SECONDHAND CLOTHES, SECOND CHANCE MINDSET?

An assessment of secondhand clothing practices among Flemish students using Wardrobe Studies

ABSTRACT

The secondhand clothing (SHC) market has grown extensively in recent decades. One important advantage of SHC is generally considered to be sustainability: reusing clothing could play an important role in curtailing the fast fashion industry's excesses. To date, however, little research has focused on motivations for SHC shopping, wearing, care and discarding among young aspirational classers. Within the field of sociological Practice Theory, this study assesses SH practices among Flemish students. Via Wardrobe Interviews, a range of aspects related to SHC were explored. This led to the delineation of three typologies among our respondents: bargain hunters, uniqueness searchers, and ethical and ecological buyers, the second being the most predominant. The respondents' motivations were found to not always coincide with their perceived ones. In addition, paradoxically, SH practices tend to lead to large volumes of clothing purchases, contradicting sustainability and durability motivations.

Keywords: secondhand clothing, sustainability, durability, Wardrobe Studies, students, aspirational class

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Preface

I am proud to present my thesis in fulfilment of my four-year Sociology program, with a topic that continues to interest and surprise me. I started out reading about the fast fashion industry and its solution: secondhand fashion. The more I read, the more I found out both are intertwined with mass consumption. It is, however, an industry with immense capabilities for improvement.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my respondents, who let me into their wardrobes and their trains of thought. Two other persons who made this research possible are my supervisors, Prof. Lesley Hustinx and Dr. Aurélie Van de Peer, who helped me find the path leading to this master thesis, providing help at every step of the way.

Then I would also like to thank my supporting family, friends, roommates, boyfriend, and most importantly, my parents Colette and Andrew, who are always there for me with advice ranging from language to life.

Elena Pease, Schaarbeek, 4th of June 2021

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1.Introduction

The fast fashion industry can not only destroy the life opportunities of factory workers in low wage countries as well as local markets who cannot compete with the big brands (Vandoorne, 2020), but also negatively influence the environment and ecosystems (Maldini, 2019). As the production of clothes doubled between 2000 and 2015 (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017), so did the fashion waste, as the materials used for the clothing became cheaper and fashion trends succeeded each other at a faster speed (Maldini, 2019). Only 1% of fabric is recycled (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017). The problem could be tackled on the production as well as the consumption side, but as the latter steers the former, sustainable solutions can only be obtained through a culture change in consumption practices (Strähle & Klatt, 2017).

A way to tackle this waste problem, is participating in the secondhand clothing (SHC) market (Kim, 2014). When clothes that are still wearable are reutilized as new products, resources are saved as fewer garments have to be made from scratch. The secondhand clothing market faces competition from the cheap fast fashion industry, where clothes can be sold for about the same low prices but have much greater ecological and ethical impact (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). A hundred secondhand (SH) garments would prevent the production of sixty to eighty-five new garments, depending on where the reuse happens (Farrant, Olsen, & Wangel, 2010). In fact, the number of secondhand clothes shoppers is a constantly increasing one. To illustrate this, a survey study by OVAM (Public Waste Agency of Flanders) showed that 65 per cent of the respondents had participated in reuse actions (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020) and 60 per cent of French consumers say they purchased secondhand garments (Schwab, 2020). In Flanders, the sales numbers in the reuse market have increased from 0,5 kg per capita in 1994 to 5 kg per capita of reusable items over the course of one year, 2018. The expectation is that this number will keep increasing.

Secondhand clothing is not only bought for sustainability reasons, but also for ethical, financial and recreative purposes (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). The buying of SH garments can, however, still contributes to the mass consumption culture and the constant urge to buy. This is where the 'Jevons paradox' comes into play: because a more sustainable product is available, it can be chosen above the unsustainable alternative, but this results in more

purchases due to increase in popularity (Alcott, 2005). Furthermore, clothing items are made 'inactive' by the user as soon as they wear out, but also when they are no longer deemed stylish, i.e. when the garments are psychologically and socially worn out (Fletcher, 2012).

This research will analyze whether the Jevons paradox is present among aspirational class students, as this specific group distinguish themselves through certain consumption practices that depict their social and cultural position of privilege (Currid-Halkett, 2017) and because the group of students buys secondhand clothing most often (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014; Nguyen, 2021). They often have the financial choice between buying firsthand or secondhand clothes, and thus make this choice for cultural sake. Secondhand clothing could be seen as a distinct clothing style situated in the hipster subculture (Michael, 2015), or as just another market-alternative with a mix of different styles to choose from (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013). Through analyzing the secondhand clothing practices that are at play, a typology is made of three recurrent profiles of young secondhand consumers, whereafter suggestions are made as to how the mass consumption pattern in secondhand consumption can be eradicated and how an important aspect of sustainability, durability, can become the main focus of the secondhand clothing culture (Fletcher, 2012).

The research situates itself in Practice Theory, focusing on materialities, meaning attribution and competence, and used the method of Wardrobe Studies. In-depth interviews were conducted at the wardrobes of the respondents, in order to elicit past memories, emotions, and identity construction when looking at the clothing. An analysis of the interviews was performed through a coding scheme using the Constructive Grounded Theory method.

Wardrobe Studies have been a method of use for quite some researchers, but to date, the method has never functioned as an analysis method for practice research with young secondhand consumers, and academic works researching motivations with secondhand consumers have never analyzed the practice patterns regarding this topic. This research thus gives an important attribution in a changing society towards sustainability and contributes to gaps in scientific knowledge.

New insights on sustainability practices will be gained: meaning attribution and affects with young aspirational class students regarding their secondhand clothing. The study will elaborate on elements related to caring for, wearing, and discarding clothing, as these stages of practices will prove to be highly relevant for the durability of garments.

Flanders is a specific example of where secondhand clothing consumption could be perceived as a hype, especially among young consumers (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020) who are in the process of discovering their clothing style and do not always have a large budget to buy (ethical) clothes firsthand (Strähle & Klatt, 2017).

Sustainability, slow, green, eco-fashion has become in-fashion (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020); hence, it is important to verify how these practices could be improved to be more durable. The Covid-19 pandemic and crisis made for a temporal change in consumption patterns, but can this bring about a change in consumption culture? Findings could contribute to the development of knowledge about the Flemish clothing market and the changing culture, facilitating the transition towards a greener fashion market.

2. Literature review

"Clothing takes on many different meanings in our lives. In order to move towards more sustainable practices of shopping and dressing, we need to understand why people shop, what dressing means to them, and the role these activities plays in their lives."

(Petersson, 2019, p. 17).

In what follows, an overview is given of relevant findings for our research to discover the secondhand (SH) practices of Flemish students and what this means for sustainability in the fashion industry. First, the fashion industry and its social and environmental repercussions will be discussed, followed by an insight in today's mass consumption culture and its implications for the secondhand clothing (SHC) market. Afterwards, we will move on to the cultural importance of fashion choices in our society, focusing predominantly on youth (sub)cultures. Finally, a synopsis on possible motivations to buy SHC that was found in former research will be listed, which functioned as a theoretical base for the interviews. We will here devote more attention to the identitary side to clothing practices, as well as the affects clothing evokes. This chapter aims to make the societal importance of this research clear and focuses on gaps in the literature to manifest its scientific relevance.

2.1 The fashion industry

The fashion industry is a singular one, because it is the most logical example of an intersection of culture, consumption, globalisation, wealth, style, and identity, and belonging to a certain group (Brooks, 2019). The following chapter will devote attention to why the fast fashion industry is an intrinsically polluting one, whereafter the increase of popularity of SHC will be highlighted.

2.1.1 Globalization of clothing production

For years, the effects the globalization of clothing production has had on lower income countries and the environment have become increasingly exposed. First industrialization processes were brought about by new tools and methods, such as Fordism and Taylorism. While Taylorism focused on the scientific management of production optimalisation, where standardized tasks for each factory worker were proven to use resources and worker time

most efficiently, Fordism focused on the intensification of the capitalist structure. This was applied on the supply level, what the factories produced, but also on the demand level in society. By using large scales in production, costs could be reduced, which fueled the urge to buy (Brooks, 2019). Due to the low prices by economies of scale and standardized patterns of fashion, the overall culture became one of consumption, which became available to all (Currid-Halkett, 2017). The decolonization tendencies from the 50s onwards, made a changing global division of labor possible. Newly independent countries were not allowed to introduce protectionist measures. Eventually, industries in western countries became uncompetitive, which made that the overall production was moved to low-income countries, setting the international division of labor even more into stone (Brooks, 2019).

The Covid-19 crisis made the abominable working conditions of fast fashion factory workers in the global South even more clear and urgent. Due to a backlash in sales with stores closed for months during the second quarter of the year 2020, major chains could not sell all the piled-up stocks and accordingly, did not pay the producing factories the amounts promised for the clothes (Vandoorne, 2020); 77% of fast fashion suppliers underwent cancellations of orders without receiving payments for them (Downling, Sumner, & Davis, 2021). The fashion chain Primark alone, since the beginning of the crisis, cancelled orders worth up to 273 million dollars in the country of Bangladesh (Vandoorne, 2020). Such malpractices are not just upheld by only a few brands, but rather by the whole fashion industry system (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). To distance themselves from this production and consumption fashion machine, people try and escape it by buying clothes secondhand (Strähle & Klatt, 2017).

2.1.2 Fast fashion and the disappearance of seasons

The Ellen MacArthur foundation (2017) estimates that between 2000 and 2015, the consumption of clothes has doubled, although the population only rose with about 20% (Maldini, 2019; Brooks, 2019). This number reflects the nature of the fast fashion phenomenon: fashion that has become cheap and democratized, so that an increasing number of people can express their clothing style at a faster pace (Currid-Halkett, 2017).
This reflects a vicious cycle of economics and a culture of globalized capitalism that keeps on expanding. Due to the elimination of the season culture of the 20th century, where fashion

trends and collections are divided into autumn/winter and spring/summer seasons, a system has become the norm where fashion chains are compelled to deliver new garments every week, resulting in a 52-cycle culture (Brooks, 2019). Online retailers like Boohoo and Zalando offer an even faster collection of items, and are therefore referred to as 24/7 or superfast fashion retailers, selling an even higher number of items due to the Covid-19 crisis (Vandoorne, 2020). Both high-end chains and cheap ones tend to call the others 'so last season', to upgrade the own appearance of being in fashion (Van de Peer, 2015), which intensifies the urge to constantly produce more garments and styles.

A higher demand in clothing facilitates a demand in resource cost suppression, which can make the garments wear out more quickly, which in its turn produces a new urge to buy new clothes (Brooks, 2019). This fact is also mostly accepted by fast fashion consumers: they do not expect an everlasting garment bought for a low price. Shopping and wearing clothes have become less about the materiality and quality, the intrinsic qualities of the garment, but more about the emotions that it brings about (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). This facilitates a throwaway culture, due to a possible psychological sense of obsolescence (Fletcher, 2012). Likewise, The Ellen MacArthur foundation (2017) states that the average person throws away 60% of the clothes they bought that same year, and the utilization period dropped a significant 35% compared to the beginning of the century. This high replacement rate has implications on the waste production level: if clothes are used for shorter periods, more clothes will be bought and more clothes have to be produced (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). Clearly, companies need new business models and strategies to fulfill their social duty of findings methods for waste and therefore production reduction (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016).

2.1.3 Climate change impact

The fast fashion industry has a significant impact on climate change acceleration. The UN environment report from 2019 states that 'the fashion industry is responsible for 8% of carbon emissions' (UN Environment Programme, 2019). Brooks (2019) explains the impact by pointing to the fact that fast fashion destroys the environment on three levels: 1) microplastics damaging sea life substantially (and also the lives of those who rely mainly on fish consumption), 2) constantly needing more resources and destroying biodiversity to this end, and 3) resulting in always going for the cheapest resources, which makes that the low-quality fibers break down more when laundered and provide a vicious cycle. People will

consume more clothes faster, which results in a never-ending race to the bottom in cheap resources. Strikingly, Belgium is a notorious country in the European Union, ranking among the five leading waste generators in the EU (Shahbandeh, 2020).

Furthermore, only 1 percent of all garments is fully recycled (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2017; Norris, 2019), a number which many fast fashion companies sometimes camouflage by *greenwashing* their fast fashion practices. This is when manufacturers try to differentiate their products or try to make them look more attractive by saying they are "'eco', 'environmentally friendly' [and] 'green'…" (Koszewska, 2015). Sometimes, claims are made about clothes being recyclable or recycled, which is not always the case. To cut costs, materials are mixed when making fabrics, which makes them more difficult to recycle than non-mixed materials; in other cases, possible recycling options are not explored when making the garments (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016; Norris, 2019). Stores also offer consumers the possibility to hand in old clothes, giving a discount in return. However, this tactic can accelerate further sales, as the consumer firstly goes to the store to hand in old clothes and is exposed to garments for sale, secondly is persuaded by the discount received and lastly, can feel more authorized to buy new clothes as they just discarded old ones (Brooks, 2019). An overall mass consumption pattern is applauded and produced.

2.1.4 Covid-19 and sustainable clothing

Different information can be found on if Covid-19 lockdowns created a decrease in overall consumption, or a change of the consumption culture. Most sources report a decrease in instore sales: 50,5% decrease in sales in the UK and 89% in US (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020), and also a 50% decrease in clothing sales globally (Liu, Xia, & Lang, 2021). It is therefore an interesting moment to do research in the domain of clothing sustainability, because there is clearly a possibility for change: one of the most polluting industries offers dynamic change possibilities.

Not only a drop in consumption is needed, but a change in cultural values regarding consumption is of the essence here. Several examples found in the literature include the increase of clearing clothes from closets, an increase in re-wearing clothing already owned, and an increase in the popularity of eco-fashion (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020). Here,

policies could play an important role to safeguard a sustainable consumption transition after the crisis (Cohen, 2020). Whether these changes are lasting, is yet to be seen, as economic forces in the fashion industry compel brands to "return to old practices such as heavy discounting which may further fuel the cycle of fast fashion" (p.301), and which might uphold the general urge to consume. Furthermore, sustainability goals can be among the first to go when survival of the company is at stake (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020)

With the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, online orders, however, are high. Clothing retailer Boohoo saw their sales increase with 54% during the beginning of the pandemic (Vandoorne, 2020). It is uncertain if the buying habits of the general consumer will change after the pandemic, which makes research in the field even more important in view of promoting change in the market (thredUP, 2020).

Covid-19 could also imply changes in SH practices due to the increased popularity of cleaning out closets and SH culture in general (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020; Nguyen, 2021). Conversely, a decrease in overall global sales of SHC could give possibilities to local fashion companies in countries where leftover fashion exported by Western countries is sold in large amounts to revitalize their markets (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020).

2.1.5 The Buyerarchy of needs

To paint a picture of consumption options, I refer to the *Buyerarchy of needs,* created by the illustrator Lazarovic (2015). As an adaptation of Maslow's psychological framework of the hierarchy of needs, initially, her model was conceived for individuals' money management where the last step is the acquisition of a new garment. The model can, however, also be relevant for a more circular and sustainable fashion industry, where individuals think of several alternatives before buying a new garment. First, individuals reflect on whether a new garment is really necessary, looking at what they already have in their wardrobe, and if they can borrow clothes from or swap clothes with family members and friends (Rivetto, 2015a). If borrowing or swapping is not possible, they should consider how they get hold of a new garment. The cheapest and most sustainable option is to thrift what is needed. Here, the focus should lie 'on what you need, not what you want' (Rivetto, 2015b). Moreover, the making of garments requires not only investment in material, but also specific knowledge (Holroyd, 2019). It can however be cheaper, more ethical, and better for the planet than

buying the garment new. Nevertheless, for the ethical consumer, this is not an exclusive demarcation. New garments can also be ethically and ecologically produced, sometimes more so than the materials that are used to make one's own clothes.

