HEC MONTRÉAL
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The Changing Face Over Time: A Sociomaterial Understanding of Consumer Identity Construction

par

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Thèse présentée en vue de l'obtention du grade de Ph. D en administration
(option Marketing)

Décembre 2018

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Cette thèse intitulée:

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Résumé

Dans la littérature sur le comportement du consommateur, un important corpus de recherche reconnaît la place centrale qu'occupent les transformations physiques dans les narratifs identitaires des consommateurs. Une synthèse de cette littérature révèle en majeure partie une compréhension du corps comme une ressource malléable que les consommateurs utilisent afin de faciliter la construction identitaire (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka 2011; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991). Néanmoins, une partie de cette littérature reconnaît des situations telles que la maladie, la prise de poids, et le vieillissement, où le corps est plutôt perçu comme une contrainte à la construction identitaire (Joy et al. 2010; St-James et al. 2011; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). Ces études mettent en lumière les efforts déployés par les consommateurs pour faire face à un corps récalcitrant.

La présente recherche contribue à ce domaine d'étude en considérant à la fois des transformations physiques qui facilitent la construction identitaire et d'autres qui l'engendrent. En plus de présenter une contrainte à la construction identitaire, le corps qui tombe malade, qui prend du poids ou qui vieillit, peut également produire des effets non-anticipés, notamment en imposant des identités abjectes (ex : vieux schnock) qui vont à l'encontre des projets identitaires des consommateurs. De ce fait, comment les consommateurs perçoivent ces identités qui se co-construisent indépendamment de leur volonté? En théorisant l'expérience des consommateurs dans de telles situations, cette recherche entreprend d'expliquer les effets provocateurs d'un corps changeant sur les projets identitaires des consommateurs.

Pour ce faire, une lentille socio-matérielle qui intègre deux perspectives sur la performativité – la performance identitaire (Butler 1990; 1993) et la performance post-humaniste (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003) – a été adoptée afin de tenir compte des entrelacs de plusieurs sources d'agence. L'articulation de cette lentille s'appuie également sur les notions

d'intersubjectivité et de provocations telles que définies par Janet Borgerson (2005; 2014). Une étude empirique qualitative a été réalisée, examinant la relation entre les transformations du visage à travers le temps et la construction identitaire. Des entrevues en profondeur ont été réalisées avec des hommes et des femmes. Aussi, une immersion dans le contexte plus étendu des discours contemporains sur le vieillissement et de la consommation s'y rattachant a permis d'enrichir l'analyse et l'interprétation de ces récits.

Les résultats jettent un regard nouveau sur l'interprétation et la négociation d'identités imposées par un corps changeant. Sur la base de leur propre expérience d'un visage jeune et malléable s'inscrivant dans une idéologie socioculturelle de progrès, les participants interprètent les signes visibles du vieillissement chez les autres comme un échec de mobilisation du visage. Cependant, ce qui est perçu comme abject chez les autres qui vieillissent se dévoile aussi soudainement en relation avec leur propre visage vieillissant. La négociation de ce visage vieillissant qui s'ensuit révèle un ensemble de pratiques visant à revitaliser des identités désirables.

Les résultats de cette recherche contribuent à une littérature largement dominée par une compréhension du corps malléable qui permet la construction identitaire, et dans une moindre mesure, d'un corps récalcitrant qui contraint les projets identitaires des consommateurs, en mettent en exergue l'expérience d'un corps qui provoque et impose une construction identitaire indésirable. L'uncanny est introduit comme un concept pertinent afin d'interpréter cette expérience troublante; soit celle d'être performé par une agence externe. Aussi, cette recherche propose une conceptualisation de l'Autre à multiples facettes qui permet d'expliquer l'internalisation involontaire de l'abject dans cette expérience. Enfin, cette recherche articule une négociation identitaire socio-matérielle qui inclue, mais ne se limite pas, à la discipline corporelle, et qui identifie la décentralisation du corps malléable comme ressource principale de la performance identitaire.

Mots-clés: Projets identitaires de consommateurs; Transformations physiques; Vieillissement; Étranger; Socio-matérialité; Performativité

Méthodes de recherche : Méthode qualitative interprétativiste; entrevues en profondeur; photo-elicitation

Abstract

To date, a significant number of studies in consumer research has examined the centrality of physical transformations to consumer self-identity narratives. A synthesis of this literature shows that it has been dominated largely by an understanding of the body as a malleable resource consumers use to facilitate consumer identity construction (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka 2011; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991). In contrast, a smaller stream of research examines instances – such as illness, weight-gain, and aging – where the body becomes a constraint to identity construction (Joy et al. 2010; St-James, Handelman & Taylor 2011; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). These studies focus on consumers' efforts to cope with a recalcitrant body.

