in the philosophy of technology field is how to comprehend the non-neutrality of technological artifacts. How should we conceive of the ways in which technology plays a role in determining our choices and actions, and yet simultaneously, it remains open to our manipulation and interpretation? How can technology both be something we create and use as means or tools for the purposes we have and also something that leads, restricts, or influences those very purposes? From a post-phenomenological perspective, one answer to this question can be found in the concept of 'multistability'. This concept, first developed by Don Ihde as an account of human perception, refers to the idea that "any technology can be put to multiple purposes and can be meaningful in different ways to different users". According to Ihde (1999, p.47), a technological artifact is never 'one thing'; rather, it is capable of belonging to multiple contexts and have different meanings and uses in each of them. Although it is crucial to note that a technology cannot mean just anything or be used to do anything, the artifact's materiality limits the potential uses

and meanings. What I would like to add here is that, in addition to the fact that technologies can be meaningful in different ways to different users, it can also be meaningful to non-users, meaning those who interact not directly with the technologies, but with the users of those technologies. What meanings that technology conveys to them might differ from the meanings it conveys to the user; this is to say that the user's purpose might be unclear to those they interact with or interpreted in a different way.

2.3.2 Mutual constitution

Post-phenomenology's goal is to show that human activity and experience is, and has always been, technologically embodied (Ihde, 1990). Therefore, it focuses on the transformative and non-neutral roles of technologies in experience. On this view, the mediation by technologies does not occur between pre-existing entities. Instead, it plays a role in the mutual constitution of both sides of the subject-object relationship. As such, technologies are transforming both perception and phenomena (Selinger, 2006; Verbeek, 2008). According to Heidegger (Ihde, 1990), objects of study cannot and should not be separated from the context in which they arise. Reality and consciousness are mutually constituted. Reality, as how the world appears to us, is influenced and even shaped by our experience of it. Simultaneously, our experience of the world is influenced and shaped by the way it appears to us. We can only perceive and experience 'reality', or the world, through our own lens. The human subject is always directed at objects; our senses are not merely perceiving, but always perceiving something. So there is an intentional relation between humans and technologies. An experience is always personal, as in that it is experienced by a particular person. That person's identity, their values, the culture, and environment they grew up in, are all factors that impact that person's experience of (specific aspects of) the world. On the other hand, technologies might exist as separate from humans; however, they only become meaningful when interacting with them. In such a relation, they become things-for-us (Rosenberger & Verbeek 2015, p.11). Post-phenomenology investigates the fundamentally mediated character of this intentional relation, and it rejects the idea that there is a pre-existing subject in a pre-existing world of objects, with a mediating entity in between. Instead, it views the mediation as the source of the particular form that human subjectivity and objectivity of the world can take on in this specific situation. Hence, "subject and object are constituted in their mediated relation" (Verbeek, 2005). Therefore, Rosenberger & Verbeek (2015) conclude that "intentionality is not a bridge between subject and object, but a fountain from which the two of them emerge". This focus on mutual constitution and mediation is also what distinguishes post-phenomenology from classic phenomenology. The concept of mutual constitution corresponds to one of the definitions of technology, as discussed in chapter 1; technology as the process of becoming; something coming into existence, through the interaction of a human being with materials or objects in the world.

In studying clothing as a technology, chapter three will address the relations between people and clothing and how these clothes and the relations we have with them impact how we experience ourselves and others, and thus our social interactions. However, before looking at the impact of clothes on identity, in the following section, I will first establish what that identity entails.

2.4 Defining identity

There are two main views on personal identity that can be distinguished within philosophy; physical continuity versus psychological continuity. The first views identity as located in the body, while the second views identity as located in the mind (in memories, beliefs, personality, etcetera). The philosophical discussion on identity is abundant, and defining identity in all its complexity goes far beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, instead of trying to capture the essence of identity, or where it is located, I use a simple and straightforward working definition; identity as *how I experience myself and how others experience me*. This intuitive definition will be sufficient for understanding the role of clothing in identity development. However, I will demonstrate how this identity is constituted. What impacts the way I experience myself and the way others experience me? In other words, how does a perception of self (by me and by others) come to be? As I have shown in the previous sections, we are shaped by technologies in our experience of ourselves and the world. This allows us to look at

identity from a different angle, that of bodily experience and perception since it is through these that we become who we are. Adopting a post-phenomenological perspective suggests a view on identity as being constituted in interaction. Since I have established that technologies are not mere tools for humans, but rather, in our relations, or interactions with technologies, a mutual constitution takes place. This notion of mutual constitution corresponds to the work on identity by Ciano Aydin (2012), in which identity is described as relational and interactional; as something that is constituted through bodily interaction with our surroundings. In the following paragraphs, I will explain what such a view on identity entails.

2.4.1 Interactional identity

According to Aydin (2012), numerous modern-day philosophers of technology endorse a functionalist perspective in assuming that there is a self, as an entity on its own, that uses technologies as tools for reaching certain goals. In contrast, the more classical philosophers of technology hold a more deterministic view by seeing technology as an autonomous power that lies outside human control or regulation. Both approaches have in common that they situate technologies outside of the domain of identity, in which beliefs, motivations, and actions are established. This is where both approaches are wrong, according to Aydin. Instead, he suggests a view on identity as being shaped and constituted *in* and *through* our interactions with technologies. As such, our view on identity is tightly connected to the technologies we have created, to which we have adapted ourselves and which have become a fundamental part of our modern life. (Kockelkoren, 2007; in Aydin, 2012) In line with Ihde's concept of mutual constitution, Aydin argues that our identity is not something that is pre-given, but instead, it is constituted in interaction with technologies.

Subsequently, he poses the question of how our self ought to be constituted, implying a presence of self-control, being able to strive towards a self that one wishes to become, a particular ideal. Such ideals are necessary for self-control and the constitution of identity, according to Aydin. On this view, technologies can be deliberately used in self-creation. Yet how does this notion of self-control relate to the idea that identity is constituted in interaction with technologies? The technologies that are present in our daily lives, and how we use them, affect how exactly we constitute and develop our identity. Naturally, to a certain degree, we decide how we use technologies; however, technologies itself cannot be controlled to do precisely what we want it to do, it can always have consequences or develop in ways that have not been anticipated. In other words, we can have an intention to interact with certain technologies in order to deliberately shape our identity towards a particular goal, but that does not necessarily mean that that goal will be achieved. This has to do with several factors, for example, the context in which the interaction takes place, varying interpretations of others, as well as the unpredictable nature of technologies, furthermore corresponding to the previously discussed concept of multistability. Moreover, our goals and preferences that we strive towards are also co-determined by technologies. In the case of clothing, by the technological system; the fashion industry. Our wardrobe choices are, at least to some extent, influenced by the fashion industry because they offer us their selection of clothing. As such, we can decide what to wear, but within the possibilities that brands and stores are offering us.

Then there is a second factor that plays a crucial role in the establishment and development of identity, namely, other people that the person interacts with. Since we do not only interact *with* technologies but also *through* technologies with the people and the world around us, in the following section, this aspect of social interaction will be elaborated upon.

2.4.2 Symbolic interactionism

Identity is not only constituted in, or through, technological interaction, but also through social interaction. In the field of social psychology, this is known as symbolic interactionism. A theory that views the self as a social construction that is established, maintained, and altered through interpersonal communication with others (Johnson, Lennon, & Rudd, 2014). The three basic premises of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) are: 1) Our behavior towards (things and) others around us

is shaped by the meaning they have for us. 2) The meaning of objects is derived from social interaction with others. Which shows that meanings are not inherent in objects, but are instead constructed socially as they are learned and shared by individuals. Furthermore, 3) Meanings are always changing by a continuous interpretative process in which the actor interacts with himself. Thus, our identity is established and validated through interaction, technological interaction, on the one hand, and social interaction, on the other hand, which are closely intertwined.

There is a mutual constitution of meaning in the interaction between humans and technologies; technologies acquire meaning, and identity is constituted. Moreover, as I have demonstrated in chapter 1, clothing is to be seen as a technology. Combining this with the insights of this chapter that we shape technology and technology shapes us, allowing me to conclude that we shape clothes and clothes shape us. More specifically, we shape the meaning of clothes and clothes, in turn, give form to, or fabricate, our identity. We have furthermore established that technologies can deliberately be used in self-creation. So, although technologies shape us, we still choose the technologies we interact with and how. To a certain degree, we can become whom we strive to be through the use of clothing.