The relevance of this *Buyerarchy* is reflected in Fletcher's practice theory research on durability in fashion. Sustainability does not only entail material aspects, such as a high quality robust and ecologically responsible fabric, but also psychological sustainability. She explains that in a fast fashion society, psychological obsolescence, the wearing out of the sentiment of usefulness, occurs much more rapidly, before the garment itself wears out. Sustainability should therefore not only be understood in the material sense, but should also be understood, examined, and changed on the level of cultural and social practices (Fletcher, 2012). Wearing a garment for two years instead of one, a report by Greenpeace states, would reduce emissions by 24 percent (Cobbing & Vicaire, 2016).

Figure 1: The Buyerarchy of Needs – Lazarovic[1]

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[1] Retrieved from (Rivetto, Buyerarchy of Needs: Using what you have, borrowing and swapping, 2015)

2.1.6 Secondhand clothing: a hype?

The buying and wearing of secondhand clothing items have increased in popularity. This can be noticed in the sales numbers in the reuse market in Flanders, which have increased in general: from 0,5 kg/capita in 1994 to 5 kg/capita of reusable items during one year, 2018 (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). Of all items that are sold secondhand, clothing is one of the most bought categories, representing 25 percent of total sales at *Kringloop* initiatives (De Schamphelaere, Poelmans, Vandeputte, & Wouters, 2018) and almost half of all the items sold secondhand in total in Flanders (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). A striking image that illustrates the rise in popularity is the distinct rise in online sales on secondhand clothing platforms like Vinted (Weewer, 2020), which even took over its main rival, United Wardrobe in October 2020 (Tucker, 2020), but also the long queues outside the Flemish secondhand clothing stores Think Twice for example (Delbeke, 2021). The reasons for this phenomenon will be elaborated on more extensively in the motivations section. It is interesting to consider why this has become a hype on the societal level: is it due to an overall rejection of the mass consumption culture, or rather because the secondhand clothing style has gained popularity? This will be explored in section 2.2.4. Wearing eco-fashion has become trendy, especially so among ecologically aware young people (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020; Strähle & Klatt, 2017). Moreover, this might be enhanced by a cultural change in consumption due to the Covid-19 crisis (Degli Esposti, Mortara, & Roberti, 2021).

Goodwill initiatives (in Flanders: referred to as *Kringloop*) and other relatively cheap SHC options are not only a good alternative for those who want or have to be frugal, or want their consumption to have a lower impact on the environment, but they also create positive job creation in a social economy. The circular economy replaces unhealthy jobs that are recurrent in the clothing production industry by better ones (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017).

WHERE? Stores and alternatives in Flanders

Used clothing can be bought or borrowed from formal as well as informal channels. Formal channels include the Flemish reuse network: non-revenue-oriented initiatives supported by the Flemish municipalities such as *Kringwinkel*, a goodwill initiative, and private secondhand

shops mentioned by respondents: chains like Oxfam solidarities (also without profit motives), and SH fashion chains such as Think Twice, Episode and Riot (with profit as main motive), as well as small scale independent stores (Delanoeije & Bachus). These stores do not have the data reporting obligation that *Kringwinkel* organization does, which makes that the available data on garment collection and sales is less extensive. Informal channels include online platform websites providing space for reuse transactions between platform users, such as 2ehands.be and Vinted, secondhand fairs, family and friends networks, and charities and good causes without regulation by an institution (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020).

WHAT? Terminology

This research focusses on SHC, rather than on vintage clothing. There is a significant difference between the two terms: the latter refers to previously owned clothes and produced in a specific period (between 1920 and 1980 according to Strähle and Klatt (2017), and at least twenty years old according to Nguyen (2021)), where the value depends on the rareness of the item. SHC, however, can be any pre-owned garment, which makes that most of these items will be sold at a lower price than the original one (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). We will thus focus on relatively cheap (compared to the original price) previously worn garments, sold in thrift and SH stores. The focus on SHC is linked with the financial difference between the two garment groups, since the financial benefit of buying SHC is an important aspect as will be discussed.

It is important to note that the SH industries that we are examining tend to be different from those in the Global South. Where in the former it offers a possibility to give garments a second life, in the latter, the industry often destroys the local production industry and can leave many in poverty (Brooks, 2019). This cycle is upheld by western countries sending their 'leftovers' to the Global South, thereby transferring the problem to other countries and in the meantime upholding the norm in the own country to buy and discard clothes at a fast pace (Claudio, 2007). Delanoeije and Bachus (2020) illustrate this with numbers from a study by Eurostat, showing that 'Belgians yearly donate 16.7 kg per capita to a good cause, mainly through clothing bins' (p.41), of which the clothing is often exported to other countries by commercial companies. It is clear that 'global reuse may be the "lesser of two evils" (i.e. global reuse

versus goods becoming waste)' (p.63) and that SH markets, but also SH consumers, differ widely according to the existing culture. This will be further discussed in the section 'cultural aspects'.

Moreover, the overview by Delanoeije and Bachus offers thorough definitions regarding reuse practices. In this research, we use the term 'reuse' as the general aim is not to repurpose or alter the garments; the clothing merely changes owners. This does not mean, however, that the clothing cannot be repaired by the respondents, even though this is often not the initial aim. Therefore, the two tendencies of reuse and repurposing do not have to be seen as independent circular actions. Furthermore, garments can also be refurbished, where major components are replaced or repaired to fix faults or change the esthetic of the garment, which is different from recycling, downcycling or upcycling, as here only the materials are used and the purpose of the piece will change (MacArthur, 2013).

2.1.7 The culture of mass consumption: The Jevons' paradox

SHC nevertheless still has negative aspects. The industry is expanding rapidly, with thrift stores becoming increasingly gentrified: economically privileged people buy the clothes, which could drive up the prices, disadvantaging underprivileged groups such as low-income shoppers or plus-sized consumers (Nguyen, 2021). It is furthermore contested as fueling the capitalist mindset of the urge to consume (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014). Not only can fast fashion retailers induce consumers to buy more clothes at a more frequent pace; the overconsumption culture can also do so in the SH market (Strähle & Klatt, 2017).

Positive and negative aspects of the circular economy: the Jevons' paradox

In his research in 2005, Alcott explains the Jevons paradox, which was introduced by William Stanley Jevons in 1865 (Sorrell, 2009), as a recurrent misconception in ecological policies. Energy efficiency programs do not use less or 'save' resources, but in fact, they cause more resources to be consumed (Alcott, 2005). This kind of rebound effects, which 'reduce the potential energy savings from improved energy efficiency' (Sorrell, 2009, p.1457), can be applied to all resource efficiency consumption. Whether the Jevons' paradox is at play, depends on the replacement rate of clothing and therefore the pace of acquisition (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). With the example of clothes, it can also be considered from this perspective,

that environmental savings through sustainable clothing practices can only happen if new acquisitions of other garments are avoided (Maldini, 2019).

This would fuel consumption practices and produce a situation with increased economic transactions, often resulting in big money opportunities for the large companies of collectors and manufacturers (Alcott, Giampietro, Mayumi, & Polimeni, 2012). The cultural idea of shopping is reproduced by the acquisition of new garments, regardless of if these are bought secondhand, from ethical labels, or from fast fashion stores (Petersson, 2019). Furthermore, Sorrell (2009) adds to the concept by focusing on how difficult it is to test the paradox empirically, as it means comparing to hypothetical numbers if it is researched quantitatively. It will be attempted to inspect if this paradox is present with the respondents through counting the garments bought second hand and discussing their personal feeling of need to consume.

Nevertheless, by focusing on waste minimization and re-utilization, one could say that a circular economy of clothing is gaining importance (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017) and thus does change the overall consumption culture, which is an important step forward. Furthermore, secondhand buying consumers respond to the problem of proliferation by buying the products other consumers no longer wanted. It can be a part of their waste reduction and environmental strategy and thus not necessarily entail an increase in consumption. Whether this is the case will be examined through having a conversation with our respondents about the frequency of consumption and the wearing of the SHC.

2.2 Culture and society

2.2.1 Fashion and habitus

The clothes we wear express who we are, our cultural taste and to which groups we belong. In our society, there are many different cultures and cultural forms, which are often crystallized in class-linked groups (Brake, 2013). These different cultures are not only influenced and performed by consumption practices of peers but are also highly influenced by the production structures that are at play, such as the fast fashion production industry which democratized mass consumption of cheap clothing (Currid-Halkett, 2017). Cultures are

influenced by existing structures and their individuals, whereas individuals are in their turn socialized by their subculture and their dominant culture at the same time. Cultural patterns and symbols distinguish groups from other groups, and individuals use these symbolic actions to distinguish themselves from others (Bourdieu, 2018). The norms of these distinctive cultural patterns, which form the habitus, have a compelling influence on individuals' ways of thinking, ways of acting, and embodies in artefacts such as clothing. The attached values that come to play in the existing culture and its practices not only determine action today, but also condition the subjects for further action (Brake, 2013).

2.2.2 The aspirational class

New strands in cultural sociology focus on an alternative to the Bourdieusian status acquisition through social class-based hierarchy, namely being aware of new developments in the cultural field and acting upon this knowledge accordingly (Michael, 2015). This is also what Currid-Halkett (2017) describes as the aspirational class. The latter is a newly formed class which in a way replaces the dichotomy of the old high, middle, and low economic classes. With this mostly highly-educated aspirational class, cultural, rather than economic, capital has become the essence of social mobility. It is no longer the price tag of the things that you consume or use that reflects your social position, it is how you dress, speak, exercise and what you read and eat. She focusses on the knowledge needed to perform these tasks according to your social position, and how this knowledge is reproduced through education, at school, as well as by friends and family. Thinking about sustainability and ethics when choosing clothing can be expensive as an option, and in doing so, often indirectly a class position is signified on the one hand, but also your position on the cultural knowledge hierarchy on the other. In other words, a specific habitus is crucial to see SHC as an option, as it can require specific knowledge. An 'easier' alternative is to find garments in cheap fast fashion chains, where sizing and style is prescribed. Therefore, these cheap fast fashion chains can be seen as competitors of SH stores (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). As our respondents are all middle-class students with financial support from their parents to some extent, we define them as young aspirational classers.

2.2.3 Youth cultures

It is also important to elaborate on youth (sub)cultures, as this could be the case for SHC culture specifically (Veenstra & Kuipers, 2013). Youth cultures experience commonalities as they all offer an alternative script from the existing dominant adult authority culture (Brake, 2013). The culture provides cognitive material to find one's own way and develop the self in a constantly changing environment, and above all, offers new ways to find companionship of like-minded peers. However, one should note that youth cultures can differ significantly from each other, where social stratifications run through youth cultures as well. They can either be an expression of post materialistic culture, but can also be a solution to the financial struggles one encounters (Currid-Halkett, 2017; France & Threadgold, 2016).

Youth cultures come to life in changing situations and generational differences, as is the case with technology and media evolutions today. The changes internet and social media brought about are significant in our study on the SHC, as they can influence demand structures (Nguyen, 2021; Strähle & Klatt, 2017). Through social media, it can be easier to find like-minded pears, like Strähle and Klatt show in their research on lifestyle groups of 'green consumers'. Furthermore, several platforms offer space for swapping, sharing, and selling pre-owned garments.

Social media platforms YouTube and TikTok have increased the popularity of thrift shopping with the teenager and student generation, through thrift hauling and thrift flip videos. This opens debates on the essence of thrifting; among this group, thrifting defies the initial purpose of providing inexpensive clothing for those who cannot afford alternatives (Nguyen, 2021). He explains that social media platforms motivate, and will keep on doing so, people to buy more (and sometimes even resell items online with profit). Nguyen adds that is has also become easier, along with more popular, to buy cheap thrift clothes and resell them online. This can however 1) uphold the capitalistic structure and 2) gentrify the prices of goods that should be available for everyone. In the interviews, we also debate on this topic.

2.2.4 Secondhand clothing culture: a new twist on hipster culture

Section 2.1.6. illustrated that SHC has gained popularity due to its sustainable characteristics and its overall perception of being in style. The latter explanation will now be elaborated on

further. On the one hand, SHC practices have shifted from subculture or subclass to more mainstream ones: it first emerged and expanded during the eighteenth and nineteenth century as a means of frugality; afterwards it declined in popularity due to stigmatization in the capitalistic twentieth century. Next, a destigmatization process took place starting from the 2000s, due to an increase in frugality in response to the global financial crisis of 2008, a rise in interest in consumer sustainability in the field of fashion, and most importantly, because SHC 'has become fashionable in its own right' (Ferraro, Sands, & Brace-Govan, 2016, p. 262). The latter is proven by the increase in branding tactics by high end brands such as Ralph Lauren that use SH garments in their collections (Ferraro, Sands, & Brace-Govan, 2016). The uniqueness of SHC is an important attribute that the hipster culture seeks (Michael, 2015) in a society that values individualism (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014).

Michael (2015) explores the Hipster subculture in her work and explains that this cultural knowledge is then used to dismiss the following of trends and is replaced by concerns of authenticity and individuality. She confirms that lifestyle practices render most social prestige, where with the cultural elite, openness and voraciousness define trendiness. This hipster culture endures a paradox, as the trend is one of distinction. In other words, distinction and trend are expressed paradoxically through the same practices.

Furthermore, Veenstra and Kuipers (2013) debate in their research if vintage practices are a subculture or just a form of consumption (as the clothing dates most often from another fashion period). They conclude that it goes beyond this dichotomy and can be both, which is definitely the case for the broader term SH, which also covers thrift.

Lastly, it is important to note that when a trend enters mainstream culture, inevitably profit will become the objective, being appropriated by retailers (e.g. Ralph Lauren) and influencers (e.g. the TikTok and YouTube influencers mentioned earlier) (Nguyen, 2021).

2.2.5 Cultural capital influencing sartorial choice

The process of sartorial choice is not necessarily a reflexive one. Røpke (2009) explains that the social reproduction of practices is bound to the intersection of the different structures,

time, and path the practitioners find themselves in. This is where the consideration of intersectionality comes into play, as social and environmental challenges are interconnected (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020). Past experiences, capital tensions and Bourdieusian cultural capital are defined by the position of the respondent in the gender, age, class and social environment structures (Brydges & Hracs, 2019; Currid-Halkett, 2017). The (unconscious) reflection and expectation of how others will look at the garment on one's body and what they will think the wearer wants to express by wearing it, thus what the *imagined gaze* will be, is a meaningful consideration (Woodward, 2007). Specific questions about how the respondents think their position in the different structures discussed here affects their practices could lead to interesting insights.