The present research extends this stream of literature by examining, besides physical transformations that facilitate identity construction, those that engender it. Apart from posing a constraint to consumer identity projects, the body that falls sick, that gains weight, or that ages, also produces unanticipated effects, notably by imposing abject identities that are opposite to consumer identity projects (e.g. old geezer). How do consumers make sense of these identities, co-constructed independently from their intentions? By theorizing consumer experiences of situations such as these, this research aims to explain the provoking effects of a changing body onto consumer identity projects.

To do so, this research adopts a sociomaterial lens that integrates two performativity perspectives – identity performativity (Butler 1990; 1993) and posthumanist performativity (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003) – in order to account for the entanglement of multiple sources of agency. The articulation of this lens also draws on Janet Borgerson's (2005; 2014) concepts of intersubjectivity and provocations. A qualitative empirical investigation was conducted to investigate the relationship between facial transformations over time and related identity construction. In-depth interviews were held with both men

and women. Also, an immersion into the broader context of current discourses on aging and aging-related consumption, has supplemented the analysis and interpretation of participants' narratives.

The findings deliver fresh insights into the ways in which consumers interpret and negotiate identities imposed by a changing body. Based on their own experience of a youthful and malleable face within a sociocultural ideology of progress, participants interpret visible signs of aging in others as a failure to mobilize the face. However, what is perceived abject in aging others also unveils itself most unexpectedly in relation to their own aging face. In response, their negotiation of this aging face reveals a set of practices aimed at reenergizing desired identities.

These findings contribute to a literature largely dominated by an understanding of the malleable body that affords identity construction, and to a lesser extent as a recalcitrant body that constrains consumer identity projects, by shedding light on the experience of a provoking body that engenders unwanted identity construction. The uncanny is introduced as a relevant concept to interpret the unsettling experience of being performed by an external agency. Also, this research proposes a conceptualization of a multifaceted otherness that helps in explaining the unintentional internalization of the abject in this experience. Lastly, this research fleshes out a sociomaterial identity negotiation that includes, but is not limited to, body disciplining, and identifies the de-centering of the malleable body as the primary resource for identity performance.

Keywords: Consumer identity projects; Physical transformations; Aging; Otherness; Sociomateriality; Performativity

Research methods: Interpretative qualitative method; long interviews; photo-elicitation

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

À la mémoire de Marie-Marthe alias "Mémé" :
Une femme d'exception.

Remerciements

Durant ces dernières années, la thèse fut une constante dans ma vie. Un deuil, une séparation, plusieurs déménagements, un nouvel emploi, un coup de foudre et une grossesse sont au nombre des événements qui sont survenus alors que cette constante demeurait à mes côtés. Au moment où j'écris ces lignes, cette constante n'est plus. J'étais persuadée que cette partie de moi ne me manquerait pas et pourtant, je ressens le vide de son absence. Mais rapidement, je me conforte dans l'idée que ce qui compte réellement demeure, à savoir les personnes formidables qui ont contribué à rendre possible cet accomplissement. Je saisis donc cette occasion pour leur exprimer ma sincère gratitude.

D'abord, mille fois merci à ma brillante et passionnée directrice de thèse Yannik St-James. Merci pour ta patience, ton investissement soutenu et tout le temps que tu m'as accordé ces dernières années pour me lire, me re-lire et me re-re-relire. Tu m'as offert tout l'encadrement nécessaire pour devenir une meilleure chercheure et pour cela, je t'en suis éternellement reconnaissante. En plus de ma directrice, je tiens à remercier les membres de mon comité de thèse – Zeynep Arsel, François Colbert, Jean-Sébastien Marcoux et Leighann Neilson – pour m'avoir accordé de leur temps et de leur support. Merci également aux professeurs du département de marketing de HEC Montréal, en particulier Alain d'Astous, Jean-Luc Geha et Renaud Legoux, pour avoir généreusement contribué à ma formation en tant que chercheure et enseignante.