In the following chapter, I expand on how the post-phenomenological framework combined with the interactional conceptualization of identity, can be applied to clothing, to demonstrate how our interaction with the clothes we wear impacts our perception of self and our perception of the world as well as our behavior in it. Moreover, I demonstrate how other people's perception of an individual is being shaped by the clothes that the individual is wearing and how that again shapes that individual's self-perception.

Chapter 3 –A post-phenomenology of clothes

George Van Ness Dearborn (1918) already suggested that “one's clothes are one of the important things that intervene between the individual personality and his environment”. In this section, the role of clothes in identity development will be discussed from a post-phenomenological perspective. The goal is to understand the roles that clothes play in the relations between humans and the world, and subsequently, analyzing the implications of these roles. Such an analysis of human-clothes relations will furthermore reveal different ways in which clothes impact human experience and perception of the world and the people around them. This is crucial, for it is in the context of these relations that clothes are worn and interpreted.

First of all, the clothes that you wear express and convey meaning, whether you intend to or not. Furthermore, the meaning that a garment or an outfit expresses for you is not necessarily the same for the people you interact with. A piece of clothing or an outfit can have meaning in itself, but the person wearing it contributes to this meaning, simply by wearing it. Clothing only truly comes to life when being worn, that is, in interaction with its wearer. Simultaneously, the wearer might even have the ability to change the existing meaning of a garment, by wearing it in new ways. Hence, the meanings that clothes have and convey are not fixed; instead, they are established in the act of dressing. Moreover, importantly, the wearer's identity is also being shaped, or given meaning, in this process of dressing. Since the clothes we wear directly affect our self-perception and other people's perceptions of us as they make up such a large part of our appearance.

In the next section, all four human-technology relations will each be discussed in turn, to explain the different ways in which we relate to the clothes that we wear.

3.1 Applying the four human-technology relations to clothes

This section will discuss how post-phenomenology informs our understanding of clothing, first, by seeing how each human-technology relation emerges in the case of clothing. We have an embodiment relation with clothes, as we literally wear them on our bodies. We also relate to clothing in a hermeneutic sense, when we look at clothing as a form of communication. Furthermore, we can have

an alterity relation with clothes, in which clothing brands become the 'quasi-other' that we wish to become part of. Lastly, we often hold a background relation to clothing, for example, when wearing a uniform or adhering to a particular dress code. It is only when someone disrupts this uniformity by wearing something different, that we are made explicitly aware of the uniformity. Each relation will be discussed in more detail in the following paragraphs, from the wearer's perspective, and from the other way around, so how others relate to the wearer via the clothes that he wears. I argue that it is crucial to incorporate this aspect of social interaction in order to really capture the complexity of clothing and its role in identity development. Hence, it is not only about how we perceive and experience the world through the medium of clothes but also about how the world (others) perceives us via the clothing, i.e., as dressed people, in the different relations with clothing. I argue that this notion of social interaction is not captured sufficiently in post-phenomenology. It is a common critique to both classic phenomenology and post-phenomenology that it focuses too much on individual experience, thereby falling short in acknowledging the importance of others; of social interaction and the social structure through which we experience the world, and ourselves and others in it. And how those others experience us, and how that again affects our own experience of self. However, I argue that it is highly important to take into account this social aspect. First because I have defined identity as; how I experience myself and how others experience me, in which the importance of the social aspect is already acknowledged. And, more importantly, because our lives take place in a social structure that is based on social interaction, therefore others play a great role in our existence and our experiences, both of ourselves and our surroundings, as these others are part of that surroundings, just as I am. Ihde (1990) attempted to resolve this issue by including the notion of macro-perception in his theory of post-phenomenology, which, in addition to individual bodily experience (micro-perception), addresses the broader socio-cultural context in which the individual experience is always embedded. However, in applying post-phenomenology to clothes, I find that micro- and macro-perception do not fully capture the complexity of clothing and its role in identity constitution, as it falls short in capturing the aspect of social interaction. Where micro-perception in the case of clothing refers to the individual's intimate interaction with the clothes he wears, and macro-perception refers to the broader sociocultural context of norms, values and laws in which interpretation and understanding take place, a category that actually captures these notions of interpretation and understanding is missing. Although the broader social structure affects an individual's actions and behavior by becoming part of their preferences and goals, it is still important to take into account the actual social interactions (Bicchieri, Muldoon & Sontuoso, 2018). Therefore, I argue that a new category of perception should be added in between micro- and macro-perception, borrowed from the field of economics, I will call this meso-perception. Meso-perception captures the interpersonal relations between people, the actual social interactions that we have with the people around us, in which interpretation and understanding of the norms, values and laws occur and are translated into expectations for behavior and appearance. This leads to the distinction of three categories instead of two: 1) Micro-perception, referring to the individual experience of the person interacting with the clothes he wears, and how that affects their sense of self. 2) Meso-perception, referring to the social interaction between a dressed person and the people around him, and how that impacts his identity. And 3) Macro-perception, corresponding to the broader social structure in which the above interactions take place, with all its norms, values, laws and expectations that influence both the micro- and meso-perception. With the additional category of meso-perception, I capture what is missing in Ihde's theory of post-phenomenology; the aspect of social interaction in which interpretation and understanding of clothing takes place and meaning is established. As such, we can see a more complete picture of the interactive process in which identity is constituted and developed; it is always within a broader sociocultural context, with all its norms, values and laws that identity is shaped in interaction with technologies and in social interaction.

In the remainder of this chapter each human-clothes relation will be addressed through both the micro-perception as well as the meso-perception, the notion of macro-perception will be discussed later on in chapter 4. This means, in the embodiment relation, for example, that we not only look at

what the embodiment of clothing means for how I perceive myself and how I experience the world but also how others relate to me via the clothing I embody; how they perceive me.

3.1.1 Embodiment relations with clothing

Regarding clothing, the type of relationship that we have with it is quite obviously one of embodiment. We literally embody the clothes in which we dress our bodies each day. So the interaction of a body with clothes occurs through embodiment, and interaction of a body with its environment occurs through clothes since our bodies almost always interact with the world while covered in clothing. According to Ihde, in embodiment relations, technological artifacts are experienced as a means through which a person interacts with their environment. The artifact acts as a medium positioned in between a person and the world around them, something through which they perceive the environment (Brey, 2000). Clothing clearly functions as such a medium between our body and the world, as our bodies are (almost) always dressed; hence it is through clothes that human bodies experience and interact with their environment. Clothing furthermore acts as a technological means for expressing identity; particular personality traits that cannot be expressed by the body alone can be conveyed to exist in a person by means of dress, whether these traits are authentic or not. Dressing can function as a tool for managing social identity; how others perceive us. In a sense, clothes 'make' us; they are part of who we are. So although clothing clearly functions as a means between a person and their environment, it does not seem to fit entirely into Ihde's definition of an embodiment relation. This might also partly be due to the fact that Ihde has in mind more complex technologies that influence visual or audial perception, such as telescopes, hearing aids, or glasses, when describing embodiment relations—as such, using this lens to look at clothes is quite radical. Clothing generally does not improve bodily functions per se; rather, it is used to improve appearance. However, simultaneously, the body engaging with the materiality and fit of clothes can constrain the body in its movement. For example, being unable to cycle when wearing a pencil skirt or not being able to sit comfortably in pants made of non-stretchy fabric, affecting posture and posture awareness. Hence, in this sense, clothing can function as means through which the environment is perceived, and simultaneously, as a means through which the self is perceived and experienced.

However, Ihde does provide the examples of a blind man's stick and a dentist's probe, technologies that function more as an extension of the body, which affect the bodily experience of the world. So these have to do with the sense of touch, be it indirectly, through the technology. Whereas telescopes, microscopes, and glasses are technologies that affect how we perceive the world through sight, they change how the world appears to us.

I take these two elements, touch and sight, as the main concepts from which I proceed. At first glance, from a post-phenomenological perspective, clothing is filed best under the element of touch, as an extension of the body. However, it does not function as an extension of the body in the strong sense that a blind man's stick or a dentist's probe does. So, the relation we have to clothing is different from other embodiment relations described by Ihde. We identify with our clothes more than we do with hearing aids, for example, which are used in a purely functional manner, in the sense that the clothes are a reflection or representation of who we are; therefore, they serve an visual purpose in addition to the functional one. They are similar, however, in that both clothing and hearing aids do not only serve to mediate perception, but they also mediate our bodily experience of the world. For example, when dressing according to the climate to maintain a comfortable body temperature, which entails the functional purposes of clothes. Additionally, clothes affect how the wearer is perceived by others, which again affects how we experience and perceive the world around us and who we are in that world. This shows that clothes can be used as a deliberate tool for identity management.