Gender could play an important role as the fashion industry is a primarily female one, where females are the largest part of the labor force of clothing production and apprentices in fashion schools (Brydges & Hracs, 2019). Fast fashion is thus "a feminist issue" (Goodonyou, 2021). As already mentioned, motivations for practices are not always reflexive. Many studies have shown that women in Western society are in general more likely to have a greater interest in fashion than men do. This is because extrinsic elements in society influence them to have more physical as well as reflective self-conscious concerns on their body and image (Workman & Lee, 2011) and have constant pressure to be fashionable (Petersson, 2019).
They therefore discard more clothing than men, which makes that 'the world supply of used women's clothing is at least seven times that of men's' (Claudio, 2007, p. 453). It is therefore important to interview women as well as men, to verify if these assumptions are the case in SHC practices. Lastly it is important to note that it was not intended to think in gender binary terms: if a non-binary person had come up in the snowball method, they would have been added to the womxn group, as they would also experience the patriarchal societal influences of self-conscious reflections on their body and representation. This was however not the case, as nine respondents defined themselves as women, and three as men.

Moving on to age, which was already mentioned in the chapter on youth cultures. Age defines 1) how independent young practitioners are of their parents in terms of consumption (Brake, 2013), 2) the lifecycle culture and the age-specific garments (young people are more likely to

buy SHC and older generation more likely to bring clothes to SHC stores (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020)) and 3) the level of influence the existing culture has on individual practices, which could be suggested to be higher for younger people than for older ones (Woodward, 2007). For example, the rise of the Instagram culture influences the Gen Z consumer group with the idea that re-wearing garments is not called for and instead, it is called for to constantly buy and wear new garments. Thrift haul-hypes on Youtube and TikTok can fuel this constant urge to wear new things (Nguyen, 2021). The dichotomy of the intention-behavior gap of ethical and sustainability awareness on the one hand, and the buying culture on the other, can therefore be an important factor that is at play in this generation (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020).

Class aspects clearly trickle through, or in other words, intersect with age and gender positions. Income is a strong driver of ecological conscious consumption (Moser & Kleinhückelkotten, 2018) and of clothing consumption (Kleinhückelkotten & Neitzke, 2019). Those with fewer economic resources could be more attracted to SHC because of the often-positive price-quality relationship. Sometimes, however, they will do the opposite and not buy and wear these items, because they are deterred by the stigmatized image SHC has and that they will 'reveal' their low SES status (Sommer, 2014), turning to conspicuous consumption of new, more expensive items instead (Currid-Halkett, 2017). Those with more financial means, however, might show more ethical and ecological reflection in their consumption, because they (indirectly) want to show their position as having the economic flexibility to be preoccupied with climate and ethics issues, which resonates with the aspirational class (Currid-Halkett, 2017).

2.2.5 Terminology of the research regarding young consumers

As mentioned above, a societal group that does not always have large budgets for shopping but does want to express their fashion style at a fast pace, are young consumers. Often, they cannot afford expensive green fashion products, which makes SH consumption a good option to act sustainably (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014). Many aspirational class students are, however, able to buy alternatives to SHC, but still buy the latter (Nguyen, 2021).

Adulthood is not only marked by the legal threshold of coming of age, but also by other significant markers like independent living and full-time work (France & Threadgold, 2016). As socio-cultural markers produce the ambiguous line between youth and adulthood which cannot be theoretically pinpointed, this research uses being a student as a requirement for data selection, as a characteristic of aspirational classers is being highly educated. In addition, the students selected are in the 18-26 age range. We are interested in this specific group because this is the main profile of the secondhand hauler (Nguyen, 2021): 90% of the active users on Depop, an online secondhand seller platform in the US, are under 26 for example. Furthermore, Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao (2014) confirm that college students purchase more fast fashion clothing than other groups, which makes the SHC alternative even more important for them. As Xu et al. (2014) explain, '[young consumers are also a] major driver behind the growth of the second-hand clothing industry in the US' (p.2), which is expected to show the same pattern in European countries (Brooks, 2019; Schwab, 2020; Shahbandeh, 2020).

As NARTS (association or resale professionals) (2020) states, there is no typical research shopper. Nevertheless, different studies focusing on this specific group when exploring the SH market show that there are undoubtedly more young SH shoppers (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014; Strähle & Klatt, 2017). To conclude, young consumers are also generally motivated to find long-term solutions for lasting problems such as that of fashion waste (NARTS, 2020). Moreover, in Flanders, 'young people' buy SH more often, whereas older generations donate clothes more often (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). Ferraro, Sands and Brace-Govan (2016) explain that 'while young shoppers may have first turned to thrift stores out of necessity, today they are more likely to view second-hand shopping as sensible, or even cool' (p.3).

Combining these insights, this research will focus on SHC practices, which range from a subculture to the mainstream youngster culture, from the hipster early adapter culture to an overall style transition to eco-fashion, with an increased demand for SHC-styled garments among young people.

2.3 Clothing choices

In a survey study in Flanders of 1100 SH consumers in 2015, it became clear that pricing was the most important factor for many. 81% of the respondents indicated their SH consumption was due to the cheaper price. Furthermore, 42% mentioned they bought SH because they liked browsing through the SH goods, and 34% because of the sustainability SH buying entails in comparison to buying new products. Finally, 30 percent explained that they liked finding something original (Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). An introduction to identity theory and affect theory will be given now, as the image one wants to portray through consumption does not always resonate with the urge-influenced outcomes. This is then followed by other possible motivations to buy and wear SHC.

2.3.1 Identity

Everyday consumption and practices are formed not only by rational considerations of which product or practice is better than the other, but also by a "web of non-instrumental motivations, values, emotions, self-conceptions and cultural associations" (Soron, 2010, p. 175), which makes it not as easy as one might think to change one's behavior towards a more environmentally friendly alternative from one day to the next.

"When dressing, we think about the people we will see that day – or rather, those who will see us- and our self-image is largely informed by the ways in which we imagine these others will perceive our appearance" (Holroyd, 2019, p. 10). The social function this entails is clear: through a constant production and reproduction, we reflect certain aspects of our identity by wearing certain clothes.

The identity expressed, produced, and represented through clothing selection is an interaction between the different intersecting positions in society and its norms on the one side, and the sartorial choice itself, either reflexive or non-reflexive (Woodward, 2007).

Clothing expresses the identity of a person and could even be seen as the extension of the self, but it should not be reduced to this. Sartorial choices are not completely comparable with any other communication tool, like language. Many authors have tried to compare pieces of clothing to words, where using certain ones expresses the life situation and

ambitions of the user (Woodward, 2007). The difference is that through choosing certain garments and through combining them in different ways (original/non-original combination, vintage/new combination, street wear/high fashion combination, …), different meanings are produced in the action itself, where emotional and tactile aspects play a crucial role, but are nevertheless ignored in the 'fashion as a language' stance.

One's identity should furthermore not be reduced to one's consumption pattern. Soron (2010) states that the problem of sociology of consumption is that it explains self-identity too much as the buying of commodities that acts as "principal channels for the communication of self-identity (Soron, 2010, p. 173)" and that this only paints part of the picture. This view on identity minimizes the other dimensions that are present and have an influence on the identity construction, like social class and lifestyle habits (Soron, 2010). Furthermore, sociological works focusing on consumption from an identity perspective often fail to address the repercussions this has for overconsumption and thus global warming, something which Degli Esposti; Mortara and Roberti (2021) do attempt to examine, looking at if respondents feel they should wear sustainable clothes because they would otherwise feel judged or because the clothes might improve their social image. It is also important to note that when someone states they care about ethics in the fashion industry, it does not mean that they necessarily consume accordingly (McNeill & Moore, 2015; Brooks, 2019) "There is a large gap between intention and behavior; people readily identify themselves as ethically minded consumers yet rarely purchase ethical products (Brooks, 2019, p. 322)".

It is important to discover what drives these young SH users to perform these practices, uncovering existing trends and social expectations in the fashion sense, as well as on an environmental conscious level.

2.3.2 Affect

As has already become clear, clothing is not just random objects that we use and then discard when we 'get sick of them'. It has an unconscious, bodily and affective dimension in the everyday life of the user. Why do we keep clothes that we no longer wear? Petersson (2019) states this is because of the affects we accumulated for the garment, because of the memories that are linked to it, and it reminds us of our past self, or because the hope the

owner has that they might fit into the garment again in the future, projecting on their future self.

These feelings can happen on a subconscious level, but can also be discussed whilst looking at the garments. Similarly, Petersson (2019) notices recurring feelings of not being in control because shopping has become so routinized that customers feel coerced to buy and wanting to have more agency in clothing choices in the future.

All these reasons show that affect can play an important role in clothing practices. Existing patterns like mass consumption interact with individual reactions and emotions. Therefore, it is important to not only examine identitary, conscious motivations, but also to focus on the feelings and unconscious routines the respondents have towards their clothing and which physical assumptions these entail, through analyzing the clothes together with the respondents. Too often, qualitative research using interviews has neglected the affect aspect of clothing (Petersson, 2019). Using the different methods of Practice Theory and Wardrobe Studies, this research hopes to add relevant information to the knowledge of SHC practices, as motivations and meaning attribution are considered, as well as the practices and outcomes themselves. Affect theory is central in Wardrobe Studies, as the general affects and unspoken feelings towards certain garments are evoked through the sight and feel of the garment in relation to the body (Woodward, 2007) and is clearly of importance for us, as unsustainable practices can also occur subconsciously (Petersson, 2019).

2.3.3 Motivations

Following the research by Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao (2014) on SHC behavior with young consumers, past purchase experience, future purchase intention and the influence of perceived values will be examined. It is important to note that their research, which was used as the basis for the motivational overview, only focusses on the buying of, and not the caring for and wearing aspects of SHC, which this research does aim to disentangle. First, an overview of the specific terminology that will be used is summarized; then, the possible motivations found in the literature are listed.

Motivations are defined by Pincus (2004) the idea of realization of unmet needs, which can be either implicit or explicit, as material (the need for a warm coat in the winter for example) or ideal (the need for uniqueness, self-actualization, need for a purchase in line with the ecological identity of the consumer). Motivations can therefore play simultaneously to fulfill specific needs on both the short and the long run. It can function as the consumer expectations and realizations of certain ideas (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014). This is where Wardrobe Studies could bring an interesting addition to the research, as the proposed motivational explanations by the respondent and the researcher can be compared to the respondent's actual SH consumption pattern. Here Petersson (2019) explains that dissonance can occur, where people say something but through their actions show that the contrary is true, which can result in negative emotions, producing 'affective dissonance'. This can be unaware and is a point of interest, as the respondent discovers something about themselves at the same time as the researcher. Motivations are, moreover, socially defined by culture, and can thus act on the individual level, but also reflect the general tendency in the population. Finally, they can also be a crystallization of existing affects and identity expressions that are at play with the individual.

Delanoeije and Bachus (2020) distinguish several types of motivations among Flemish SH consumers, with the most important demarcation being critical motivations on the one hand (not wanting to participate in the existing system of overproduction and overconsumption, ethics and ecology), and economic motivations (low and bargain prices) on the other. They add that 'SH shopping behaviors can be considered thrifty (i.e. practices of savvy consumption), green (i.e. ecologically-oriented) or frugal.' (p.22). Strähle and Klatt (2017) go further and add recreational motivations to the list.

Financial advantages

Delanoeije and Bachus (2020) report that 62% of their respondents saw price as an enabling factor when buying SH goods, but that concomitantly, 60% indicated (lack of) quality as a possible barrier. SHC are sold for less than the original price. People who do not have large amounts of spending money might find more quality for their money with older garments then with the low-quality fast fashion garments (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). Additionally, secondhand consumers mostly do not pay the price of branding and advertising, contrary to

fast fashion consumers (Brooks, 2019), though this could be contested with certain SH stores and platforms (Vinted (Reclame Archief, 2020)) that do use some advertising.

The SH market was even originally developed to offer affordable prices for less fortunate (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014). Here Delanoeije and Bachus' research shows that 23% of their respondents buy SHC because they would otherwise have financial difficulties. Of the 62% that saw pricing play an important role in their decision-making process, the researchers do not know how many could afford newly bought alternative pieces.

SHC is seen as an opportunity for people to have more power to buy what they want again (purchasing power), something that disappeared with the globalization of fashion and for which fast fashion was for a long time the only solution (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). Strähle and Klatt (2017) state that this could be 'a first step away from the throwaway culture that came up with the fast fashion trend'. On the other hand, there are also some critiques on this notion. The hedonistic buying urge could for example be reinforced due to the positive shopping experience these cheap SH alternatives offer. Contrary to expectations, SH consumers are positively conditioned to embrace the shopping, mass consumption culture (Strähle & Klatt, 2017; Petersson, 2019). Here the gap in the literature becomes clear, as the Jevons paradox has never been specifically researched on the topic of SHC practices of students. Do students who buy and wear SHC for ethical and ecological reasons buy less as well?

Shopping for recreation

The recreational aspect of shopping thrift stores has already been mentioned. The shopping spree phenomenon is not only present in the fast fashion market: people often walk through the shops without the intention to buy garments, without a clear expectation in mind. Furthermore, shopping often fulfills social interaction needs (Evans, Christiansen, & Gill, 1996). Strähle and Klatt (2017) illustrate this phenomenon with the example of discovering and talking with interesting new people, but the social aspect of meeting friends for a shopping spree should also not be neglected (Mangleburg, Doney, & Bristol, 2004).

Nevertheless, the treasure hunt aspect of finding the perfect unique item eventually does motivate the consumer to buy the garment. It is also important to note that the financial and

recreational motives are in relation to one another, as the one influences the other (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). The thrill of finding something of great value at a low price (Xu, Chen, Burman, & Zhao, 2014) will for example motivate the consumer to go SH shopping in the future from a recreational perspective.

Hedonic aspects

Another aspect that was often mentioned together with recreational shopping is hedonic tendencies. In a society where young people feel the psychological pressure to participate in the 'consumptions arms race' (Brooks, 2019), SHC consumption could be seen as a cheap solution. The problem here can thus be that hedonic principles prevail, and that people consume just to consume, buying things they do not need, morally not being so different from the fast fashion tendencies, as the shopping experience itself is seen as the most important aspect, not the product bought (Strähle & Klatt, 2017). So, although the circular economy is seen as the ultimate solution to the waste problem, there are also some points of criticism towards it if it exists mainly to fulfill the hedonic motivations. Circular economies are seen as the most sustainable, just because it is expected that people who are interested sustainability issues will also buy less, which is not necessarily the case (Geissdoerfer, Savaget, Bocken, & Hultink, 2017; Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020). While it could be a first step towards a destruction of the throwaway culture (Brooks, 2019), the Jevons paradox could also be present, as outlined above.

Negative attitudes towards secondhand clothing

Little research focusses on the perceived downsides of buying and wearing SHC, as well as on the supply side of the SHC chain. Hur (2020) did include respondents who turned down SHC and defined several reasons why this was the case. Those who were not SH practitioners ascribed this to 1) it not being socially acceptable, 2) expectations of lesser quality and/or hygiene (with ideas like disease transfer discussed by (Sommer, 2014), which is relevant in global pandemic times, as hygiene doubters have proven to buy their products at cheap fast fashion competitors (Brydges, Retamal, & Hanlon, 2020; Delanoeije & Bachus, 2020)), 3) perception of unfashionable or not self-expressive and fitting the self-identity, 4) lack of time or sufficient knowledge about SHC options and brands (Hur, 2020).

It is important to acknowledge these possible attitudes and perceptions. Although only SHC fanatics will be interviewed, and the respondents will unlikely have all these negative attitudes towards SHC, they could hold a selection of the attitudes or it could be an active aspect in their environment, transforming or influencing their practices in a certain way. Hence, the respondents are asked if they know opponents to SHC and why they think these persons do not agree with SHC practices; lastly, an open debate will be possible about negative attitudes towards SHC.