Je suis reconnaissante envers le Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada, HEC Montréal et la Chaire de gestion des arts Carmelle and Rémi Marcoux pour avoir supporté financièrement cette thèse. Merci également aux employés et autres étudiants affiliés à la Chaire de gestion des arts. Ce fut un plaisir de partager l'espace de la Chaire avec vous pendant toutes ces années.

Finalement, un merci tout spécial à ces autres personnes formidables qui ont marqué mon parcours doctoral. Merci à mes amis, et en particulier à ceux que j'ai rencontré pendant le doctorat – Benjamin, Myriam et Géraldine – pour les collaborations de travail plus sérieuses mais aussi pour les moments de pur plaisir et les très nécessaires interruptions au travail. En parlant d'interruptions nécessaires, un gros merci à mon amoureux Moustapha. Ta compréhension et tes encouragements m'ont motivé à redoubler d'efforts pour atteindre le fil d'arrivée. Je terminerai avec un dernier merci mais non le moindre, à ma famille, pour avoir nourri ma curiosité, mon désir d'apprendre, et pour m'avoir constamment rappelé que oui, je pouvais le faire. Et je l'ai fait.

MERCI.

Introduction

"Vieillir, c'est se retirer lentement de son visage. Et perdre peu à peu le bénéfice de l'attention des autres. Pour la première fois l'individu ne se reconnaît plus dans le miroir, il est devenu autre. […] La vieillesse serait cette maladie lente qui emporte le visage de référence indissolublement lié au sentiment d'identité de l'individu" (Le Breton 2013, p.220).[1]

In this excerpt, sociologist and anthropologist David Le Breton portrays the peculiar effects of an aging face on an individual's identity. His observation highlights how aging can turn a familiar face and self into an Other, and provides an example of an unintentional physical transformation as opposed to one that is undertaken voluntarily. Although both of types of physical transformations are of interest to consumer researchers, the literature fails to adequately explain consumer experiences of unintentional physical transformations that pose a challenge to their identity.

An important stream of literature in consumer research acknowledges the centrality of physical transformations to narratives of self-identity (McCracken 2008; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Thompson & Hirschman 1998; 1995). Focusing on consumption practices that involve corporeal modification, this literature highlights the inherent relationship between physical transformations and identity construction (Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaard

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[1] "To age is to slowly withdraw oneself from one's face and lose, little by little, the benefit of others' attention. For the first time, the individual no longer recognizes himself in the mirror, he becomes an Other. (…) Aging is that slow sickness that sweeps away the referential face linked inextricably to individual identity". (Free translation)

2005; McAlexander & Schouten 1995). In particular, it provides ample evidence of consumers' use of physical transformations to construct particular identities. For example, they may undertake physical transformations to ease identity transitions such as a divorce, a wedding, the death of a loved one, or retirement (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka 2011; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991). Various bodily practices may also be used to support consumer identity-plays and the performance of alternative identities, such as a fantastic character during an event, or a biker on weekends (Belk & Costa 1998; McAlexander & Schouten 1995; McCracken 2008; Thompson 2000).

By considering bodily practices as diverse as physical training (Brace-Govan 2010), hairstyle changes (McAlexander & Schouten 1989; McCracken 1995), tattooing (Bengtsson et al. 2005), cosmetic surgery (Askegaard, Gertsen, & Langer 2002; Giesler 2012; Schouten 1991), styling choices (Holbrook, Block & Fitzsimons 1998), and cross-dressing (Peñaloza 1994), this stream particularly highlights an understanding of the body as a "site of choices and possibilities" (Askegaard et al. 2002, p.800). As with any other possessions, the body can be altered and customized to mirror sought-after identities (Noble & Walker 1997). It then further serves as an anchor to these identities (Featherstone 2000). Despite this emphasis on the use of physical transformations to facilitate identity construction, however, situations have been identified where consumers experience their bodies as at odds with who they are.

A second, smaller, set of studies in consumer research documents the bodily changes that consumers may undergo, unintentionally, over the course of their life. Examining physical transformations such as sickness (Pavia & Mason 2004; Thompson & Troester 2002), aging (Joy et al. 2010; Sayre 2013; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998) and weight-gain (St-James, Handelman & Taylor 2011), researchers have shed light on the body as a "site of struggle" (Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998) or a "besieged system" (Thompson & Troester 2002), an understanding clearly opposed to that as a "site of choices and possibilities" (Askegaard et al. 2002, p.800). This stream of research delivers important insights into consumers' experiences of shame, moral failure, or anxiety, as they struggle to maintain a certain body image. In turn, a recalcitrant body that does not conform to the sociocultural norms can jeopardize the "sustainability" of a desired identity project (e.g. model identity in Parmentier & Fischer 2011).