Furthermore, clothing does not fit into Ihde's definition of an embodied technology as something that does not, or hardly, become itself an object of perception; it is not a 'transparent' means that one hardly notices. Instead, it is undoubtedly visible; it makes up a large part of a person's appearance and is, in that sense, part of that person. As such, it is something upon which we make judgments and

estimates about a person. Thus, when we focus on the element of sight, we move from (lived) experience of the body in the environment to the environment perceiving the body. We move from interaction of the individual body with the clothes (Micro-perception) to interaction of the clothed body with others (meso-perception). This is where the visual purposes of clothes come into the picture, in which clothing is used as a means to manage appearance; in an attempt to take control of one's social identity, i.e., how a person is perceived by others, which will be further elaborated on in the following section.

3.1.1.1 Embodiment & meaning

With the embodiment of a garment naturally comes appropriation of that garment. Bar et al. (2016, p.617) define technological appropriation as something that moves beyond adoption; it is the process of users adopting a certain technology and appropriating it to their needs and personal situation. This process is about making the technology their own and embedding it in their social and daily practices. Hence, the meaning of a technology can change through use, depending on the person using it and the context in which it is used. With clothing, the appropriation process specifically entails appropriating the garment to fit one's identity. At the same time, the garment shapes that identity by giving meaning and expression to it. This appropriation process is, therefore, a process of mutual constitution (Ihde, 1990). Thus, in appropriating clothes, we make them part of our identity, simultaneously shaping the meaning of the garment and shaping the identity of the wearer. On the one hand, the wearer gives meaning to the clothes they wear, and in return, the clothing gives meaning to the identity they are expressing. On the other hand, the way an individual dresses also has public meaning and significance to the people around them. They perceive that individual mainly through appearance and interact with them based on that appearance. Therefore, the appropriation process of clothing can be seen as an interactive process of embodying meaning and giving meaning, of adopting meaning and changing meaning.

Then what is it precisely that we embody through the clothes we wear, in addition to the clothes themselves as a materiality? As briefly discussed in the first chapter, clothing reveals something about the identity of the person wearing it; personality traits or qualities of the person's actual self or their ideal self. This distinction between an actual self and an ideal self comes from the field of social psychology. According to Miller et al. (1982, p.364), the use of clothing can reflect a person's concept of self. Preferences for specific outfits and certain fabrics, colors, and fit are found to represent a compromise between an individual's actual self and their ideal self-image. This indicates that clothing is, or at least can be, used to augment personal perception as well as public presentation of the self. People actively participate in creating their own being, working towards their ideal self, which can change from time to time and can be influenced by different societal contexts. Thus clothing can function as a means for conveying a particular identity to others and ourselves, as they affect how others perceive us and how we see ourselves.

3.1.1.2 Between embodiment and fusion

In Ihde's (1990) understanding, in embodiment relations, the embodied technology does not, or at least not to a great extent, become itself an object of perception. "Rather it 'withdraws' and serves as a (partially) transparent means through which one perceives one's environment, thus engendering a partial symbiosis of oneself and it." (Brey 2000, p. 3) However, this does not seem to be correct for the embodiment of clothes. Clothes are for themselves objects of perception, and therefore Ihde's account does not seem sufficient for clothes. Although clothes are embodied, and as such, become part of the wearer's appearance, they also remain objects of perception themselves, but they become more meaningful when being worn. When clothes are embodied, they sort of merge with the person, or become part of that person's identity, both giving meaning to the other. Verbeek (2015) introduces some other relations that humans can have with technologies, in addition to Don Ihde's four human-technology relations. One of these is the fusion relation, in which technologies merge with our physical bodies, for example, with a pacemaker or a cochlear implant. This is a far more intimate relationship than the embodiment relation discussed by Ihde, as it blurs the boundaries between the body and the

technological artifact. Needless to say, the relation we have to clothing is by far not as intimate as a relation with a pacemaker, neither is it of comparable necessity; it is not as if our lives depend on it. However, we do identify with our clothes more strongly than we do with a pacemaker, in the sense that it is an expression of our identity and makes up a large part of our appearance, which makes it part of our self-perception. Therefore we might say that clothing can be found somewhere between the embodiment relation that Ihde describes and Verbeek's fusion relation. Even though the clothing does not literally merge with the body, as it is always a daily practice of dressing and undressing, the human body is almost always dressed in interaction with its' environment. The dressing activity is so deeply embedded in our daily lives; we would not think of leaving the house naked. This shows that the relationship we have with clothes is stronger and more intimate than Ihde's embodiment relation. Furthermore, we identify with clothes more strongly than we do with glasses for example, although glasses might not be the best example here, since they have also become a dress item with visual purposes in addition to the functional one of improving sight. My point is that clothes are used for self-expression, even as extensions of personality and identity, which is why the embodiment relations we have with clothes are much more intimate than the embodiment relation with for example hearing aids, where its' functions of embodiment are purely functional.

3.1.2 Hermeneutic relations with clothing

We can have a hermeneutic relation with clothes in the sense that one needs particular knowledge about cultural values, dress codes, and unspoken rules to be able to dress appropriately in a particular context, but also for 'reading' and interpreting other people's way of dressing, to get a sense of who they are based on how they look. Dressing well and interpreting other people's clothes can be compared to speaking and understanding a language, having a vocabulary (of clothes), and knowledge of the grammar, i.e., how to combine and dress for the occasion, and being able to understand what others are saying. The next section will revolve around the following questions: what do I signal to myself through my clothing, and what does my clothing signal to others?

3.1.2.1 *The language of clothes*

Personality traits are attributed to specific garments and particular ways of dressing. In that way, clothes can carry a particular message about a person's personality, as assumptions are being made based on appearance (dress body & self, Johnson, Lennon & Rudd, 2014). In her book *The Language of Clothes* (1992), Alison Lurie argues that clothing and how we use it to dress ourselves can be seen as a similar sign system as a written or spoken language.

"For thousands of years, human beings have communicated with one another first in the language of dress. Long before I am near enough to talk to you on the street, in a meeting, or at a party, you announce your sex, age, and class to me through what you are wearing – and very possibly give me important information (or misinformation) as to your occupation, origin, personality, opinions, tastes, sexual desires, and current mood. I may not be able to put what I observe into words, but I register the information unconsciously, and you simultaneously do the same for me. By the time we meet and converse, we have already spoken to each other in an older and more universal language."

Even though the idea of seeing clothing as a language is not new, what is different about Lurie's approach is that she goes one step further by arguing that if clothing is a language, it must have grammar and vocabulary like other languages. According to Bicchieri (2006), "social norms can be understood as the grammar of social interaction", resembling grammar in spoken languages, norms articulate what is acceptable and appropriate in a given context. In philosophical literature, social norms are seen as the endogenous product of social interactions (Ullmann-Margalit 1977; Vanderschraaf 1995; Bicchieri 2006). On this view, there is a mutual constitution of social interaction and social norms; through interaction with others, and the expectations therein, we create the social reality that shapes the interactions we are having. Furthermore, within the language of dress, as with spoken languages, there is not one language, but many, and each individual has his own stock of 'words' and employs personal variations of tone and meaning. The vocabulary of dress, besides

clothing, includes any other form of bodily decoration, such as hairstyles, jewelry, and make-up. Hence a person's 'vocabulary' consists of all the 'words' that they know, in this case, all the clothing and other dress items they possess, which they can use to build 'sentences', or outfits in this case. As such, clothes can be used to manage one's appearance in the world, in other words, clothes can be used to fabricate a desired identity.

According to sociologist Diana Crane (2000), we should interpret dress not as a 'closed text' like language, with relatively stable/ fixed meanings, but rather as 'open texts' that constantly acquire new meanings. Fred Davis (1993) reaches a similar conclusion in stating that the meanings evoked by the combinations and modifications of clothing's qualities (i.e., colour, fabric, pattern, texture, silhouette and occasion) are constantly in flux. Hence, as with spoken language, the meaning of an outfit strongly depends on the specific place and time in which it is worn. Any change in these particular circumstances can alter its meaning entirely. For example, clothes that are appropriate in a casual situation instantly become inappropriate when appearing in a more formal setting, immediately marking its wearer as a person of low status or, at the very least, as someone who does not belong. Hence, the meaning of appropriate dress strongly depends on the situation. The meaning of an outfit furthermore depends on who is wearing it.