3. Methods

3.1 Practice Theory

"Social practices are socially preformed and individually performed" (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014, p. 3)

A popular methodology in sociological consumption studies is the utilization of the Practice theory. As Røpke (2009) summarized in her work on practice theory, people perform many and varying practices in their everyday lives, which is the focus of the sociological method. Research in the domain of sustainable consumption should not be reduced to single behavioral acts like the acquisition of the product, as people think of it as a meaningful practice, rather than merely consuming (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014).

A practice is defined by Schatzki as an organized set of actions, many of which entail a form of resource consumption (Røpke, 2009). Practices are determined by the actors' position, but at the same time, structures of practices are constructed by individual actions. This dualism thus goes in two ways and, according to Gidden's structuration theory, its medium is social practices and its material artefacts (Røpke, 2009). Consumption in general, and more specifically clothing consumption and the sartorial choice a person makes each day, is almost always in one way or another a social practice (Woodward, 2007; McNeill & Moore, 2015), be it the representation of one's identity towards others or the buying itself of the garments in a complex fashion system that makes the act a social one. Nevertheless, as already explained in the section on motivations, this does not necessarily require conscious reflection of the actor. Therefore, the reason why people perform certain practices can be intentional, but it can also be an automatic, unthinking reaction to the actor's current situation. The first aspect, where certain actions are chosen because they fit one's identity and position in society, is as

much a social interaction as the latter aspect, where affects and urges are more at play. Both aspects were discussed in the chapter on identity and affect theory.

The social practices of clothing are materialized in how the garments are bought, worn, and stored (Holroyd, 2019). Clothing practices are therefore not limited to buying and consumption. If only the economic side of the practice were focused on, many practices would be forgotten, practices that are also relevant to the polluting industry. Consumption is defined by Røpke as 'the turning of material goods into waste' (p. 2495), which can of course take a long while, and implies a wide range of practices.

Tailoring a hand-me-down garment to adapt it to one's own style, for example, could seem to have little to do with supply and demand on the market, but can nevertheless be influenced by grand structures of practices in certain cultures. The practices are not only embedded in macrostructures, such as social life, norms, systems and institutions, but also in meso-structures, such as social relations and networks of an individual (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014).

Focusing on practitioners rather than on consumers, Røpke (2009) suggests, brings aspects to light that would otherwise remain in the background and would leave significant suggestions for amelioration untouched.

By understanding what happens when garments are chosen and cared for, the final focus can lie on how to change these patterns through policies towards a more environmentally friendly consumption of material goods, and less so on stigmatizing certain groups for certain practices they perform.

Furthermore, by focusing not only on the buying aspect, but also on the experiences and practices that occur with respondents, there is room for exploring personal preferences and importances. Some respondents might consider the shopping spree as the most important aspect of clothing, whilst others focus more and the wearing or storing of the garments, for example to create and express their identity, and others think of clothing as an extension of the body (Woodward, 2007), where clothes fulfil certain affect needs. The case of a shopping addiction, Røpke (2009) states as an example, implies that the act of buying itself is the most important aspect, but also shows that it is crucial to examine the practices after the purchase.

This is where Wardrobe Studies will offer new insights into the subject, open to introducing under-exposed elements.

Clearly, consumption and garment acquisition are only the tip of the iceberg, that which can be visibly perceived. Further practices have to be analyzed through conversation and self-realization (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014). Notably, even though the wearing of garments can also be visually analyzed, it has been of lesser interest in research on the subject of sustainability and therefore, it is of interest to examine how these structures of practices have developed.

Whilst Spaargaren and Oosterveer (2010) add three aspects to sustainable consumption; ecological citizenship, political consumerism, and lifestyle politics, these only highlight the active identitary self-reflection of respondents on the subject of sustainability. As they argue, the aspect of active agency is neglected too much in the Practice theory defined by Schatzki (Spaargaren & Oosterveer, 2010). The three elements they introduce should be considered, however, in the case of SHC: sustainability is only one aspect, which makes that the reflective sides of consumption should also be applied to other motivations, reflections, and practices that are present in the respondents' wardrobe, and research should be expanded from consumption to practices.

Furthermore, focusing only on consumption neglects other practices that transfer ownership like swapping, borrowing or donating, and practices that temporarily change the access or ownership, like lending and renting. These are practices that could also be at play in the respondents' wardrobe (Ek Styvén & Mariani, 2020; Hur, 2020).

To conclude, focusing on the practices of selection and consumption will open new doors to aspects otherwise not highlighted as such. Illustrating with some examples given by Røpke (2009), respondents who experience a scarcity of time could perform different practices than those who live in a 'spiral of work-and-spend' or those who consume just to consume. Secondly, it is important to explore not only consumption patterns, but also practices, as this can highlight important aspects that could be used as a basis for essential cultural change (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014).

3.1.1 Practices defined by competence, material and meaning

Practices are influenced by three main domains. Firstly, know-how or competence is of importance, which is culturally socialized by family, school and so on. Applied to clothing practices, examples could be the knowledge where to buy SHC, how to combine the clothes, and how to repair tattered clothing, but also the knowledge the respondent has about the fashion industry (and its malfunctions). Secondly, material plays an important part. This goes from one's budget, to clothing choices, and other material aspects like equipment, wardrobe space, and even the body. Furthermore, Woodward (2007) adds that women who have more clothing space in their wardrobe, tend to also have more clothing. Lastly, social meanings are at play, which influence individual motivations. The practices are embedded into a meaningful context (Jaeger-Erben & Offenberger, 2014), for example the consumption and wearing of ethical clothing as a part of expression of moral goodness with the aspirational class (Currid-Halkett, 2017). The three aspects influence each other and interact in the performance of the practice (Røpke, 2009). For example, to repair clothes, one must have a certain mindset or motivation, the right material and embodies skills, and the knowledge to get a project done.

3.2 Wardrobe Studies

The interviews will be conducted whilst jointly looking through the wardrobe of the respondents. Following the Wardrobe Studies method, interesting insights could in this way be obtained by retrieving past experiences of consumption, by exploring what meaning is given to these garments (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014), and by discerning how the garments are cared for (Cwerner, 2001). Cwerner (2001) explains the importance of Wardrobe Studies by stating that fashion theory neglects the aspect of garment care too often: the way subjects relate to and take care of their clothes. In addition, we will examine whether the respondent ever repairs clothes that were too tattered to wear, which could give insights in the mindset towards consumption conceptions and practices and to verify if the Jevons paradox is indeed present (Lapolla & Sanders, 2015).

As Klepp and Bjerck (2014) explain, the methodology of Wardrobe Studies situates itself in Practice theory, focusing on more the material element than the symbolic element of clothing. Using this '*Inventory of clothes'-method,* a small quantitative aspect will be added to

the overall qualitative research model: an overview will be given of how many clothes were bought SH, were borrowed, or were bought new in a first-hand store. More light will also be shed on inactive clothing practices. This is followed by a discussion on past experiences and paint a picture existing consumption patterns. Where Klepp and Bjerck focus mostly on the material aspect, the purpose of this research will also be to unravel the symbolic meanings given to SHC, with the material aspect as a method to enhance the conversation and bring the interviewee to topics otherwise forgotten.

A possible problem here is that people may be unaware of their own affects: why they keep certain clothes or why they bought them in the first place. This is where Wardrobe studies may help remind respondents of certain moments and experiences related to the consumption, wearing and storing of clothing.

Where Woodward (2007) performed interviews repeatedly, my focus lies to a lesser extent on the daily selecting of garments, but rather on the materialities, motivations, and know-how that SHC entails for the respondents. Wardrobe Studies offer a unique added value in the sense that the existing practices are explored more in-depth. Where standard qualitative interviews focus only on the respondent's ideas and perceptions on the subject, Wardrobe Studies offer the addition of insight in the materialities that come into play in clothing practices: the importance of, for instance, touch of fabric and the affects of how garments feel on the body can become clear.

3.3 Data collection

3.3.1 Data and participants

Two forms of data were collected for this study. Interviews were conducted with twelve respondents. Besides the interview data itself (the interview and the short drop off survey on place of residence, age, occupation), an estimation of the percentage of SHC was made, by counting the garments together with the participant.

For the respondent sampling, the snowball method was used, facilitating a closer approximation of the population (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The respondents had to be between 18 and 26 (the oldest respondent was 23 and the youngest 18), be a student, and be an occasional to passionate SH practitioner. During the conversations, the subjects

suggested friends or acquaintances who would be interesting to interview. A delicate balance plays in this research method: the goal is to offer an in-depth analysis of the SHC practices of Flemish students, which on the one hand is a diverse research group, but on the other hand necessitates a trusting relationship, as respondents are 'reluctant to letting a stranger into their wardrobes' (Woodward, 2007, p.35) and to share information about their practices regarding clothing (Woodward, 2007). Finally, as Woodward notes, the snowball method offers an interesting addition to the analysis. As seen earlier, the identity is formed by one's position in the overall structure, the cultural context one lives in, but it is also mediated by friend and family groups. It is precisely these networks that are used to delineate the position of other respondents.

The search for a respondent network started off with three gatekeepers: respondent Flora who resides near Ghent, respondent Katharina who lives in Brussels, and respondent Bella who lives in Leuven. These subjects were selected from my larger group of acquaintances on the premises of buying SHC. Two respondents lived in rural areas, and ten in urban areas. Nine respondents defined themselves as women and three as men. All respondents were still financially dependent in some way, but some had to pay for clothing themselves. Respondents Flora, Rana and Uma are students in a fashion program. fashion program.

Table 1: Respondent matrix

Name	Bella	Katharina	Lemony	Flora	Zoë	Aaron	Marie	Rana	Thi Nhung	Uma	Charles	Senne
Gender(M/W/O)	W	W	W	W	W	M	W	W	W	W	M	M
Age	18	22	22	21	22	19	21	22	23	21	21	21
Study field	Medicine	Art history	Architecture	Fashion technology	Child psychology	Teacher training	Political Sciences	Textile design	Journalism	Fashion technology	Urban Studies	Political Sciences
Funding clothes	Parents	Mixed	Parents	Self	Mixed	Parents	Self	Mixed	Mixed	Parents	Mixed	Self
Student Job	/	Bartender	/	Café	Daycare	Online SH small business	Supermarket	/	Restaurant	/	Record Store	/

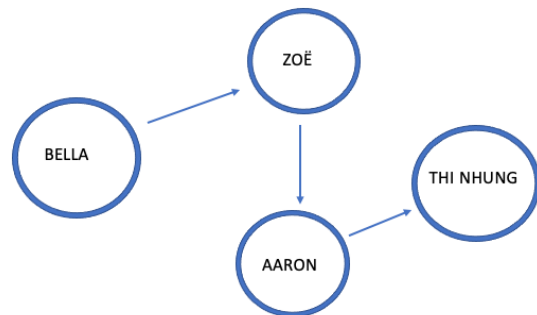**Figure 2: Snowball method starting from respondent in Leuven**

Figure 3: Snowball method starting from respondent in Brussels
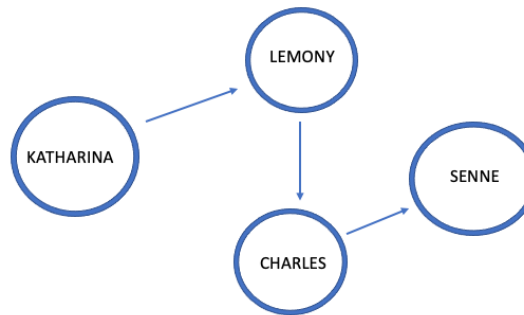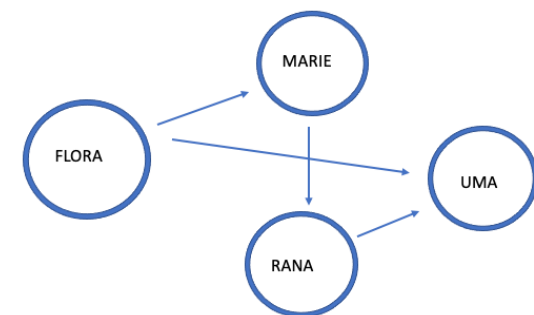
Figure 4: Snowball method starting from respondent near Ghent

It should again be acknowledged that the data pool is limited to a selection of students who buy and wear SHC focussing mostly on a subculture group in the aspirational class. Although they may not be representative for their age group as a whole, some observations have implications for society in a broader sense.

3.3.2 Instruments and procedures

The respondents received a consent form beforehand with information about the data collection practices and had the possibility to opt out of participating at all times. The interviews took place in Dutch; the final interview questions can be found in the Appendix section. They were recorded and thereafter transcribed. Coding subsequently took place via a coding system on Nvivo, which was adjusted after each interview. After all the interviews had taken place, the codes were translated into English, as were the quotes used in the findings analysis. The original tapes of the interviews will be deleted after the termination of the study, as well as the transcriptions.

To start off the interview, the respondents were given five possible motivations to buy and wear SHC on flashcards: recreational, financial, ethical, ecological, and '…' (to fill in themselves). At this point, they were asked to rank the motivations in the order most applicable for them, whereafter they could elaborate on what these words mean to them in relation to clothing practices. Next, the semi-structured interview was continued, using a combination of questions on SHC practices and motivations in general, and of questions on specific garments in the wardrobe. The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that certain questions were written out beforehand, and influenced by former interviews; however, the order in which they came up differed from interview to interview. In almost all interviews, however, the counting of the garments took place at the end of the conversation, facilitating a clarifying overview. The duration differed between 45 minutes and 3 hours, depending largely on how much clothing was present in the room or how much the subject had to reflect and say about their SHC practices.

Due to Covid restrictions, two participants (Flora and Uma) were hesitant to allow the researcher into their house, let alone their bedroom and wardrobe. Nevertheless, they did

not shy away from letting the researcher in on their SHC practices through an online meeting. Uma even showed the clothes in her wardrobe and made the systematic overview possible, while Flora only showed her favourite items that were lying around, and afterwards counted her clothing inventory on her own.

It should be noted that the subject of SHC did not call for embarrassment or socially expected answers in the broad sense. Respondents Marie and Uma did express that they were ashamed of having so many clothes that they had hardly worn, while Flora, Lemony and Zoë reported that they felt embarrassed about buying clothes in the *Kringloop*-stores while they could afford more expensive clothes, taking away affordable options from those who could only afford the latter. These answers showed that although social expectations of how to act and practice SHC were present in their reflection, they were able to reflect on and express their mixed feelings toward the matter.

3.4 Data analysis

Applying a constructivist stance, semi-structured interviews were conducted providing data for qualitative analysis of the practices and motivations of 12 SHC buyers and wearers between 18 and 23 years old. For the analysis, the General Inductive Qualitative Analysis Method (GIQM) was used with influences of the Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) method defined by Charmaz (Stevens & Van Praag, 2020). In what follows, I will offer a short overview of the consideration of the differences and similarities leading to the choice to combine these two analysis methods.

GIQM and CGT have many similarities and only differ in the respondent selection stage and in slight differences in coding positions. Firstly, the respondent selection stage: using the snowball method, respondents were selected from the same group, namely young SHC practitioners, whereas GT prescribes a differentiation from the initial sample, in our case interviewing for example non-practitioners or respondents from another age category. The GIQM, on the other hand, allows the researcher to choose the sample group beforehand based on theoretical motivations. Following theoretical adaption, I did consider possible

respondents that emerged from the snowball method to include at least three male respondents, while all respondents wanted to refer me to female friends or acquaintances.