In addition to facilitating or constraining identity construction, the body also changes in ways that may be unwanted by consumers. Such instances of unwanted changes may engender identity construction that consumers did not originally planned and less so, desire. This research thus aims to understand how consumers interpret and negotiate these identities imposed by a body that is changing in unwanted ways. To fall sick, to gain weight, or to age can engender undesirable identity constructions. More specifically, the sick, overweight or aging body can materialize stereotypical identities that evoke one's failure or

incapacity to internalize expected cultural ideals. A participant in a study by St-James et al. (2011), who is trying to lose weight, for example, says essentially that her overweight body is lying about who she is while simultaneously threatening to project an image of an 'Other': "You are not that fat person (…) Everyone knows fat people are unpleasant people, sweaty people who dress ridiculously and have no self-control, who are affront to aesthetics" (p.638). The opening quote to this chapter suggests a similar confrontation in the mirror with an older Other who is at odds with the individual's identity (Le Breton 2013). Sharing her thoughts about her own experience of aging, historian Linda Nochlin asks: "Who is that Old Stranger? What has become of Me, the real me" (2006, p.278). By theorizing experiences such as these of physical transformation that engenders identity construction, this research aims to deepen our understanding of the relationship between identity and the changing body.

To answer this goal, this research adopts a sociomaterial lens (Orlikowski 2007; 2010; Orlikowski & Scott 2008) that integrates two performativity perspectives – Butler's (1990; 1993) identity performativity perspective and a posthumanist performativity (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003) – in order to account for the interweaving of sociocultural and material agentic forces in consumer experience of physical transformations and their related identity construction. Also, in articulating this lens, this research draws on consumer researcher Janet Borgerson's (2005; 2014) notions of provocations and intersubjectivity in relation to object agency. Provocation is the conceptualization

of more intensive forms of object agency and related material effects (Drucker in Borgerson 2014). Objects may not only constrain or limit consumer actions and intentions but also surprise, baffle (Alaimo 2008) and hence, provoke. Intersubjectivity refers to the possibility that even things without agency and intentionality in a human sense, can stimulate personal change (Pickering in Borgerson 2005). Accordingly, an intersubjective consumer self is one that is co-constructed[2] in its experience with "Others" which may include subjects, culture, material objects and the environment (Borgerson 2005). The sociomaterial lens developed for this research also considers, alongside material effects, those which are temporal, and which are receiving growing attention from consumer researchers (Chitakunye & Maclaran 2014; Strengers, Nicholls & Maller 2016; Türe & Ger 2016; Woermann & Rokka 2015). Each of these notions speak to the way in which consumers interpret and negotiate identities that may be imposed by a body that is not only changeable but also changing.

The empirical work upon which this study is based involves a qualitative investigation of consumer experience of the changing face over time. I have adopted a conventional portraiture view of the face, i.e. one that incorporates all of the features that would normally appear in a constructed portrait (Le Breton 2003). As an undeniable locus of identity (Synnott 1993; Le Breton 2003) the

[2] My use of co-construction is equivalent to Borgerson's "co-creation". However, the former term is preferred throughout this dissertation because I believe that the latter is too evocative of another phenomenon (i.e. value co-creation and experiences co-creation).

face constitutes a repository of memories and can be the site of many facial transformations over time including those that are intentional (e.g. haircut in McCracken 1995; botox in Joy et al. 2010; shaving in Schroeder & Zwick 2004) and those that are not (e.g. greying of the hair in Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998; appearance of wrinkles in Sayre 2013). A total of twenty-three phenomenological interviews (Thompson, Pollio & Locander 1989) were conducted, during which photo-elicitation was used as a prompting tool, to capture in-depth descriptions of facial transformations within an unfolding narrative of self-identity. Supplementary references on the context of aging (e.g. essays, documentaries, journal publications) were retrieved to enrich the analysis of participants' stories. Their facial transformations could then be placed within the broader sociocultural discourses on the aging body and aging-related consumption. Within this discourse, I specifically sought to discern how an ideology of progress structures experiences of facial transformations that consumers undertake intentionally versus those that they undergo unintentionally.