Lurie (1992, p. 27) claims that we dress ourselves for some of the same reasons that we speak, that is: "to make living and working easier and more comfortable, to proclaim or disguise our identities and to attract attention". James Laver (1969) has labeled these motives as the Utility Principle, the Hierarchical Principle, and the Seduction Principle. The first one, the Utility Principle, comprises the purely functional aspects of clothing such as warmth and protection, as mentioned above. The Hierarchical Principle and the Seduction Principle are both about conveying status and identity to others and can, as such, be filed under the denominator appearance, as these principles are judged on their looks. The clothes that one decides to wear are often chosen to indicate their place in the world and to make them look good or attractive.

Furthermore, many political, social, and cultural trends and phenomena are mirrored in what we wear. Clothing has come to function as a tool for showcasing what kind of person you are, making dressing a more social activity. Whether we like it or not, clothes speak for us; the way we dress gives essential information, or misinformation, about our identities. It communicates, among other things, our gender, age and class, and even our personality, beliefs, and how we feel. Since clothing can communicate all these aspects, we can carefully choose what to 'say', meaning that we use it to deliberately express certain qualities or traits that we have, or that we would like to have. Furthermore, the wearer can communicate certain values or religious, spiritual, or political beliefs through his clothes. To do this, the wearer needs to have knowledge and skills that allow him to use his 'vocabulary', or clothes, in a 'grammatically' correct or appropriate way.

3.1.3 Alterity relations with clothing

At first, the alterity relation does not seem to fit with clothing, since we do not similarly interact with a garment as we would with a person; in other words, a garment does not appear to us as a 'quasi-other' that is distinct from us and the world. However, when shifting from an individual garment or an outfit to a more broader perspective, namely the clothing brands, it becomes clear that we can, in fact, relate to clothes in a manner of alterity. In commercials or other marketing outlets, clothing brands put considerable effort into shaping brand communications, intending to generate specific beliefs, feelings, and expectations in the consumers exposed to the brand (Rhee and Johnson, 2012). In the field of marketing and consumer behavior, a common concept is that of brand identity or brand personality, referring to several human qualities or traits that the brand is associated with. These human characteristics serve to have consumers identify with them and link them to their own traits, creating a desire to use the brand as a means for self-expression. As such, the brand behind a specific piece of clothing can function as a 'quasi-other', more specifically, an 'other' that we look up to, that we identify with, or that we wish to be a part of. Brands are using this by indirectly presenting

themselves as a means through which one can manage other people's perception, or gain social acceptance, for example, emphasizing the social aspect of dressing again. In particular, brands do this by selling a particular lifestyle that almost always comes down to: 'If you buy (and wear) this, you will be happy/ attractive/ cool/ professional', or any other quality that a person could wish to possess. As if, by wearing a particular brand, one could actually obtain these qualities. This is, of course, from a brand's commercial perspective to make sure that people keep buying their products, but it does pose an interesting question; could we actually become something by 'dressing the part'? This question builds on what was already discussed in the section on embodiment and will be further elaborated upon in the last chapter.

For the people around him, the wearer, in a way, becomes part of the particular brand that he is wearing, i.e., the wearer becomes a representation of the brand and the lifestyle it promotes. Simultaneously, or even before that, the wearer is perceived as someone of a certain status, as someone who is wealthy enough to afford that particular brand. Hence, (branded) clothing indicates the wearer's place in the world. Sometimes, an individual tries to gain such a status of wealth by wearing a specific brand, while they are not actually that wealthy. As it turns out, people with lower incomes are more brand conscious (Haynes et al., 1993) and tend to have a higher interest in luxury brands (Shim et al., 1995). As such, luxury brands are stronger symbols of status for those who cannot afford them. For people with lower incomes, branded clothing can function as a tool for keeping up the appearance of wealth, or belonging to a particular social class. Moreover, the very existence of brand counterfeits shows that a brand is seen as some kind of other, an 'other' that not everyone can interact with.

3.1.4 Background relations with clothing

At first, it might seem counterintuitive to have a background relation with clothing, as it is such a visible technology that makes up a large part of our appearance and that we use to present ourselves. There are, however, several ways in which we do relate to clothing as fading to the background.

One way in which we can have a background relation with clothes is during the day when we are not constantly aware of what we are wearing. In the morning, we might deliberately pick a specific outfit, thinking about whom we want to be that day, in which the hermeneutic relation is experienced. However, during the day, as we go about our business, the experience of clothing around our body fades to the background. It is only when something is wrong, an itchy label, or an uncomfortable fabric or fit, for example, that the wearer becomes aware of it. Another way in which we have a background relation with clothes is, for example, when a uniform is required within a certain company, and it is only when one person disrupts the system of uniformity by wearing something other than the required uniform that we are made explicitly aware of the uniformity and the wearer's lack thereof. Another way we engage in a background relation with clothes is when someone is wearing clothes that do not stand out, that person, in a way, makes himself part of other people's backgrounds. These last two background relations are from an observer's perspective instead of the wearer's and are concerned with context-dependency; it strongly depends on the context in which the wearer finds himself, whether he blends in or stands out.

As I have shown, clothes can fulfill all of Ihde's human-technology relations. However, to truly capture the complex role of clothes in identity development, the next chapter will dive more deeply into mediation theory's concepts of mutual constitution and multistability. The discussion is further deepened by applying an interactional view on identity to clothes. The combination of mediation theory with a theory of interactional identity allows me to create a more complete picture of the impact of clothing on how we see ourselves and how others perceive us.

Chapter 4 – How we shape clothes and how clothes shape us

In the previous chapter, I have examined the relations between the wearer and the clothes, and between this dressed person and the others and the world around him. This chapter zooms out by looking at what happens in these interactions and the implications for identity development. I demonstrate that in interaction with the clothes we wear, they are shaping our identity. Hence, it works two ways; we can use the clothing we wear for self-expression and self-presentation, but it is not merely a technological means for self-creation; it also gives form to our identity in ways that we may not have intended. Furthermore, in the interaction between clothes and its' wearer, a mutual constitution of meaning occurs; the daily practice of dressing is one in which the wearer gives meaning to the clothes and the clothes, in return, give meaning to the wearer's identity. The meanings that emerge thus seem to depend on three factors; (1) the clothes, (2) the person who wears them, and (3) the social context in which that person is wearing them.

Furthermore, clothing has meaning for and gives meaning to its wearer, but it also has meaning for other people that the dressed person interacts with, which do not always coincide. The meaning of an embodied garment thus strongly depends on context; on who wears it, how it is worn, at what occasion, and also on who interprets it. As such, a piece of clothing or an outfit can hold multiple meanings and can be used in different ways. This links back to Ihde's notion of multistability as "any technology can be put to multiple purposes and can be meaningful in different ways to different users". As already discussed in chapter 2, a technological artifact is never just 'one thing'; rather, it can belong to multiple contexts and have different meanings and uses in each of them. Additionally, another layer of multistability can be observed; even in a fixed context, we can simultaneously engage in multiple human-clothes relations. At the same time, it is through these relations that clothes acquire meaning, that a mutual constitution takes place, not only between the wearer and his clothes, but rather a mutual constitution of self, clothing, and world. Since others, and the particular environment in which he finds himself also impact the wearer's sense of self. Shaping the wearer's identity, how he perceives himself, and how others perceive him, as well as how he perceives and experiences the world around him of which he is part.

4.1 Mutual constitution of meaning in dress

In the relation between clothing and its wearer, meanings are mutually constituted. A garment can have a particular meaning for its wearer, embodying that meaning by wearing it, in doing so, making it part of who he is, while at the same time, the wearer also adds to the meaning of the garment, simply by wearing it. Therefore, perception lies at the heart of these meanings. According to Merleau-Ponty (1945/1962), one's body is one's perspective on the world, in which the body is a 'transcendental field', i.e., a space that is constitutive of our perceptual world (Carman, 2008, p.82). For Merleau-Ponty, perception is thus something that demands interaction with other people and objects as part of being-in-the-world. If one's body is one's perception on the world, stressing the individual, personal experience, importantly, it is a dressed body from which this perceptual world is constituted.

The clothes you wear have an impact on how you feel, behave, and interact with others. It affects your sense of self; how you perceive yourself. Additionally, your outfit has an impact on your outlook on the world and your experience of it. Both points become more evident when comparing two different outfits; a suit and a leather jacket and jeans, both having quite strong universal meanings associated with them. In a well-fitted suit, the wearer may feel confident, powerful, professional, and able to tackle any task on his plate. The world is then perceived as something to be controlled or dominated. On the other hand, in a leather jacket and jeans, the wearer may feel bold, tough, and daring. The world is then experienced as something to rebel against.