Secondly, both GIQM and CGT use findings from the literature research and will use these as a basis for the original research questions, interview questions and possible analysis; in contrast, Post-Positivistic Grounded Theory is wary of this, and will thus not apply literature findings in the same manner. The former approach was the case for this research.

Moving on to analysis through coding, CGT offers more guidance. As both methods are very similar in their basis, the analytic coding method of CGT is applied in this research. With this method, after coding the first interviews in an open manner, the reducing and integrating of codes through axial and selective coding happens in an inductive way, using both the theoretical background and by coding the interviews in vivo. Using memos, the researcher relates codes to each other and notes certain questions that come up during the process, letting the codes speak for themselves. This leads the research to develop sensitizing concepts that bring codes together, but also stay in vivo and therefore not too abstract (Stevens & Van Praag, 2020).

Furthermore, what makes the process "grounded" is its constant comparative method. After every three interviews conducted, these are analyzed using coding and serve as a point of theoretical reflection (Haig, 1995). New important aspects regarding SHC practices are then highlighted and focused on in further interviews. The literary review provides a starting point for the questions of the first interviews, which are then revised according to the findings from in the first three interviews.

Finally, where in GIQM the researcher stops gathering new information when there is substantive saturation (nothing new is being added), CGT follows the tradition of trying to find a theoretical explanation of the phenomenon, by which the researcher will only stop gathering new information when theoretical saturation takes place. The latter is the goal of this research. Here Charmaz (2014) adds a valid point: using CGT, researchers should not aim to develop a fully integrated theory that offers an understanding for all possible variation, which is not possible or necessary. Therefore, a thorough explanation of selected variation is the goal of this research.

Essentially, most aspects of CGT are used. But as the theoretical sample requirement is not fulfilled, this research functions in the wide range of GIQM with a constructivist approach. The research questions aim to go beyond merely describing the phenomena and can, and did, change direction throughout the development of the research. Most importantly, theory development happens through the coding and letting codes speak for themselves inductively, with a basis found in the literature study.

4 Findings

Social practices are carried out by the practitioners through a configuration of different elements. As explained above, Røpke (2009) clusters these elements in three main components: meaning, competence and material, which are related and can overlap. In the following, the social practices of buying of, wearing of, care for, and discarding of SHC with our respondents will be discussed through an analysis of

1) the relevant reflections of the respondents on their practices and their sense of belonging in social groups, where a typology will be introduced that categorizes the respondents through their motivations to buy SHC,

2) the knowledge needed to buy, care for and discard SHC and the routines this implies,

3) the bodily relations to clothing choices and the intrinsic values of clothing garments.

As we will see, buying is the most discussed aspect. Nevertheless, the other aspects will prove important for the analysis of sustainability and durability. The codes regarding buying and wearing overlapped, as during the buying procedure, respondents consider if and how they will wear the garments. Caring for and discarding are also discussed simultaneously, as if one of the two is done, the other is not. These two pairs of practices will therefore be discussed together. Finally, I will discuss what this practice breakdown and meaning-typology means for sustainability in the SH industry.

4.1 Buying and wearing

The acquisition of clothes is an individual choice, but it is also socially influenced. In this chapter, an overview of the meaning attribution that comes into play when considering buying clothing will be given, whereafter a typology of three groups of respondents who hold different intrinsic motivations to buy SHC will be explained. Afterwards, we will focus on the material aspects that are considered when buying and caring for garments. Finally, specific knowledge needed to make good purchases will be elaborated on, as well as which shopping routines come into play. Figure 5 gives an overview of these components.

Figure 5: Components of SHC buying practices
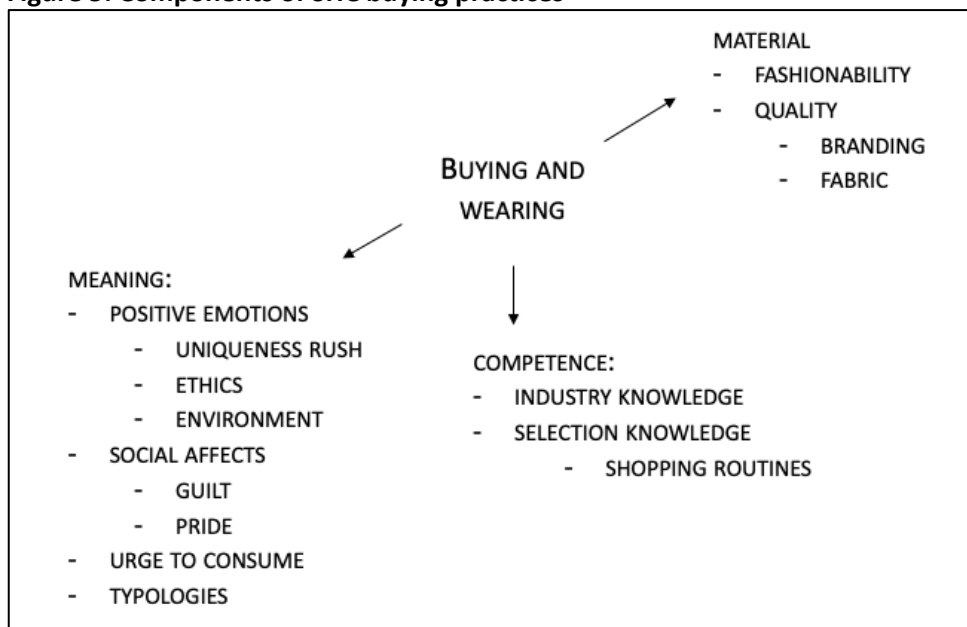
4.1.1 Meaning

The meaning respondents ascribe to their clothes is on the one hand specific to the individual, as everyone has their own relation to fashion and pays their own amount of attention to it. On the other hand, however, recurrent patterns of meaning attribution emerged from the analysis of the interviews: societal influences trickle through to the reflective part of practices (Røpke, 2009).

Positive emotions and identity construction

"I enjoy the search for a secondhand garment more than a new one. Because there are just a lot more unique pieces, and maybe you can show more who you are with it… compared to everything that can be found ten times in the same shop" (Thi Nhung)

First, it has become clear that most respondents buy and wear SHC because they enjoy it, be it through the quest of finding these unique garments, the showing off to peers of how little their garment cost, or the satisfying feeling of doing something ethically good. Evidently, this is possible because many respondents do not have to pay for their garments themselves and thus do not have consider clothes as a provision, but rather as an esthetic choice. The act of enjoyment therefore seeps through the other motivations or meaning attributions and is important to discuss first.

Uniqueness rush

Over half of the sample explained that it made them happy to find a bargain in an SH store, either because they felt this was a confirmation of having looked thoroughly through everything (Flora, Bella, Zoë), or because they felt their find *was a sign* (Bella). This is also linked to the unpredictableness of the items on offer in SH stores, something which is not the case in firsthand stores, '*where if you want a certain garment, like for example a black sweater, you are sure to find it*' (Uma). This unpredictableness makes the SHC practitioner even happier to have found a garment they like, as they feel it is more difficult to find. This relates to the uniqueness of SH garments, which almost all respondents mention is one of the main reasons they buy and wear SHC: the possibility of finding something special. All respondents agree that these clothing articles can just not be found in any firsthand store. Important for some respondents, Rana and Katharina, is that buying SH ensures that no one else will be wearing the same garment, whereas Lemony explicitly mentions that she does not care about this aspect: in her view, style and uniqueness lies in original combinations of garments, rather than in the uniqueness of the garment itself (Lemony, Senne). Both Marie and Rana add that they often feel they wear clothes that are 'too boring', and that the uniqueness of SHC garments that stand out can remedy this feeling.

Ethics

Almost all respondents saw human rights ethics, animal rights ethics, and climate motivations coincide in terms of their goals, in the sense that when something is ethical, it is also ecological and vice versa.

Some respondents buy SHC from an initial desire to consume more ethically; others see it as a positive side effect of buying SHC, their primary motivation being style. For the specific student consumer group, financial aspects do seem to play an important role. Over half of the respondents bring up the financial issues of buying ethically produced clothing, and say that SHC is a nice alternative, being cheap and ethical at the same time, which confirms findings from Delanoeije and Bachus' (2020) research.

Respondent Uma mentions, however, that it is problematic that because SHC's low prices, she expects all SHC garments to be cheap, whilst she knows how much it costs to produce an ethically, let alone ecologically produced garment. This reflection depicts what Nguyen (2021) explains as a decrease in expectations regarding pricing with SHC because of the fast fashion pricing standard. Furthermore, Flora reports that many SHC practitioners clearly do so more for style than for ethical reasons, as they also still buy new articles in 'unethical' shops and online retailers.

Respondents Zoë and Bella also refer to the ethical initiatives of *Kringloop*-stores, as they offer a social project of employment possibilities for socially underprivileged people, and state that they feel they are doing a good thing when buying there.

Animal rights

For animal rights' sake, five respondents declare not to buy animal textiles such as leather, wool, and fur firsthand, but they do buy this SH. Whilst Thi Nhung's reason for this is that she lives a vegan lifestyle, other respondents mention that they would never wear fur because of the social stigma they would encounter if they did so (Marie, Katharina, Rana), which shows yet again that these motivations are socially influenced and interconnected (Woodward, 2007; Røpke, 2009). Following this logic, Katharina reports that she has issues with wearing leather, as she feels it adds to the overall popularity of leather items and thus also their production.

Ecological motivations

Four respondents say that ecological motivations play an important role in their lifestyle practices. Some say they think about these problems regularly and that this is their most important reason to buy SHC (Rana, Uma, Flora), while others reflect that they do not think about this in relation to clothing (Katharina, Zoë). Contrary to expectations regarding

ecological motivations, the feelings are mixed about cheap SHC having become so popular. Flora makes a good point here:

"sustainability means a lot to me, but eventually I also think that the ecological side is also to consume less [in Dutch this is referred to as '**consuminderen'**] *and I also have that feeling with SH clothing. Yes, the fashion industry is a very polluting one, but even when you buy SH, you're still buying and consuming."* (Flora)

Ecological and ethical motivations are individual decisions, but are influenced by a societal position and which kind of identity the individual (unconsciously) wants to create. The next chapter will devote attention to the imagined gaze (Woodward, 2007) when buying and wearing clothes.

Social affects

What others think of garments or combinations has an influence on buying patterns as well as on the sartorial choice itself. Four respondents mention having bought clothes they have never worn because they were influenced in the store by the opinions of peers or family members they were shopping with (Rana, Zoë, Katharina, Charles). Furthermore, regarding sartorial choice, Katharina explains that if her boyfriend says something is *kitsch,* she is less inclined to wear it. Aaron, however, notes that even though his friends sometimes make fun of a garment he is wearing, he really does not mind and stays true to his own inner style, which he does acknowledge to be influenced by mainstream popular culture though.

When choosing what to wear, one also tries to picture the imagined gaze others will hold. Rana reports that compliments are essential in how often she wears an item: with several garments she explains how many compliments she got, making her more confident in wearing those items. Like Marie, she is focused on not being too bland in her clothing choices, because this says a lot about who you are, for example: a creative person.

Thi Nhung emphasizes that with your clothing choices, you always express what kind of person you are:

"I think that, one way or another, clothes really do… make a person. You can really just know what kind of person you are dealing with by looking at their clothing" (Thi Nhung)

This sense of belonging to groups, explicitly or implicitly, plays an important role with the respondents; Charles thinks his social circle is the main reason why he buys and wears SHC; he also wants to represent his music scene through his clothing, and Rana feels that dress is really important in her friend group. Thi Nhung adds that she feels self-selection of groups often happens through clothing. Uma and Rana report that they would not wear clothes which others would not see as matching their personality: for example, clothes that are too eccentric or too tight.

As previously mentioned, there is also a social aspect to ecological and ethical clothing choices. The knowledge you have on these subjects is not only influenced by your environment, but it also projects your position towards these aspects. Marie, for example, explains that she does not want to wear Bershka pants, because she does not want to be connoted with fast fashion. Thi Nhung explains that she would be surprised if one of her roommates were to come home with a newly bought firsthand piece of clothing, because it just does not fit their lifestyles.

This ties in with the social aspect of receiving and borrowing clothes, which influences how one relates to those clothes. Due to specific emotional ties, some respondents would keep the clothes, but not necessarily wear them, whereas others feel it is their responsibility to do so. Memories related to clothing will be elaborated on further in the meaning section, in the context of caring for clothes.

Guilt

Another affect regarding buying and wearing practices is guilt. Respondents Flora, Lemony, and Bella report that they sometimes feel guilty when buying cheap SHC (especially from *Kringloopwinkel* stores), as they, even though they are students who generally have limited capital to spend on clothing, actually do have the option to buy more expensive alternatives; by buying SHC in goodwill initiatives, they are taking a good quality garment from someone with more limited funds. Awareness of the gentrification process Nguyen (2021) suggests is therefore apparent.

Bella adds that in her experience, people with lower incomes are less likely to buy SHC because in their view it is a stigmatized practice, reflecting their low-income position. This is exactly what Currid-Halkett (2017) explains: cultural capital is as important as ever, where it can eventually lead to reproducing privilege, for example making middle and higher classers, aspirational classers, more likely to be able to express their clothing style through SHC.

The awareness of this problem and the guilt it implies, does not always result in acting accordingly. The affective dissonance that Petersson (2019) describes in her research was perceived with three respondents.

Pride

A new important finding is that almost all respondents talk about the pride they feel when finding a low-priced item, a feeling of having struck a bargain compared to the price the garment hypothetically cost when it was new (Senne, Katharina, Bella, Zoë, Aaron), or of having found it among all the other options in the shop (Flora, Marie).

"I'm always really proud in thinking: 'out of everything that you can find in the thrift store, I found THIS!'" (Flora)

In addition, Bella, Zoë, Katherina, and Senne describe the pride they feel when someone asks where they bought the garment they are wearing, and they can answer that it was SH and cost very little.

"that's so typical me! If someone gives me a compliment on something I'm wearing, I immediately say: it only cost 2 euros! That's really…like my family laughs at me for this. My grandma, even before she can say that something I'm wearing is pretty, she knows how much it cost!" (Katharina)

Flora's main source of pride lies in the fact that it is more ethically right in her opinion to wear SH clothes, as they do not contribute to the community and environment destroying fast fashion industry. She and Bella also mention the fact that having a nice outfit which can be either regarded as fashionable (Flora) or situated in the overall mainstream style of the period (Bella, Aaron) with clothes that are all thrifted, contributes to the feeling of pride because it requires knowledge of style and culture to be able to find items that fit and go together. Rana adds that she likes little details on SH garments which reveal that the garment is SH, like

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embroidery details which are hardly copied in firsthand stores, because she is proud to wear SHC and is even more proud when she realizes that her whole outfit is thrifted. Bella and Flora also remark that they become even more proud of clothing articles if their friends have said they are jealous of them. Furthermore, Bella has a routine of, when she gets home from a SHC store, sending videos to her SH-loving friends to ask their opinion on the items.

It has become clear that the most important factor in buying and wearing SH clothing is that it makes the respondents happy and proud. Only one respondent, Charles, expressed not to enjoy shopping, especially so in an SHC store, because it was often too overwhelming. Other motivations were also important, such as being unique and ecologically and ethically responsible; these latter motivations, however, intersect with feeling content in one way or another.