Therefore, both one's experience of self and one's experience of the world are always influenced by the clothes one is wearing. Clothing, when being worn, can thus invoke certain personality traits or qualities within a person. On the other hand, in the same way, clothing has the ability to repress such traits or qualities. For example, when a person is asked to dress according to a particular dress code,

she might not be able to dress in a way that expresses her personality as she wishes, constraining her in her individuality. Such qualities are embodied by wearing the clothing, but do these qualities exist in the person already, and are they awakened, so to say, by the clothes? Or, do the clothes possess these qualities, which are then embodied by the person wearing them and in that way incorporated into the self, becoming part of their identity? As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter, identity is interactionally constituted, which, in the case of clothing, is thus constituted in interaction with the clothing. Here the concept of mutual constitution comes to the fore again; the person wearing a certain garment can embody its meaning and incorporate it into their sense of self. However, in wearing it, the person can change the garment's meaning as well, by wearing or combining it in a new way. Hence, not only the wearer's identity is constituted in interaction with his clothes, but also the meaning of the clothes themselves. Since the wearer can give meaning to the clothes he is wearing, clothes are multistable in meaning. This multistability concept corresponds to Julia Twigg's (2010) remark about the failing attempts by fashion theorists to give an enduring account of the meaning of particular forms of dress. She ascribes this to "the very plurality and cultural plasticity of dress" that withstands such efforts. A feature characteristic to dress is that its meanings are constantly in flux, depending on the specific context in which the act of dressing takes place. Additionally, this context, referring to the broader sociocultural structure (macro-perception) in which all interactions take place, has great influence on how identity is interactionally constituted. Through the norms, values and laws within this sociocultural structure, and the expectations of others emerging from that, the meaning of clothes and what is considered appropriate are established, as well as the ideal self that we strive for. Hence, mutual constitution is much broader than simply between the wearer and his clothes, there is also a mutual constitution between social interactions and social norms and values, as I have shown in section 3.1.2.1. This shows that the three categories of perception (micro-meso-macro), are tightly intertwined and cannot exist independently. Therefore, it is not only in the wearer's interaction with the clothes that meanings are established and identity is constituted, but also in the social interaction with the people around us and the broader sociocultural context in which these interactions take place.

4.2 Multistability of clothing

A costume – a combination of garments that together make up an outfit- is given meaning in relation to multiple temporal and spatial contexts. Yet what truly makes a costume speak, according to Alison Lurie (1992), is that it is worn by a specific person whose age, sex, and physical attributes influence the judgment and interpretations on which others' perceptions are based. So the meaning of a garment or an outfit is always relational and can vary with a change of context, i.e., the meaning can be shaped and redefined. This corresponds to Ihde's notion of multistability. When a piece of clothing is bought, the wearer can appropriate it to fit their identity. However, it should be noted that this is a two-way relation, one of mutual constitution, as discussed in the previous section. The person wearing the garment can change the meaning of that garment. At the same time, the garment may change the wearer's sense of self as well as his perception of others and others' perception of him, and his behavior in this social environment. Furthermore, certain norms and unspoken rules surrounding physical appearances exist, and what proper dress entails for these appearances. For example, it may be perceived as vulgar when an overweight person shows too much skin, while the same outfit may be perceived in a more positive sense when a slim person is wearing it. Therefore, any outfit's meaning strongly depends on who is wearing it and the sociocultural context in which it is worn.

Clothing is multistable in function and meaning, depending on the overall context, the person wearing it, how it is worn (how it is combined with other clothing items), the time and place in which it is worn, and the end or goal for which it is worn. The same garment can have or convey multiple meanings and functions to different people, and in different situations, for the wearer, as well as the onlooker. That is to say, that the wearer's intentions with a certain outfit do not necessarily coincide with the interpretations of the person they interact with. Ian King (2015) describes this as a gap in communication through clothes "between the intention of the message (my planned choice of wearing a particular item of clothing) and its receipt (how audiences interpret my choice)". As such, the

meaning of clothes is established mostly in interaction: interaction of the clothes with the person who wears them, and interaction of that dressed person with others and the world around them.

For example, a piece of clothing that is considered dull or old-fashioned in a particular context can be given a new meaning when put into a different context, by combining or wearing it in a new way. A good example of this is vintage clothing; for example, oversized knitted sweaters and cardigans, the ones that are generally associated with older people, can be given a new meaning when worn by an adolescent girl. However, she must wear it with confidence in order to create a new meaning that is not communicating 'grandma'. If this confidence lacks, the girl wearing the knitted sweater risks becoming the subject of ridicule because of a mismatch between her age and her way of dressing.

4.2.1 Intention vs. interpretation

This section discusses the interplay between intention and interpretation, between micro-perception and meso-perception. When we dress ourselves, we present a particular image of ourselves to the world as an attempt to manage other people's perceptions of who we are. However, what we intend to say, does not always coincide with the interpretation of those we interact with. Similarly, with clothes, what we intend to communicate through our dress can be interpreted differently by the people around us, depending on their own background, values, and beliefs. In the 'mutton dressed as lamb' case from chapter 1, there is a discrepancy between the meaning of an outfit for the wearer and the meaning of that same outfit for the onlooker. For the wearer, 'young' clothes might make her feel young again, while those she interacts with will most certainly not perceive her as young as she wishes to be, but rather as ridiculous, as someone who does not want to accept her real age. So in this particular case, the embodiment of a certain outfit has a different meaning for the wearer than for the onlooker.

Thus, the meaning of particular forms of dress relies strongly upon interpretation, highlighting the contingent nature of these meanings. The meaning of an outfit is constituted through various factors, and as previously noted, the meaning of clothes are fluid and context-dependent, as they are rooted in specific social and historical structures. Hence, both temporal and spatial factors are part of the meaning of clothes, as is interpretation, which is closely connected to the temporal and spatial aspects, since an interpretation is always formed within a particular context in time and space (Twigg, 2010).

4.3 The role of clothing in identity constitution

The notion of personal identity or the self is often discussed in philosophy in terms of mind-body dualism or attempting to overcome that (Harris 1995, Parfit 1984, Bermúdez et al. 1998). However, an important point that is being overlooked concerning the body is that we dress it every day. As such, clothing forms a significant element in the experience and constitution of identity, not only because we interact with it through our bodies, but also because they are fundamental to how these bodies are experienced, presented, and understood within culture and social interaction. We perceive and interact with dressed bodies, so the body is perceived through the medium of dress (Twigg, 2010). The clothes we embody mediate between our naked bodies and the world around us. Therefore, they play a prominent role in social interaction, bringing along social expectations regarding how these bodies ought to be dressed. Twigg strikingly captures it as clothes forming the "vestmentary envelope that contains and makes manifest the body, offering a means whereby it is experienced, presented, and given meaning in particular social contexts." In the following section, I discuss how identity is constituted in interactions *with* and interactions *through* clothes.

4.3.1 Technological interaction – interaction *with* clothes

In our intimate relations with the clothes we wear, they almost become part of our self; we identify with our clothes, and they give meaning and expression to our identity. So the constitution of identity is interactional in a technological way and occurs through wearing clothes in this specific case. In the field of consumer behavior, Belk (1988) has discussed the role of possessions in self-perception: 'Our possessions are a major contributor to and a reflection of our identities'. Possessions such as clothing

can be incorporated into the sense of self, according to Belk. He posits that such an extended self can include external objects and personal possessions. Belk explains the notion of the extended self as something that comprises not only that which is seen as 'me' (the self) but also that which is seen as 'mine' and that these notions of 'me' and 'mine' are interwoven in the way we perceive ourselves. That this belief is implicitly underlying our current view on possessions, especially clothing, becomes evident by looking at the simple example of the sentence 'That is so you'. And the opposite, when something does not correspond to someone's perceived identity/ personality, can be seen as 'not being able to pull it off' or 'out of character'. Automatically, when you have a particular occupation, for example, being a lawyer, this is part of who you are and the clothes that go along with that represent that, and are also part of you, in that specific role. Another example is attaching emotional value to particular material objects; in the case of clothing, this becomes visible in the lack of willingness to dispose of worn-out clothes because they are associated with certain memories of the past and the past self that experienced those memories. It seems that involuntary loss of possession can cause a loss of self. These examples highlight the fact that we do indeed identify with our clothes, but the position of regarding them as part of the self might still seem quite an extreme one; it rather seems that they reflect our sense of self. Nevertheless, clothes genuinely have the power to shape our identity, together with us. So not as an autonomous power, but rather as something that in interaction (together) with the person, has the power to shape or create an identity. At the same time, the person also gives meaning to the clothes they are wearing, which links back to the concept of mutual constitution.