"It really is special how happy finding a nice piece of clothing can make you feel. It's really weird because I think, come on! For example with some jeans that I recently bought: I was so happy with it so I've been wearing it constantly for the past three weeks or so…but I have so many other pants! And even so, I want to wear the new ones, that's so special!" (Rana)

The pride and joy clothing can bring to respondents has become clear. However, sometimes this can influence the practitioner to keep on consuming (Strähle & Klatt, 2017)

Urge to consume

Some respondents state that they need to be in the right mood to go to SH stores. But some add that when they are in this specific mood, they want to buy, and sometimes end up buying items they do not really need (Bella, Zoë).

With the Covid-19 lockdown of stores, some respondents felt their urge to buy online increase (Bella, Zoë, Marie, Aaron), often finding an outlet on the Vinted platform, and some felt it shut down together with the stores (Senne, Charles, Rana, Thi Nhung). This urge to consume can originate from wanting to feel new (Zoë), rewarding oneself after a stressful period like exams (Thi Nhung), or wanting to have found a good bargain of which one can be proud (Katharina, Bella). The urge to buy clothing can also be converted into the urge to buy other items, such as accessories, items for one's student room, and clothing or other items for someone else (Uma, Rana, Zoë, Bella, Katharina).

"…if I don't find anything, then I can think yeah why did you come here in the first place. Then I don't feel satisfied, but I wouldn't quickly buy something just because I want to buy something though." (Katharina)

The good feeling respondents talk about when looking for or buying garments, is similar to the hedonic motivation Strähle and Klatt (2017) discuss in their analysis. Furthermore, the constant urge to consume points to what we discussed earlier with Fletcher's psychological obsolescence theory and the Jevons paradox. As a sustainable option becomes cheaper, it will be bought more, which adds to the overall urge to consume and a decrease in psychological durability.

The considerations outlined in the above section lead us to discern three typologies of young SH consumers, which will be elaborated on below. It will become clear that within each typology, the Jevons paradox can be present.

4.1.2 Typologies of the young secondhand consumer

The views and observations gathered from the Wardrobe Interviews led us to distinguish three typologies of young SH consumers. The typology has similarities to that of Strähle and Klatt (2017); however, different emphases are given, and the new dimension of sustainability implications of the Jevons paradox is elaborated on. Furthermore, Strähle and Klatt focused on the broad consumer analysis, while this research focuses specifically on students. Respondents are categorized in the first typology when they buy SHC primarily for its style and uniqueness, the second typology when they do not buy non-ethical and non-ecologic friendly clothing altogether and this is then extended to SHC, and the third typology, when pricing is most important, where respondents would also buy first hand clothes if these were the same price.

The uniqueness trend

The predominant group buys SHC for the unique characteristics of the garments. Respondents Lemony, Thi Nhung, Aaron, Charles, Senne and Marie defined **uniqueness** as (one of) the most important factors in buying and wearing SHC. According to them, this is also due to the popularity of uniqueness in fashion trends and the overall popularity of SHC styles in the

mainstream fashion culture. Most of these respondents would also consider buying new garments to have longer lasting basics in their wardrobes. Paradoxically, timelessness is also a convincing attribute of clothing that grabs their attention. Increased popularity of unique clothing items can motivate practitioners to find new exciting ways to combine the clothing already in their wardrobes, but can also motivate them to buy more in an everlasting spiral, as the garments are often comparably cheap and easy to resell.

"This was also really a good bargain. I think… it's always the special pieces that really pop out for me in a store." (Lemony)

Furthermore, many respondents feel that these clothes cannot be found firsthand, and that this is the most important reason they go to SH stores, with environment friendliness and ethics as positive side effects. The thrill of looking for these unique pieces in a seemingly endless sea of garments is sometimes even more important than the purchase itself.

Second chance ethics

Flora, Uma and Rana's main reason to buy SHC is ethical and ecological attitudes. These three respondents learned about malpractices of the fashion industry at school. Respondent Marie can also be classified in this category. She emphasizes that **ethical and ecological awareness** depends on who your friends are, if you live in the city or not, and your educational path. Flora adds that having this knowledge is a start, but acting accordingly is not implied; one should not position oneself as morally superior, and rather explain why one takes this approach. These respondents indicate to also invest in ethically and ecological friendly produced garments, but see SHC as the cheaper alternative. However, it is important to not buy too much, Flora and Rana say, as this means that you are still overconsuming. Table 2 however depicts that respondent Flora has the most garments in her wardrobe, which shows that affective dissonance takes place (Petersson, 2019). They also add that for them, being in style is less important, which could reflect in their clothing having a longer perceived psychological durability. But as Table 2 shows, this is not the case.

The bargain hunter

Lastly, Bella, Zoë and partly Katharina and Marie form the third category, the **bargain hunters**, those who buy SHC mostly because of its value for money. Several respondents explained they feel a positive sensation when buying something for a small amount of money, even though the garment may not be necessary in one's wardrobe. Respondent Zoë would probably also buy firsthand clothes if these were as cheap; she feels one cannot always act according to environmental or ethical knowledge. Bella and Zoë both report that if they have not found anything on a thrift shop visit, they are more likely to buy something they do not need or are not totally convinced of. Furthermore, Bella adds that she initially sees SH fashion as an interesting alternative to fast fashion chains, because it is less resource devouring, but that the most important factor for her is that it is cheap. She defines herself as a *shopping addict,* buying around 10 new garments every month. Lastly, because clothes are easy to resell online or at SHC markets, the barrier to buy something becomes lower. This shows that the general urge to consume is maintained or even enhanced, making wardrobes overflow with clothes that are barely used.

"If there really isn't anything that I like, I don't buy anything. But I will buy something that I'm not that sure about if I haven't found a lot of other things. If I had found other things, then I maybe would not have bought that item, so I think that maybe somehow there is a little bit of pressure to want to have found something." (Bella)

These three typologies are non-exclusive and can be combined. For example, someone might start buying SHC because of ethical motivations, and in doing so realize they are saving money, which encourages them to buy more. Likewise, those who buy SHC for its uniqueness could also buy more basic clothing SH because it is cheaper or more ethically and ecologically friendly.

The most important reason for buying SHC, the search for the thrill of uniqueness, was outlined extensively. Striking good bargains, being proud of finding these garments in the big pool of choice, showing them off to peers, and most importantly, feeling confident in an outfit choice makes the respondents content. However, the motivations the respondents give do not necessarily resonate with their true practice patterns, and furthermore, the Jevons paradox can be found in all three typologies, regardless of what the respondents express as their main motivation. This will be elaborated upon in the discussion section on sustainability,

along with the question what this means for sustainability in the fashion industry: can SHC form a solution for some existing problems?

4.1.3 Competence

Let us first have another look at the other practices found in this research. We will now focus on competences that are used whilst looking for and wearing SHC garments.

Industry knowledge

It is important to note that in order to be able to make assumptions about ethics and ecology, one has to have the time, energy and financial capital to do so, as well as the knowledge about this side of the coin in fashion.

Flora mentions that she does not order clothes online at new stores, like many of her friends do. This is because she is abhorred by reports that rejected clothes that are returned by customers are burned and not resold. She thinks that if more people knew about these malpractices, they would no longer blindly order online. The same is true for the ethical and ecological sides of the fashion industry. Zoë and Bella explain that they like going to *Kringloopwinkel*, as they feel good about supporting a social economy initiative, something that Zoë adds she knows a lot about because of her educational training and internship experiences. A significant point Zoë also makes is that even if you are aware of malpractices, this does not mean you adjust your behavior; she compares it with eating meat. This is yet again the affective dissonance Petersson (2019) mentions as a possible player. Marie also questions how this knowledge comes to her; as this information mostly reaches her through social media, it is also dependent on algorithms.

'There are a lot of articles about these subjects, but because you're interested in it, it demands your attention more and you will inform yourself more, and this is a spiral that keeps on going really…' (Rana)

Finally, Flora explains how her lack of knowledge of how SH stores collect, select and sell their clothes makes her less confident in believing that planet and people come before profit, and thus that these shops are actually not 100% perfect. She adds that the most sustainable

option one has is to not consume, which is also the case for SHC according to her. She also calls into question what happens to clothes that cannot be sold in SHC stores in Europe and are then shipped to *poorer countries.*

Selection knowledge

Our respondents described different kinds of knowledge about SH while shopping. Katharina reports that she has gained knowledge about how to select clothing by shopping SH. Zoë adds that she learnt that SHC articles need not necessarily be 'gross', as many people in her environment think because of ignorance, she explains. Finding the right items on Vinted also demands accumulated knowledge. Zoë, Bella and Marie explain that it takes a few 'bad buys' to understand how to select clothing on Vinted, focusing on which specific size fits your body and which articles are 'too good to be true'. Shopping through Vinted is especially difficult, as the garments cannot be returned. This does however cause buyers to think twice before buying, and that other steps of the Buyerarchy are gone through, reducing impulsive buys to a minimum.

The platform Vinted can also seem overwhelming, with seemingly infinite garments at one's disposal (Charles, Uma, Senne, Rana, Marie). In order to shop online, specific knowledge is also mentioned. Flora adds that knowledge about which size you need for which brand can be gained through 'bad buys', and Uma that certain garments, for example trousers, are more difficult to get the sizing right for. Flora also makes clear that she would never buy something on Vinted that does not still have price tags attached or is brand new, and Rana never something that is intimate, like lingerie or other items that are worn close to the skin.

Ten respondents who use the platform also do so to sell items, which, Uma says, 'makes me buy garments faster myself, because the amount you earn on it stays on the platform'. The fact that you make someone else happy with old clothes is also a positive side-effect, Senne and Uma report. Several respondents think they have increased buying on Vinted due to the Covid-19 lockdowns of physical stores (Marie, Bella, Zoë), but still do not find it the same experience (Rana). Vinted also has negative sides to it, be it the relatively high delivery costs compared to the low cost of the garments themselves, or the mediocre help of the Vinted support team when a problem arises (Senne).

Shopping sprees and other routines

During the interviews, we also talked about buying practices and shopping procedures, as these play an important role in how many garments are owned and how often they are all used.

The most important factor with regard to shopping routines is whether the visit was planned or not. Respondents explain that they sometimes just pop into a SH store and then browse without having anything in mind. The browsing itself, some respondents say, is a leisure activity for them, which is relevant for us because it reflects that the shopping spree mass consumption culture is recurrent among these respondents. When visits are planned, however, it is either because they really feel like looking for interesting items, or they have a specific garment in mind that they want to find. As already mentioned before, respondents Bella, Katharina and Zoë note that the chances of buying something are higher when they have the initial feeling of wanting to do so. This specific mood of wanting to look for items, and the counterpart of not feeling like searching at all, are important aspects many respondents talk about. Respondents Lemony, Rana and Thi Nhung also indicate that if they have a specific garment type in mind, they will opt for stores like Riot and Episode, as these stores always offer a wide array of every garment type, in comparison to less preselected stores like Think Twice and *Kringloop*, where you never know what you might find (Uma). Moreover, they add that there is a difference between preselected, more expensive vintage stores, where the chances are higher that you will pay more, but also have a higher quality garment (Marie, Thi Nhung), and a *Kringloop*-store, where you can find garments of differing quality. However, this is exactly what attracts Katharina to *Kringloop*: because it is not preselected, the chances are higher that if you find something unique, or an expensive brand-name item, you will be able to buy it cheaply. Marie and Flora furthermore explain that in planning a trip to the local goodwill store, they allocate a sufficient amount of time and make a lengthy excursion out of it, looking at everything in the store. A competence Bella also adds to the list is that she knows when the new clothes are delivered in her local thrift store and when it is too busy to have a calm look around.

The thinking patterns that cross the buyer's mind can also be relevant. Whereas respondents Uma and Thi Nhung first scan clothes according to color, other respondents always go to

specific aisles first, Flora for example to the jackets aisle. In addition, some respondents explicitly speak about their tactics in estimating if they will wear the garment often when debating if they should buy it. Senne and Bella explain that they already think of how they would combine the clothing pieces, and Uma that she always tries to assess if she does not have something similar in her wardrobe already.

"…be tough on myself and think, I don't need this, put it back, only buy the stuff you really like" (Uma).

Thi Nhung and Zoë, however, emphasize that the garment just has to grab their attention; they do not reflect on how they would combine it, as in their opinion, everything can be combined with some of the basic garments they have in their wardrobe. Finally, Bella explains that she often gets the feeling in the store that she will wear the garment often, but that this is eventually not always the case, indicating that this knowledge Uma talks about is not inherently common.

Some respondents mention that they can feel overwhelmed in SH stores, as there is much more choice and much more to look at (Charles, Lemony). It can therefore be appeasing to go together with a family member or friend who you trust to give good advice on what to buy (Charles). Other respondents explicitly mention preferring to shop alone, as they do not want to feel pressured 1) to look at everything at a certain pace (Marie, Zoë) and 2) to buy items they are not fully convinced about (Katharina, Rana). Furthermore, Bella, Aaron, and Flora report that when you go shopping with friends, it can happen that two persons want the same garment, which they explain is never a fun experience. However, Bella reminds me, it can also be nice to have a second opinion on an item, and on if your companions think you will wear it often or not.

4.1.4 Material
Garment types

Some respondents are reluctant to wear SH shoes, as 1) they find the mere idea that someone else has worn them off-putting or 2) the shoes might already have been broken in by the former user, which is orthopedically harmful. With some respondents, the parents can have a significant impact here, advising them against buying SH shoes, regardless of their financial

support (Senne, Rana, Bella). Almost all respondents indicate they do not want to wear SH underwear, as this is clothing that is too close to the skin or too intimate. Katharina, Zoë, and Marie, however, have already bought SH lingerie and were content with it. Rana explains that she would buy items like a bathing suit SH, but that she would not tell anyone that it is SH, as she believes that there still is a stigma in this regard, and that she will be seen as unhygienic.

Pricing

As has already become clear, pricing plays an important role in SHC acquisition with young adults. When a garment is sold at a very low price, it can convince doubters that there is hardly any loss in buying it. Many respondents describe their visits to cheap thrift stores or sales days in the Think Twice store, where for example 4-, 2-, and 1-euro days are organized every five weeks, meaning that every item is sold at these low prices. This does imply, however, that sometimes items are bought that are hardly worn.

"I always reflect when I buy something, am I really going to wear it? And am I buying it now because it is so cheap, or am I buying it because I think it is pretty?" (Senne)

Contrary to expectations, respondents that finance their clothing acquisitions themselves are not those from the 'bargain hunters' group; in other words, those that buy SHC predominantly for their relative affordability. This is probably because all respondents are aspirational classers and most do not see SHC as their only financial option. This demarcation of material unmet needs (needing clothing for warmth and protection) and ideal unmet needs (the feeling of needing something because nothing similar is owned) (Pincus, 2004) reflects findings from Delanoeije and Bachus' research (2020) where 62 percent said price was an influencing factor when buying SH, but only 23 percent said it was the reason they could not buy firsthand alternatives.

Branding

Branding can also have an impact on the perceived quality of the garment and has an influence of the amount one is willing to pay for it (Flora, Marie, Senne, Katharina). Respondent Katharina admits she sometimes even buys garments from a prestigious brand when they are cheap despite not liking them, so she can sell them more expensively on Vinted. Uma, Flora and Rana, as fashion bachelor students, also look at the material of the

garment and are willing to pay more for expensive fabrics, such as 100% cotton, wool or leather garments.