Hence, we establish and validate our identity through the wearing of clothes, by which we shape our appearance in a certain way, and how others then interact with us based on that appearance, again impacts our self-perception. This notion of social interaction will be further deepened in the following paragraphs.

4.3.2 Social interaction – interaction *through* clothes

Not only do we interact *with* the clothes we wear (micro-perception), but also *through* them in our contact with others (meso-perception). Social interaction, as the process by which people act and react in relation to others, is always between dressed people, therefore, the clothes we wear shape our social interactions. Stone (1962, p.87) argues that appearance is equally important as verbal communication in establishing and maintaining the self. He describes a process of self-establishment through interaction with others. Such a process includes selecting clothes to communicate a desired aspect of self and convey it to others. One of the steps in this process is a person's evaluation of and response to their own appearance (Stone calls this a program). This can be experienced by looking in the mirror to evaluate whether the intended identity expressed through dressing is actually achieved. According to Stone, this looking in the mirror is a way of trying to see yourself through the eyes of others. After this evaluation of one's own appearance in the personal sphere, the appearance will then be judged in the public sphere; others will react to the individual's appearance (Stone calls this a review). Stone argues that "when programs and reviews coincide, the self of the one who appears is validated or established." (p.92). However, when programs and reviews do not coincide, the intended identity is challenged and needs redefinition. Stone's argument stresses the significance of appearance in interaction and communication, after which the importance of others in the establishment of identity is highlighted. It furthermore relates to symbolic interactionism, as discussed in chapter 2. I recall the three basic premises of this theory and see what they mean when applied to clothing.

1. Our behavior towards (things and) others around us is shaped by the meaning they have for us. In the case of dress, this means that our interaction with others is influenced by the clothes worn in this interaction and the meanings appointed to that particular way of dressing.
2. The meaning of objects is derived from social interaction with others. Which shows that meanings are not inherent in objects, but are instead constructed socially as they are learned and shared by individuals. In the case of clothes, they are given meaning in the context in which they are being worn.

3. “Meanings are modified by a continuous interpretative process in which the actor interacts with himself (Blumer, 1969), applied to clothing; this indicates that the wearer, as well as the interpreter of an outfit or item of clothing, are both active in determining the meaning of that item or outfit. Meanings can differ depending on the wearer, the interpreter and the context as the people involved can hold different values or associations with clothes and different norms can be implicit in different contexts or situations.

Combining this with the idea of dress as a language, as discussed in section 3.1.1, leads me to conclude that the self is constituted and developed through dress as a form of interpersonal communication with others.

4.3.3 Macro-perception; broader social structure

Both interaction with and through clothes, and our own experience of self and others’ experience of us therein, is a process that always takes place within a certain social or cultural context. Let’s call this the social structure. This structure consists of certain values, norms and laws to which the people within this social structure are expected to adhere. Thus, from this structure, expectations with regards to social interaction emerge, specifically expectations of behavior and appearance. Hence, this social structure with all its rules and expectations strongly shapes our experience of self and that of others. The broader social structure in which the aforementioned social interactions occur, consists of norms, values and laws that are present within a society. As such, the social structure gives direction to, and sets limits on these social interactions. The norms, values and laws are translated into expectations that we have of others in our interactions with them. Hence, in our social relations certain expectations are established, depending on the specific social setting. To conclude, social interaction between dressed people always takes place within a particular social structure, from which expectations with regards to behavior and dress emerge. This broader sociocultural context, in which both interactions between the wearer and his clothing, and between this dressed person and the people around him occurs, strongly influences these interactions, for it sets the norms and values for these very interactions.

4.3.4 Clothes as artifacts for self-creation

As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, identity is constituted and developed in interaction with technologies and others. Even though identity is shaped in interaction with technologies, this does not mean that those technologies, or clothes in this particular case, determine that identity. Since we can still choose, at least to some extent, what we are wearing, linking back to Aydin’s notion of self-control, due to this self-control, a person can deliberately engage in his self-creation. According to Smelik (2011), we use consuming, shopping and dressing in constructing and performing a particular identity, for ourselves and for others to see. She goes on to conclude that our agency lies in “the ways in which we construct our individual self, partly through dressing”. On her view, this does not mean that we are mere dupes of consumer society, nor is it a passive consumption, rather she accentuates the role of individual agency. In line with this, Entwistle and Wilson (2003) argue that “the body is not a submissive object to be draped in accordance with the dictates of the social or cultural field”, rather dressing is an active embodied practice, thereby accentuating the role of individual agency. This implies that a person can, simply by ‘dressing the part’, get closer to actually becoming it. However, even if this would not be the case, that one could ‘acquire’ certain qualities by wearing particular clothes, one could still appear to possess these qualities in the perception of others, in doing so fabricating a ‘social self’. Smelik (2011), argues that the bodily practice of dressing should be recognized as a performance of identity; “Every day we perform who we are, as if in a constant dress rehearsal, shifting among different roles such as teacher, colleague, mother, friend, lover, etcetera”. As such, dressing the body is a substantial way of performing identity in its many facets. On that view, clothes become artifacts for impression management, or, props, in the words of Goffman. Props that

can help a person convey a certain impression to the people he interacts with, specifically with the purpose of managing people's perception of him. In this sense, clothing becomes a technology for self-creation because it gives us the ability to actively shape our identity. For example, if you want to make a professional impression, wearing a suit can help conveying that image. Hence, clothes are technologies for impression management, through clothing one can literally embody a particular role, and in doing so, it can help in convincing others that you hold a certain status, that that role or status is part of your identity.

However, a discrepancy can be observed, for if we view identity as a performance, specifically a performance of social roles, through which we express cultural values and which are a way of adhering to social expectations, than the social field seems to have a strong impact on how we dress. For our social roles are based on the social statuses that we have, which exist within the social structure in which there are particular norms and values with regards to appearance and behavior, resulting in expectations for dress. Therefore, there is a tension between individual agency in self-creation on the one hand, and social expectations that shape the ideal self that we strive to create. This is in fact a tension between being and appearing to be, between authenticity and performance. But what is part of the performance, and what is not? And can you be authentic when you perform, or is it always a way of portraying an image of yourself that you are in fact not? This is where a seemingly stark distinction between who I am to myself and who I am to others, becomes visible. In interaction with others, in performance of a social role, one always tries to meet expectations, and in doing so, one only shows some particular image. However, there seems to be some agency in what one shows to the audience and what they don't get to see, but this agency is again constrained by the social norms, and the expectations that others place on us. Maybe dressing authentically is not possible at all, for if our identities are shaped by social and technological interaction, it is always constructed by the socio-cultural structure in which norms, values and expectations are established. And maybe then, authenticity cannot really exist, and what we believe to be authentic is in fact also fabricated. However, the notion of authenticity is far too complex to fully unpack within this last chapter, but it would be an interesting topic for further research.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1968), although not discussing clothing in particular, he did discuss the importance and significance of expression and style in general. In doing so, he has beautifully captured this notion of self-creation as: "A personal style is never simply given or chosen. It is a response to and founded upon the conditions of existence and embodiment. It constitutes the establishment of a lived coherence which gathers the elements of existence into life, a project with direction and character. Style ensures my existence of stability while allowing for the possibility of growth and change". This quote again shows the interactive character of identity constitution. Hence, in our self-presentation, clothes function as artifacts for conveying a desired identity. Both self-creation and impression management can be captured in what I call the fabrication of self through clothes. However, there are examples in which the 'creation power' of clothes is not as strong in that it can actually make a person become something they are not. One prominent example can be found when we look at age, particularly at women of older age. Simply dressing in a young manner does not make you look younger; on the contrary, it accentuates the older age even more because it is so out of line with each other. It also makes visible that such a person has somehow not accepted, or is unwilling to accept their age and the unspoken social expectations that come with it. This example again shows the existence of the often implicit or unspoken norms and rules that are present in society, which have an impact on how we behave within society and, therefore, also on our ways of dressing. Therefore, how others will perceive us is something we, whether consciously or unconsciously, keep in mind when dressing ourselves; thus, others' perceptions and opinions play a role in our self-creation. The ideal self that we strive towards is also, at least to some extent, shaped by the expectations that others have of us, or the expectations we believe that others have of us. This is because we are inherently social beings that need recognition and acceptance within a group to survive. We feel a strong need to belong, be seen, or better even to be liked or admired. How others interact with us, based on their

perception of us, also affects how we view ourselves. Hence, there is an ongoing interplay between these elements that affect our sense of self, and through which our identity is constituted.