The right fit?

The conscious reflection of what to buy and wear was already elaborated on. How the clothes feel and which clothing choices and combinations this entails, is also of importance because it might shed light on why some clothes are hardly worn; this can also be socially mediated and have social repercussions.

Some respondents report that they sometimes do not feel elegant enough with SHC that are often oversized or baggy. They reflect that these particular items do not suit their figure. Uma and Thi Nhung add that certain garments make them feel unpolished or can give a look of neglected hygiene. Many respondents aim at finding the pieces where this is not the case, the more sophisticated looking pieces (Senne, Katharina, Thi Nhung), whilst others like the SH style of oversizedness and feel that this fits their overall clothing style (Rana, Uma, Aaron, Flora).

Self-knowledge of what fits their body well is an important competence here. When someone is aware of the types of garments they like to wear and feel good in, they will make fewer 'bad buys'. Marie, for example, never buys clothes that are too tight under the arms and therefore rejects these types of clothes immediately. Many respondents (Marie, Uma, Charles, Bella) arrange their wardrobe according to how often they like to wear specific garments, where inactive clothing is kept in less accessible places. Furthermore, many show as their favorite garment one that has been worn most often.

Lastly, oversizedness is considered acceptable for certain clothing garment pieces, like jackets and sweaters, but for pants for example, a good fit is crucial (Rana, Zoë, Flora, Bella, Uma, Marie). Sometimes uniqueness triumphs over functionality, and sometimes it is the other way around. This is dependent on what the clothing style is and which type of garments the respondents feel best in. Uma explains that sometimes, clothing does fit your body, but not your personality, which also results in banishment to one of the inactive boxes.

"I quite like oversized coats, because, I don't know, I enjoy wearing loose clothing. So it's something that… in the winter I also wear lots of layers. So, for me it's important that my coat is big enough because otherwise, I won't fit into it." (Flora)

Fashionability

During the interviews, we also reflected on structural trends that influence their pattern to buy and wear SHC.

Almost all respondents feel that SHC has become a hype is some way or another, which reflects the overall pattern of the Hipster paradox described by Michael (2015), where uniqueness is paradoxically a trend: as uniqueness has become a popular style, the lines between following the main trend and truly being *unique* are blurred (Rana, Charles, Thi Nhung). It is however not only the uniqueness of SHC that makes it trendy. Respondents Senne and Rana add that SH articles in general are more broadly socially accepted than before. Flora explains that compared to 10 to 20 years ago, when wearing pre-owned items was looked down on, due to the uprise of fast fashion, in her environment it is now a source of pride to find in-fashion clothes that are cheap as well as eco-friendly. Rana and Marie add that in general, consuming environmentally and ethically has become a hype, which SHC embodies as well, which resonates with the idea of Ferraro, Sands, and Brace-Govan (2016) that SHC 'has become fashionable in its own right' (p.262). Katharina illustrates this increase in popularity through what she perceives as an increase in prices in the local *Kringloop,* confirming Nguyen's (2021) gentrification assumption; Rana adds the fact that to try on a garment that is on display in Think Twice, you have to put your name on a waiting list, whereas 5 years ago, you could just ask and try it on immediately. Aaron explains this trend as follows: in general, a mix-match of old clothing styles is considered 'cool' and 'hot'; others point to the fact that uniqueness has gained popularity, making SHC a valuable choice in their opinion. Aaron also adds that he would never wear firsthand clothes, simply because he no longer likes the style.

Whereas some respondents stated that they are not influenced by the existing mainstream style, others acknowledged the hype or increased popularity of the style, but at the same time stated that the agency lies in one's own acquisition of a garment and combination style (Aaron and Senne). Flora added that in her opinion, expressing one's style is more difficult with SHC than new clothing, which makes that if you look fashionable with SHC, you can express your

style even more. Marie combines the two sides of fashionability and uniqueness in her reflection on SH fashion:

"The fact is, I'm constantly in a heavy debate with myself on this subject: that you want to be unique, but at the same time, you're not, because I know that I follow certain trends, and that I am inspired by certain styles. So for sure, I go along with it, I really feel that it is important as well to acknowledge that." (Marie)

Furthermore, respondent Uma adds that in her opinion it is essential that SHC has become a hype. More people will try the practices out, which could result in a positive change of culture when they realise their positive aspects. She feels that the problem with SHC being a hype is that it will eventually pass. In her view, the hype should stay.

Thi Nhung states another reason why she likes SHC is that the fashion choices here are not prescribed like in firsthand stores; that she buys garments because she really likes them, not because the mainstream fashion tendencies influence her taste. All respondents, however, do report being influenced by existing fashion trends in some way or another.

Material examples of garment styles that were repeatedly mentioned as examples of SHC as a specific clothing style are baggy pants with special features, other oversized items such as T-shirts and sweaters, and *debardeurs*: sleeveless sweaters that have gained overall popularity in recent months (Katharina, Thi Nhung, Rana, Lemony, Bella, Zoë).

Knowing what is in fashion is also socially determined. The youngest respondent, Bella, explains that she is aware of several trends because of the platform TikTok, and that this is the case for many of her peers, which confirms assumptions made by Nguyen (2021). This influences her consumption pattern, as she buys clothes that would go well in this trend, like for example layering clothes. Rana also talks about this trend of layering clothes, explaining that what she likes about clothing trends is that they always make her look at her own clothes in new ways: how she can combine and wear them, which makes her buy fewer new clothes. This could be a very interesting solution to the mass consumption tendencies that are at play. Instead of buying new garments to fit the existing style, one can try and create this style by looking at what they already have lying around, adjusting these, or borrowing from the social circle. This reminds us of the alternative steps the Buyerarchy of needs offers.

Marie, Senne and Thi Nhung explain that they look for pieces that are timeless, that can be worn through different fashion periods. This ties in with the model of slow fashion, where new clothing garments are not just bought to last for a few months, as is the case with fast fashion. The own style is created in this way, with influences of the mainstream culture (Aaron). Marie adds that the pieces she borrows from her mother are more timeless than the current in-store garments. Uma, Thi Nhung and Zoë realise that when something is in fashion, one is exposed to it more often and eventually begins to like the look of it. Contrarily, Flora thinks she sometimes coincidentally buys something that is in fashion, but does not do so on purpose. Bella, Lemony and Zoë, however, do say they buy items that are in fashion and then tire of them afterwards, reaching psychological obsolescence as Fletcher (2012) would say.

In conclusion, the rate at which someone changes their clothing style has a significant impact on the psychological durability of clothing. Even though they present themselves as predominantly an ethical buyer, if the replacement rate of clothing is high and if the other steps of the Buyerarchy of needs are not considered, then consumption rates will remain high and the mass consumption culture is reinforced.

4.2 Caring and discarding

Below, we will focus on how garments are cared for on the one hand, and when they are discarded on the other. As we will see, the labeling of clothing as inactive will be of importance here, as well as the replacement rate.

Figure 6: Caring and discarding
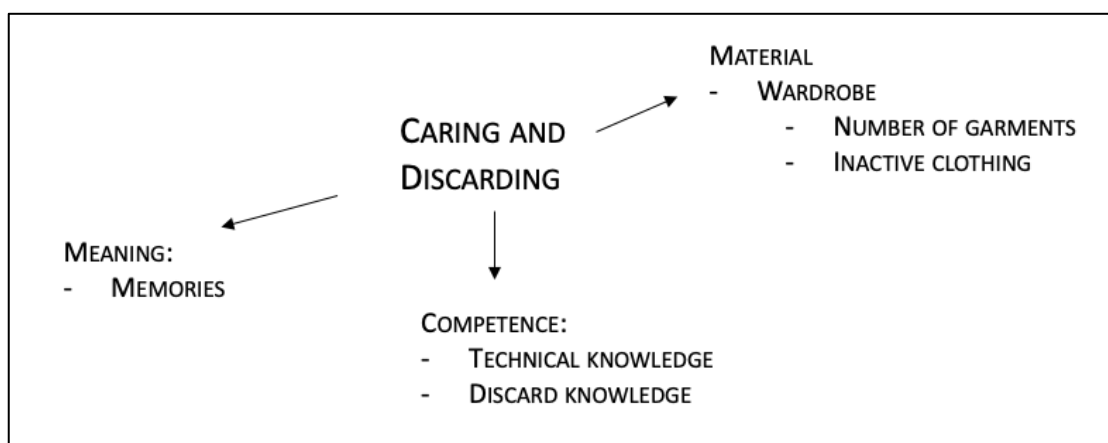
4.2.1 Materialities: the wardrobe

First an overview of the overall clothing choices will be given, describing the setting of the respondents' wardrobe situation: how many garments they own, how they are organized and what the overall percentage of SHC is in the wardrobe. Thereafter, the focus will lie on what the characteristics are of the inactive clothing.

Inventory of clothes Number of garments

As there are many different reasons to buy and wear SHC, ascertaining whether the Jevons paradox is present can be problematic. However, the respondents (Katharina, Bella, and Zoë) who explicitly said that they sometimes buy something because it is cheap and because it is the environmentally friendly option compared to fast fashion, and subsequently admit that because of these two reasons they sometimes just buy clothing for the sake of it, rather than because they are 'blown away' by the garment itself, did have a large number of garments in their wardrobes. To verify if the Jevons paradox is present, I propose to not necessarily look at the percentage of SHC, but at the total number of garments, how many clothes are worn actively and how often the respondent visits SHC stores. The main reason the respondents give themselves is given, along with to which typology they were categorized.

Table 2: Clothing inventory overview

Name	Bella	Katharina	Lemony	Flora	Zoë	Aaron	Marie	Rana	Thi Nhung	Uma	Charles	Senne
Gender(M/W/O)	W	W	W	W	W	M	W	W	W	W	M	M
Age	18	22	22	21	22	19	21	22	23	21	21	21
Study field	Medicine	Art history	Architecture	Fashion technology	Child psychology	Teacher training	Political Sciences	Textile design	Journalism	Fashion technology	Urban Studies	Political Sciences
Funding clothes	Parents	Mixed	Parents	Self	Mixed	Parents	Self	Mixed	Mixed	Parents	Mixed	Self
# active garments	126	59	45	298	65	53	168	45	106	161	42	78
# SHC garments	72	45	34	31	27	51	102	17	80	103	20	53
Borrowed clothes	/ (NMY)[2]	/ (NMY)	5	29	6	3	28	10	3	7	3	1
Inactive clothing?	In bags in basement	At parents' house (not much)	At parents' house (not much)	In same wardrobe	At parents' house (more than noted here)	In bags in room	In bags in room (many)	At parents' house (not much)	At parents' house (same amount)	in back of wardrobe	At parents' house (not much)	At parents' house
Frequency of SHC purchases	+/- once every week	+/- once every month	+/- once every month	+/- once every month	+/- once every week	+/- once every week	+/- once every month	+/- once every month	+/- once every month	+/- once every week	+/- once every month	+/- once every month
Main reason(s)[1]	Financial	Financial	Uniqueness	Ethical Ecological	Financial	Style	Ethical Uniqueness	Ethical Ecological	Uniqueness	Ecological	Social circle	Financial Style
Typology designation	Bargain hunter	Uniqueness	Uniqueness	Ethical Ecological	Bargain hunter	Uniqueness	Ethical Ecological	Uniqueness	Uniqueness	Ethical Ecological	Uniqueness	Uniqueness

[1]Reasons given by the respondents themselves as main reason(s) for buying SHC. Note that this can differ from the typology to which they were assigned by the researcher.

[2] NMY = not measured yet

As Table 2 shows, respondents Bella, Flora, Marie, Thi Nhung and Uma own the largest number of garments. They all report enjoying shopping from time to time, ranging from once a month to once a week. Most importantly, they belong to different typologies, which shows that regardless of the main reason for buying SHC, one can still experience an urge to buy.

It is noteworthy that these respondents also own the most inactive clothes, and that if these were also counted, they would have significantly more clothing than the others. The number found in the wardrobes is therefore skewed, as large amounts of inactive clothing can lie around their parents' house, in the basement, or in inactive corners of their rooms. We can also note that in this sample, the men own less clothes than most women. This is however a too small sample to confirm findings by Claudio (2007) that women have more clothes in general.

The main reasons SHC is bought are financial and uniqueness; Uma forms an exception here, as she maintains climate is the most important motivation, SHC being a less polluting industry. Flora and Rana combine ecological motivations with ethical ones. Other respondents see the ecological benefit of SHC as a positive extra. One could however say that the Jevons paradox is present with most respondents, as a general urge to consume is present and is enhanced by constant acquisitions of new items.

Wardrobe

Following Woodward (2007), I conclude that in the respondents' wardrobes, the same pattern could be found that 1) the wardrobes are full, and therefore, 2) the size of the wardrobe is positively correlated with the amount of clothing a person owns. If the amount of clothing exceeds the wardrobe, then often inactive clothes are selected out of the wardrobe and into boxes in the corner of the room, the basement, and eventually out of the house.

"Yeah, it hasn't been long that I buy THIS much, it's really..euhm..since the stores opened up again after the lockdown..so yeah, but now my wardrobe is beginning to be overfull, there is not much room any more…" (Bella)

In this respect, it is interesting to note what the wardrobes look like and thus how the garments are cared for. Ten respondents have an additional clothing rack to hang clothes on, and almost all have some other option, either shelves or boxes, for garments that do not need

ironing. Sometimes, often-used clothing never ends up in the wardrobe, as Woodward (2007) also describes in her research, as it goes straight from wearing to the laundry basket and back. Almost all respondents arrange their clothes through garment group, and Uma goes as far as arranging clothes further by color. This is possible because she has a walk-in closet. It is clear that space mediates amount with our respondents, similarly to how Woodward described.

When active clothing becomes inactive

Most respondents have clothes that were bought in the last five years. Some sentimental pieces date from early adolescence, but most clothes were bought more recently, because the respondents grew, or their clothing style changed.

All respondents classify certain clothing pieces as inactive, but not everyone gets rid of clothes. Emotional ties to clothing can play an important role in whether the item is gotten rid of. Some respondents have so many pieces, that some are automatically hardly worn (Marie, Bella). Half of the respondents leave inactive clothes with their parents and keep the more active clothes at their student housing. Another way to discard clothing is reselling it, which could even make a profit. This will be discussed below.

4.2.2 Competence

We have already referred to the knowledge needed to perform certain practices. This is also the case with the technical knowledge needed to care for and repair garments, but also to know what to discard, and how this is done best, for example by reselling them online. Respondents who know how to sew are more likely to repair or upcycle tattered garments than respondents who do not. Charles and Senne explicitly state that if they were able to do so, they would repair more. This knowledge of needlework also has an influence on garment choice in the store. Rana explains that because she and her mother often sew together, she now notices when garments are poorly finished and therefore does not buy them. Uma and Flora add that because they have basic knowledge of which fabrics are good quality, they also select garments accordingly.

Nine respondents sell inactive clothes online, predominantly via the platforms Vinted and Instagram. Some respondents also create a maybe pile or box, in which they rediscover clothes after a few months or years, because styles often come back, or can be combined in

new ways (Bella, Rana). Those who have basic sewing skills or have someone among their peers or family who does, often repair clothes. Yet, all respondents state they should do this more often. Three respondents even buy clothes with small imperfections or flaws, knowing that they can alter and upgrade them. Four respondents have a waiting line of garments that have to be touched up (Rana, Marie, Lemony, Uma).