Related to this topic, Sirgy (1982) introduced the self-image product-image congruity theory, which supposes the following basic assumption; through marketing and branding, products gain associated images, in other words; meanings are given to them. This theory's central premise is that people are motivated to buy products that are in accordance with, or symbolic of, how they see themselves, i.e., actual self-image or how they would like to be (seen), i.e., ideal self-image. Support for this theory was found in research by Rhee and Johnson (2012), who investigated the purchase and use of clothing brands by male and female adolescents. Participants pointed out that their favorite brand was most similar to their actual self; they found it to reflect their identity. Besides the actual self, which reflects an individual's experienced sense of self (micro-perception), a desired self, and a social self (meso-perception) can be distinguished. The desired self reflects who I want to be, and as such, coincides with the notion of ideal self-image that was previously discussed and is closely linked to the social self, which reflects how an individual wants to be perceived by others. Although these different notions of self can help understand the complexity of the self, I argue that they should not be regarded as different selves. Instead, they should be seen as parts of the same identity. The key might be that we fabricate ourselves, and adapt to different roles that different social settings demand, but there is not much agency because we are so strongly shaped by the sociocultural context and its' social norms and values, in our self-creation, as we strive to become what is admired, or valued in society. On this view, I argue that the social roles that we take on should be seen as different facets of the same identity, similar to a crystal that can appear in many different ways, depending on the perspective. This perspective depends on the others with which the individual interacts and the sociocultural context in which this interaction takes place. Furthermore, we define our perception of self through these different social roles as well, as such, the individual experience of self is always embedded within the social experience of self and the broader sociocultural context that shapes these experiences.

Different situations hold different rules, norms, or expectations for dressing. For example, when you go to a wedding, different expectations regarding dress apply than when you go on a job interview. Even for each wedding, it might differ, depending on cultural or religious values, for example. Similarly, with a job interview, the dress code or expectations might differ depending on the country and the type of company. Again, this shows the social disposition of dressing, and reveals identity as something that is relational and interactional; a person can change and behave differently in different situations or depending on the nature of their company, without becoming an entirely different person, i.e., without assuming an entirely different identity. People perform different roles throughout their lives, even throughout the day (Smelik, 2011), depending on the situation and the other people involved in that situation, and clothes enable them to take on these different roles. In other words: clothes can help us find and shape our identity; as such, they serve as artifacts for self-creation. Endorsing this view does not mean that we are different people, or, not ourselves, in some situations. It simply means that we can adapt ourselves to suit each situation in the best way, but these different sides are all still part of the same identity. It means that we humans are adaptable in nature and that we also have the ability of self-creation and the ability of 'polishing' some parts or creating a new 'side', albeit strongly influenced by social factors. However, this sociocultural influence is much more severe, and more complex than I could acknowledge in this thesis, and for future research it would be interesting to go deeper into this aspect.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

With this thesis, using a radical new approach of applying mediation theory to clothes and combining it with an interactional view on identity constitution, I have provided insight into the broader interplay of the numerous socio-technological factors in which identity is constituted and developed, and specifically on the role of clothing and the practice of dressing within.

In the first chapter, I have shown different ways in which clothing can be seen as technology. I have furthermore demonstrated that appearance is highly influential in our social interactions, since appearance strongly informs other people's perceptions of us, and clothes make up a large part of that appearance. As such, I have shown that clothing can function as a technological means for shaping appearance and managing impressions.

In chapters two and three, I have demonstrated that post-phenomenology provides a good starting point for understanding the different ways in which clothing shapes our identity because it focuses on mediated individual experience. In the case of clothing, the focus lies on the wearer's experience, both on the relations and interactions with his clothes and through his clothes. By discussing the different human-technology relations and applying them to clothing, I have demonstrated the different ways in which we relate to the clothing that we wear. However, mediation theory falls short in addressing the aspect of social interaction, which is precisely what is essential to include in order to give a complete account of the role of clothing in identity constitution. Since we not only interact *with* the clothes directly, and *through* the clothes with others, these others also base their perception of us in large part on our appearance, and thus on our clothes. Mediation theory is mainly concerned with how interacting with technologies shapes our perception and experience of the world, while I have argued that it is equally important to look at how this interaction with technologies changes our self-perception and to do that, we need to take into account how this interaction with technologies also shapes our interaction with others and their perception of us. Therefore, to really capture the complexity of clothing and its role in identity constitution, I have incorporated another dimension in which I addressed the experience of the onlooker, and their perception of us, through the clothes that we wear; as a dressed person.

I have argued that we interact directly *with* the clothes by wearing them but simultaneously also *through* them as we interact with others through a dressed body. Both are affected and shaped by the broader socio-cultural context in which these interactions take place. And all these three factors affect our sense of self; thus, identity is constituted in two forms of interaction: technological interaction and social interaction, which are closely intertwined and take place in a broader sociocultural context. To incorporate the notion of social interaction into the theory of post-phenomenology, I proposed to include a new category of perception; meso-perception. I found that micro- and macro-perception could not fully capture the complexity of clothing and its role in identity development, as it falls short in addressing the social interaction aspect. Where micro-perception, in the case of clothing, refers to the individual's intimate interaction with the clothes he wears, and macro-perception refers to the broader sociocultural context of norms, values and laws in which interpretation and understanding take place, a category that actually captures these notions of interpretation and understanding is missing. Although the broader social structure affects an individual's actions and behavior by becoming part of their preferences and goals, it is still important to take into account the actual social interactions. That is why I proposed to add in between them the notion of meso-perception, which captures the interpersonal relations between people, the actual social interactions that we have with the people around us, in which interpretation and understanding of the norms, values and laws occur, and are translated into expectations for behavior and appearance. Therefore, there are now three levels of perception instead of two: 1) Micro-perception, referring to the individual experience of the person interacting with the clothes he wears, and how that affects their sense of self. 2) Meso-perception, referring to the social interaction between a dressed person and the people around him, and how that impacts his identity. And 3) Macro-perception, corresponding to the broader social structure in which the above interactions take place, with all its norms, values, laws and expectations that influence both the micro- and meso-perception. As such, post-phenomenology has not only helped in gaining a better understanding of the role of clothes in identity development, but the specific topic of clothing and identity has also allowed me to better understand, critique and redefine the theory of post-phenomenology.

Furthermore, I have defined identity as being constituted in interaction with and through technologies, and in interaction with others and the world around us. In chapter four, I have demonstrated that wearing particular clothes allows a person to embody certain qualities and, in doing so, incorporate these qualities into their self-perception, making them part of their identity, in a sense *becoming* what they wear. Hence, in shaping, discovering, and developing ourselves through the clothes we wear, by appropriating the qualities and redefining the meanings that they have, we engage in self-creation. Through the clothes we wear, we fabricate our self. Therefore, the act of dressing is an identity-shaping activity. However, in choosing which clothes to wear and which qualities to embody, we take into account the perception of others. We embody meanings of personality traits of which we would like others to believe that we possess. As such, the person we want to be, the ideal self we strive for, is, at least to a certain extent, based on how we want others to perceive us. Therefore the mutual constitution is much broader than simply between the wearer and his clothes, there is also a mutual constitution between social interactions and social norms and values, as it is through interaction with others, and the underlying norms and expectations within, that we create the social reality that shapes the interactions we are having. This shows that the three categories of perception (micro-meso-macro), are tightly intertwined and cannot exist independently. Therefore, it is not only in the wearer's interaction with the clothes that meanings are established and identity is constituted, but also in the social interaction with the people around us and the broader sociocultural context in which these interactions take place. Hence, clothes are a substantial part of taking on a certain role or expressing a certain status. Therefore, our self-perception cannot not be affected by clothes. And even if we would not interact with others, or would not care about what others think of us, we still dress ourselves and therefore, clothing still impacts our perception of self.

To conclude, in the intimate interaction *with* clothes, the social interactions mediated *by* clothes, and the social norms and expectations that influence these interactions, our identity is constituted. We create, or fabricate ourselves in the act of dressing. As such, the clothes we wear shape both our self-perception as well as how others perceive us.

Bibliography

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics, Metaphysics, Physics*, in Jonathan Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Volumes I and II, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Arthur, W. (2009). *The nature of technology - what it is and how it evolves*. Free Press.
- Aydin, C. (2012). Identiteit als opgave: over techniek, zelfvorming en idealen. *Wijsgerig perspectief op maatschappij en wetenschap*, 52(2), 30-38.
- Bar, F., Weber, M., & Pisani, F. (2016). Mobile technology appropriation in a distant mirror: Baroquization, creolization, and cannibalism. *New media & society*, 18(4), pp.617-636.
- Barthes, R. (1985) *The Fashion System*, London: Cape.
- Bauman, Z. (2011). *Culture in a Liquid Modern World*, Cambridge: Polity Press. Belk, Russell W. (1988), Possessions and the Extended Self, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (September), 139-168.
- Bermúdez, J., Eilan, N., & Marcel, A. (1998). *The body and the self*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Bicchieri, C. (2006). *The Grammar of Society: the Nature and Dynamics of Social Norms*, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bicchieri, C. and A. Chavez (2010). Behaving as Expected: Public Information and Fairness Norms, *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making*, 23(2): 161–178.
- Bicchieri, C., Muldoon, R., & Sontuoso, A. (2018). Social Norms, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 Edition), Zalta, E.N. (ed.).

- Blumer, H. (1969). *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*. Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, London: Routledge Kegan Paul.
- Breward, C. (2000) Cultures, identities, histories: fashioning a cultural approach to dress, in N.White and I.Griffiths (eds) *The Fashion Business: Theory, Practice, Image*, Oxford: Berg.
- Brewer, M. B. (1991) . The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17: 475–482.
- Brey, P. (2000). 'Technology and Embodiment in Ihde and Merleau-Ponty.' *Metaphysics, Epistemology, and Technology. Research in Philosophy and Technology*, vol 19. ed. C. Mitcham. London: Elsevier/JAI Press.
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Carman, T. (2008). *Merleau-Ponty*. London–New York: Routledge.
- Cixous, H. (1994). *Sonia Rykiel in translation*. In: Sh. Benstock & S. Ferriss (Eds.). *On fashion* (pp. 95–99). New Brunswick, N: Rutgers University Press.
- Craik, J. (1994) *The Face of Fashion: Cultural Studies in Fashion*, London: Routledge.
- Crane, J. (2000). *Fashion and its social agendas: Class, gender, and identity in clothing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Crawley, M. (2003). Dress (1st ed.: 1912). Reproduced in: K. K. P. Johnson, S. J. Torntore, J. B. Eicher (Eds.). *Fashion foundations: Early writings on fashion and dress*. New York: Berg Publishers.
- Davis, F. (1992) *Fashion, Culture and Identity*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dolezal, L. (2015). The phenomenology of self-presentation: describing the structures of intercorporeality with Erving Goffman. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, (16), 237-254.
- Entwistle, J. (2000a) *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity.
- Entwistle, J. (2000b). Fashion and the Fleishy Body: Dress as Embodied Practice. *Fashion Theory*, 4(3), pp.323-347.
- Entwistle, J., Wilson, E. (2003) *Body Dressing*, Oxford/New York: Berg.
- Feenberg, A. (2000). From Essentialism to Constructivism: Philosophy of Technology at the Crossroads. In E. Higgs, D. Strong, and A. Light (eds.), *Technology and the Good Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 294–315.
- Fine, B. and Leopold, E. (1993) *The World of Consumption*, London: Routledge.
- Finkelstein, J. (1991) *The Fashioned Self*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Goffman, E. (1956) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.
- Goldsberry, E., Shim, S., & Reich, N. (1996). Women 55 Years and Older: Part I. *Clothing And Textiles Research Journal*, 14(2), 108-120. DOI: 10.1177/0887302x9601400202.
- Granovetter, M. (1985). Economic action and social structure: the problem of embeddedness, *The American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3): 681–510.

- Harris, H. (1995). *Identity: Essays Based on Herbert Spencer Lectures given in the University of Oxford* (pp. 13-45). New York: Clarendon Press.
- Harrison, K., and Fredrickson, B. (2003). Women's Sports Media, Self-Objectification, and Mental Health in Black and White Adolescent Females. *Journal of Communication*, 53(2), pp.216-232.
- Haynes, J. L., D. C. Burts, A. Dukes and R. Cloud (1993). Consumer Socialization of Preschoolers and Kindergartners as Related to Clothing Consumption, *Psychology and Marketing*, 10, 151-166.
- Hilpinen, Risto, 1992, Artifacts and Works of Art, *Theoria*, 58(1): 58–82.
- Hilpinen, 2011, Artifact, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
- Ihde, D. (1990). *Technology and the Lifeworld*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Ihde, D. (1993). *Postphenomenology: Essays in the postmodern context*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Johnson, K., Torntore, S., & Eicher, J. (2003). *Fashion Foundations: Early Writings on Fashion and Dress*. Oxford: Berg.
- Johnson, K., Lennon, S., and Rudd, N. (2014). Dress, body, and self: research in the social psychology of dress. *Fashion and Textiles*, 1(20).
- King, I. (2015). 'What to wear?': Clothing as an example of expression and intentionality. *Argument*, 5(1), 59-78.
- Laver, J. (1969). *The Concise History of Costume and Fashion*. New York: Abrams. Lurie, A. (1992). *The language of clothes*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1962/1945). *Phenomenology of Perception*. C. Smith (trans.). New York and London: Routledge. Originally published in French as *Phénoménologie de la Perception*.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *Visible and invisible*. (A. Lingis, trans.). Evanston: northwestern University Press.
- Miller, F., Davis, L., and Rowold, K. (1982). Public Self-Consciousness, Social Anxiety, and Attitudes Toward the Use of Clothing. *Home Economics Research Journal*, 10(4), pp.363-368.
- Parfit, D. (1984). *Reasons and persons*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Polhemus, T. (1994). *Streetstyle: From Sidewalk to Catwalk*, London: Thames and Hudson.
- Powell, J., Gilbert, T., & Twigg, J. (2009). *Aging and Identity: A Postmodern Dialogue*. New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Preston, B. (2020). Artifact, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Zalta, E.N. (ed.).
- Rhee, J., and Johnson, K. (2012). Investigating relationships between adolescents' liking for an apparel brand and brand self congruency. *Young Consumers*, 13(1), pp.74-85.
- Rosenberger, R., & Verbeek, P. P. (2015). A field guide to postphenomenology. *Postphenomenological investigations: Essays on human-technology relations*, (p.9-42) London: Lexington Books.
- Selinger, E. (ed.) (2006). *Postphenomenology: A Critical Companion to Ihde*. Albany: SUNY Press.

- Shim, S., Snyder, L., & Gehrt, K. (1995). Parents' perception regarding children's use of clothing evaluative criteria: an exploratory study from the consumer socialization process perspective. *Advances In Consumer Research*, 22, 628-632.
- Simmel, G. (1904/ 1971) 'Fashion', *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, TRS D.C.Levine, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Sirgy, J. (1982), Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9 (December),287-300.
- Smelik, A. M. (2011). The performance of authenticity. *Address. Journal for Fashion Writing and Criticism*, 1, 76–82.
- Stone, G.P. (1962), Appearance and the self. Human behavior and social processes: An interactionist approach. Edited by: Rose AM. Houghton Mifflin, New York, 86-118.
- Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tseelon, E. (1995). *The Masque of Femininity*, London: Sage.
- Turner, J.C., Hogg, M.A., Oakes, P.J., Reicher, S.D., and Wetherell, M. (1987). *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Twigg, J. (2007). Clothing, age, and the body: a critical review. *Ageing and Society*, 27(2), pp.285-305.
- Twigg, J. (2010). Clothing and dementia: A neglected dimension?. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 24(4), pp.223-230.
- Ullmann-Margalit, E. (1977). *The Emergence of Norms*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Vanderschraaf, P. (1995). Convention as Correlated Equilibrium, *Erkenntnis*, 42(1): 65–87.
- Van Ness Dearborn, G. (2003). Physical connections between the body and dress. The psychology of clothing (1st ed.: 1918). Reprinted in: K. K. P. Johnson, S. J. Torntore, & J. B. Eicher (Eds.). *Fashion foundations: Early writings on fashion and dress*. New York: Berg Publishers.
- Veblen, T. (1899/1953) *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, New York: Mentor.
- Verbeek, P.P. (2005) Postphenomenology of Technology, from *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, and Design*, trans. Robert P. Crease (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), pp. 99–119.
- Verbeek, P.P. (2008). Cyborg Intentionality: Rethinking the Phenomenology of Human-Technology Relations. *Phenomenology and Cognitive Science*. 7: 387–395.
- Verbeek, P.P. (2015). Beyond interaction: A short introduction to Mediation Theory. *Interactions*, 22(3), 26-31.