As previously discussed, peers can have enormous influence on one's buying and wearing garments. Buying online also sometimes results in 'bad buys', as one cannot try the garment on before ordering, and sizes differ by country and brand (Bella). Flora explains she had ordered a dress, which was so short that it looked like a T-shirt, and Zoë ordered a jumpsuit, which fit her 8-year-old sister. As previously discussed, having the possibility of reselling clothes on Vinted, moreover, can also influence the buying process. Katharina, for instance, buys branded clothing to resell, which Aaron does on a professional level as well. This could resonate with the image of the thrift hauler by Nguyen (2021), someone who buys SHC in large quantities to wear the garments for short periods, or to resell them at a profit. However, this does not necessarily have to be the case. Aaron also explains that 'bad buys' have occurred when he was focused too much on the brand and did not consider the quality or look of the garment itself. In conclusion, the urge to consume can be reinforced by possibilities to resell.

4.2.3 Meaning

Memories

Lastly, meaning attribution is an extremely important factor in view of caring for and discarding garments. Whether clothes are discarded or not, depends on the memories they evoke: it is easier to discard clothing when there are no memories linked to the garment.

Many respondents describe the emotional links and memories they connote with their clothing. The pride in finding a good, beautiful bargain which we just discussed can reflect through many years of wearing. Both respondents Flora and Lemony explain their favorite memories of clothing through being proud that they had found this, a moment of which they often think when wearing the garment. Other memories are embedded in clothing because they were received from loved ones. All respondents have something in their wardrobe of a family member, and a few of grandparents that passed away. Respondents Flora, Rana and

Marie, who have the most borrowed clothing, explain proudly who gave them these items. These emotional ties play an important role in how the garments are cared for and how likely they are to be retained. Almost all respondents have a cupboard, box, or bag somewhere in their house or their parents' house, with clothes that are no longer worn, but are nevertheless not thrown away because of the emotional values attached.

"The clothes that I still have from when I was 14/15, when I gamed a lot and bought stuff like Mario T-shirts (laughs), I put them all in a plastic bag because I didn't really know what to do with them, because there is still like some sort of emotional worth to them. I told my dad don't throw the bag out yet! So yeah now.. there is this garbage bag full of old clothes in my childhood room at home, yeah… I'll have to get rid of it sometime though." (Charles)

Furthermore, more reflexive memories also play a role. Marie, Thi Nhung, Uma, Rana and Senne explain they often think of where they bought the clothing, and when this was on vacation, it makes them happy to remember 'how good I felt at that precise moment' (Flora). These respondents mentioned that when on vacation, they look up the local SH store, because they enjoy creating these special ties with their clothing. However, Katharina also describes buying SHC on vacation, but does not consider this a compulsive factor to not discard these items. She explains that she has no emotional ties to clothing that she barely wears, and only has a selected amount of clothing that she often wears.

Other respondents also mention being reminded of moments when they wore these clothes, such as going out with friends (Zoë and Senne), to music festivals (Rana), to a summer job (Uma) or their time on Erasmus exchange (Katharina, Marie, Thi Nhung).

"That sweater makes me think of going to a festival a few years ago, where all my friends wanted to wear the sweater for an evening which made that at the end there were stains everywhere, it reminds me of good times." (Rana)

Clothes sharing and buying together with friends and family is also an important practice to mention, as in the Buyerarchy of needs, the two steps before thrifting are dedicated to these two usage practices. Some respondents are proponents of a sharing culture, where they borrow clothes from friends, siblings, or their parents, and lend them clothes as well. Uma and Bella mention that they often buy SHC together with their sisters. Others prefer having their own overview over their wardrobe, not having to take into account clothes that are not physically in their own wardrobe (Marie).

This shows yet again that not only the acquisition of clothing matters, but daily routines of wearing, looking at and storing clothes in the wardrobe do as well.

"Like a sweater for example, even though it cost €200, I'm just giving an example (…) and you give that away, if you haven't really worn it a lot, it doesn't matter to me that much, but for example, I used to have a T-shirt, one that I wore my whole youth, then I think that it is more difficult to give it away, because it was my favorite T-shirt, even though that T-shirt only cost €5 when I got it, as a souvenir in Spain, but yeah…it does not really matter how expensive it was, it is the meaning you give the T-shirt yourself I guess…" (Senne)

4.3 Buy – Discard – Repeat

This chapter gave an overview of the predominant results from the Wardrobe interviews. We can assess that an overall trend towards acceptance of SHC is taking place in Flanders. Almost all respondents see SHC being a hype in their friend groups. Nevertheless, SHC can still evoke some social stigma, but the respondents feel that this is lessening. Some respondents even mentioned the stigma firsthand clothing carries in their social groups.

Whereas firsthand shopping is seen as easier because the sizing is clearer and customers will often find what they are looking for, SHC offers a uniqueness that firsthand clothing cannot. Stores with a steady offer of preselected garments, such as Episode and Riot, which have a large selection of different garment categories, can be seen as a middle ground, where shoppers are surer that they will find what they need, which can substitute the feeling of finding a good and unique bargain.

The respondents express that online SH shopping is less straightforward than via firsthand online retailers, as sizing can be a wild guess and return options are limited but is a good alternative regarding the overproduction in the fast fashion industry. It remains to be seen if these newly changed consumption practices of online thrifting are bound to stay. It can be a good option to get rid of inactive clothes, but can also enhance the urge to consume, as discarding old clothes can be a financial plus while making other people happy.

Eco friendly and ethical clothes can be more expensive than their polluting alternatives when they are bought new. SHC offers a good solution for students who generally have a limited clothing budget or feel they have to be frugal, to experiment with, search for, and express

their clothing style in an ethical an eco-friendly way. It furthermore also offers the good feeling of being ethically and ecologically responsible.

Students however do not all have financial struggles, and as has become clear, many buy more clothing than they need. In the bargain hunter, the uniqueness searcher, as well as the ethical consumer typology, mass consumption practices can be found, fulfilling ideal unmet needs rather than material (Pincus, 2004).

Could this change in the long run due to the Covid-19 crisis? According to Degli Esposti, Mortara and Roberti (2021), their respondents who said to have changed their consumption patterns during the lockdowns, reinitiated their behavior of before. Clearly, the constant urge to buy new clothes will not be halted through financial changes; this can only be obtained through long lasting cultural change. In the discussion section, we will elaborate on further implications and solutions for durability of clothing and topics for future research.

5. Discussion
5.1 Sustainability implications

Regarding the Buyerarchy of needs by Lazarovic, we can assess that all steps are rarely gone through before buying SHC with aspirational class students. Before buying an item, only a few respondents reflected on if they already had something similar, if they could borrow something similar from friends or family, and foremost, if they really needed it. While buying SHC, alternatives are not often considered, because the garments are often either cheap or a good investment. Respondents bought clothes because the feeling of having found something or showing these items off to friends and family made them happy. This can, however, imply that some clothes are hardly worn.

SHC is an interesting and cheap alternative for ethical and ecological clothing. But when garments are bought for quantity rather than quality, the psychological durability will not last, resulting in an unsustainable practice (Fletcher, 2012).

Nevertheless, the reverse angle could be considered: when someone changes their clothing style often, cheap and ecologically friendly garments are a better solution than firsthand clothes for psychological obsolescence. Respondents further explained that SH pieces are more often less timeless, but rather statement pieces matching their style at the moment of

acquisition. They explain that they go to SH stores for unique pieces, and when they need basic ones, they sometimes visit firsthand stores.

The overall conclusion of this study, therefore, is not that prices should be increased to promote a drop in consumption (Brooks, 2019), but rather that the overall culture of consumption should be revalued and adapted. The pace of fashion has to slow down. Maybe the hipster culture could lead the way there, as the culture values uniqueness, which could also be attained by being different in the pace of buying fashion and finding unique ways to reuse one's own clothing or that in the environment. This is something that the respondents showed proudly: the reutilization of garments previously owned by their parents, grandparents, siblings, and friends. This makes clear that emotional attachments to clothing can help in prolonging the psychological durability.

And if the overall urge to wear new items cannot be avoided, one should first, instead of buying new garments, look in one's own wardrobe and consider whether any clothes can be adapted to one's liking. Here knowledge is needed, but this can be easily shared through initiatives such as repair cafés like Maakbaar in Leuven (Maakbaar Leuven, 2021), where individuals can learn how to repair garments and other products.

Some respondents lost track of what they had lying around in their wardrobe. A solution for this was introduced by two researchers at the University of Glasgow, Shaw and Duffy (2020): digitalizing sustainable consumption. Here subjects used an app as a personal library, where they uploaded pictures of the garments they owned. Through doing so, the individual knows what they own, and more importantly how much; a realization that could temper consumption urge. The actions listed here could help in the eradication of overconsumption, as one will only buy what one really needs (Shaw & Duffy, 2020).

In conclusion, the psychological and material durability which Fletcher (2012) proposes could be enhanced through an increase in repair knowledge and a change in mass consumption culture. These tendencies are already at play in young aspirational class groups, as durability

and sustainability can be seen as a fashionable hype. This should however endure beyond the overall hype period, towards a more long-term solution in change of culture.

5.2 Research implications

It has become clear that although some respondents had not reflected extensively on their SHC practices, the Wardrobe Interviews opened debates and offered interesting insights. These insights were not only experienced by the researcher, but also by several respondents themselves, as they realised how many clothes they owned or reflected that their motivations were not as ethically responsible as they might have thought before. I therefore recommend this methodology for not only researchers, but also for everyone who wants to reflect on their clothing and consumption patterns: count the garments and one might be surprised by their number.

The limitations of this research that were encountered will now be listed, along with possible areas for future research.

Because durability is such an important facet of sustainability, a more longitudinal research model would shed more light on which garments are worn for longer periods, and which only briefly. A longitudinal model was not possible within the scope of this research.

Researching why people from lower SES groups do or do not buy SHC and what the barriers are could be interesting. This research focused on the specific group of young adults belonging to the aspirational class defined by Currid-Halkett (2017), as a direction had to be chosen and delineated, and therefore cannot offer a complete explanation for all SH practitioner variation.

Online influences from platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram have been shown to be important but were only discussed briefly in this research. Therefore, I suggest research to focus on the social aspects of offline and online influences on the SH clothing style, which could be examined through focus group conversations. In addition, joining the respondent during shopping sprees could clarify clothing choice reflections even further, as well as an analysis of online thrift-flip and thrift-hauling content.

Finally, more attention could be devoted to the inactive clothing in people's wardrobes, rooms, and basements. In this domain, more research is possible on why these clothes are classified as inactive and how these piles of garments could be reduced. Repairing and upgrading old clothes, for example, could give a new dimension to the Buyerarchy of needs, combining *'use what you have'* with *'make'.* Holroyd (2019) already did research on how respondents related to self-made clothing, and which social practices this entailed, but this could be expanded towards the repairing of SHC and towards exploring more solution-based research for the fast fashion problem.

6. Conclusion

Within the relatively small segment of young aspirational class secondhand consumers, to date, little research has been done.

This research aimed at depicting SH practices among young aspirational class students. Three typologies were discerned: those who buy SH clothes primarily for style and uniqueness purposes, those who buy SHC because of its ethical and sustainable values, and those who buy SHC for its bargain aspect. With all typologies, the Jevons paradox could be found in different ways. It was predominantly present among those who valued the thrill of finding a bargain the most, as these consumers buy bargains regardless of whether they already have similar items, as Delanoeije and Bachus (2020) describe with their replacement rate. This is something which the easy option of reselling garments on Vinted and other platforms seem to enhance as well.

In the group of the uniqueness searchers, items can become psychologically obsolete at a fast rate, which results in a constant urge to buy and reinvent uniqueness. Lastly, the ethical and sustainable buyer does not inevitably buy less SHC. As they compare SHC to the fast fashion sector, they see the former as a more ethically and ecologically neutral way of expressing one's style. They also tend to reflect on the fact that they should consume less in general, but do not always act accordingly: with them affective dissonance is greatest, as they hold motivations that they do not act upon, which results in feelings of guilt.

SH is a more ethically, financially, and ecologically friendly way to discover and change one's clothing style during the period of young adulthood, but other ways to reuse, following the 'Buyerarchy of needs', should be considered before acquisition of new garments.

Therefore, awareness should be raised of the mass consumption culture and the constant need to renew, and the influence SHC practices can play in this should be stressed. Knowledge on how garments can be repaired and altered to renew psychological durability can be diffused through *repair café* initiatives, and a more general culture of sharing garments and care for a longer period should be reinitiated. The fashion industry is a creative one, where the production as well as the consumption side can surely pave a new path towards longer durability of clothing, less overproduction and overconsumption, and a sustainable use of resources. In sum, creativity in reuse patterns is called for.

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8. Appendix: topic list interviews

Wardrobe Interviews: Vragenlijst

Drop off:
Gender, studierichting, leeftijd, woonplaats, studentenjob

5 kaartjes met redenen om tweedehands kleding te kopen, rangschikken van meest naar minst van toepassing en dan toelichten:
- o Financieel
- o Ethisch
- o Ecologisch
- o Recreatie
- o (…) → vul zelf aan

1. Hoe ziet een doorsnee TH winkel bezoek er uit?
- o Welke winkels bezoek je?
- o Ga je als je iets nodig hebt/als je zin hebt…
- o Met wie ga je? (alleen/vrienden/familie/…)
- o Waar hecht je belang aan als je kledingstukken zoekt?
- o Denk je in de winkel al na over hoe je het stuk zou combineren?
- o Met welk geld koop je kleding?
- o Heb je een maximum/minimumprijs voor een TH stuk? (En is dat anders als je online koopt (Vinted)?)

2. Heb je bepaalde kennis nodig om TH te kopen? Do's / don'ts

3. Koop je meer of minder dan mensen in je omgeving?
Gender, Familie, School, …

4. Koop je TH dingen die je EH niet zou kopen? (bv. uit ethische overwegingen)
Koop je dingen EH die je niet TH zou kopen? (bv. uit hygiënische overwegingen)
Zijn er bepaalde items die je niet TH mag kopen van je ouders

5. Herstel je soms kledingstukken? Welke aanpassingen maak je dan meestal?

6. Doe je soms kleding weg?
- o Heeft dat een effect op je consumptiepatroon?
- o Wat doe je met kleren die je tijdelijk niet gebruikt?
- o Is TH gemakkelijker om weg te doen dan EH?

7. Toen de winkels gesloten waren door de lockdown, kocht je dan online?

8. In hoeverre hecht je waarde aan of wat je draagt 'in' is?
- o Zie je TH als een eigen stijl? Is het een rage?
- o Waar zie je deze stijl terugkeren?

9. Leen je van of leen je uit?
- o Hangen er bepaalde herinneringen vast aan je kledingstukken?
- o Deel je kleren met anderen?

10. Koop je andere dingen TH?

11. Heb je ooit al online TH gekocht?
- o Ja: Hoe vaak? Welke stuks? Heb je een account? Wat was je ervaring ermee?
- o Nee: Wat houdt je tegen?

12. Samen het aantal kledingstukken in de kleerkast/de kamer tellen
- o Welke ervan zijn TH?
- o Aan welk kledingstuk heb je goede herinneringen?
- o Wat is je lievelingsstuk? Waarom?
- o Wat is je grootste miskoop? Reden?
- o Indien studentenkamer: waar liggen je kleren vooral (studentenkamer, ouders, …)? Verplaats je ze?