My findings contribute to consumer research by offering a sociomaterial understanding of identity construction. More specifically, by integrating the concept of provocations (Borgerson 2014) with a posthumanist performativity perspective (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2008), I theorize experiences where a provoking body engenders unwanted identity construction. This theorization provides new insights into prior research that depicts largely a malleable body that affords desired identity construction (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Noble &

Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Sørensen & Thomsen 2006) and to a lesser degree, a recalcitrant body that constrains desired identity construction (Thompson & Hirschman 1998). In particular, the meaningful set of experiences identified in this research as "unveilings of an otherness within" feature an aging face that provokes by "performing" abject identities against participants' will.

In addition, my research sheds light on a set of creative practices aimed at reenergizing desired identities coherent with (re)productivity. That is, in the context of prior research describing how consumers struggle to maintain identities by disciplining the body (Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998) or abandon identities that can no longer be sustained by a recalcitrant body (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Parmentier & Fischer 2011; Pavia & Mason 2004; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998), I find a de-centering of the body as the primary resource of identity performance to the benefits of other practices that leverage instead the malleability of meaning.

My research also offers a conceptualization of a multifaceted otherness, particularly in regard to an intersubjective self-othering. In this respect, my findings advance another path to the internalizing of "otherness" (Canniford & Karaba 2013; Jantzen & Østegaard 1998; Sobh, Belk & Gressel 2014), illustrated by an unintentional internalizing of an abjected otherness. While the literature has so far considered the abject (e.g. abject single in Lai, Lim & Higgins 2015; petite person in Valtonen 2013) as separate from what is not abject, experiences of unveilings examined in my study shed light on an otherness that is inherently uncanny since it is defined by an intermeshing of the familiar and the strange, of a

self with an abject other. A related contribution pertains to a reinterpretation of manifestations of the uncanny (Jentsch 1906; Freud 1919) in the everyday context of aging and aging-related consumption which underscores visual and temporal uncanny experiences.

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter 1 reviews consumer research on physical transformations, which then allows me to articulate the opportunity to develop further insight into experiences of those that engender identity construction. Chapter 2 integrates the two performativity perspectives to develop the theoretical lens which will guide my analysis of consumers' interpretation and negotiation of identities co-constructed with a changeable and changing body. Next, Chapter 3 defines my research agenda. The changing face over time is presented as the context of my empirical work and the qualitative research design is detailed. Chapter 4 presents my findings organized according to themes of "Agentic Self and Abject Others", "Unveilings of an Otherness Within", and "Beyond the Looking Glass". A discussion of the contributions of these findings to the existing literature follows in Chapter 5. Limitations and avenues for future research are then highlighted.

Chapter 1: Physical Transformations and Identity Construction

The purpose of this dissertation is to cultivate our understanding of the relationship between physical transformation and identity construction, especially in situations where a changing body is engendering identity construction against consumers' will. To this end, this chapter begins by explaining in what ways physical transformations are central to consumer identity projects. It then introduces an organization of consumer research studies relevant to this topic that differentiates four understanding of the relationship between physical transformations and identity construction. More specifically, the use of a typology highlights two sources of physical transformation and two distinct embodied experiences. The typology, in sum, identifies an opportunity to gain further insights into consumer experiences of physical transformations that engender identity construction.

1.1 Physical transformations and Self-identity Narratives

As presented in **Table 1.1**, a review of extant CCT literature testifies to researchers' interest in different types of physical transformations. A wide range of terms have been used to convey or qualify the process through which these physical transformations occur such as adornment, restoration, and enhancement. These physical transformations vary from more dramatic and permanent changes (e.g. plastic surgery) to more superficial and temporary changes (e.g. a haircut). Amongst these physical transformations, those undertaken intentionally by

consumers include a wide range of bodily practices meant to change one's appearance and external look, such as tattooing and clothing. In this stream of literature, researchers also considered physical transformations that happen to consumers, for example through aging or a sickness, and which may include for example the greying or the loss of hair. This literature, however, is not simply concerned with physical transformations.

Of particular interest to researchers is the centrality of these physical transformations to consumer self-identity narratives. Identity construction is generally understood as an *ongoing process* (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Joy et al. 2010; Roster 2014). As such, it implies the possibility of identity *formation* (Oswald 1999), *maintenance* (Thomsen & Sørensen 2006), *preservation* (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013), *renaissance* (Schau, Gilly & Wolfinbarger 2009), and *reconstruction* (Schouten 1991; Schouten & McAlexander 1995). Continuity through change is considered to be a function of the subject's narrative of self-identity: "The continuity of the self-as-knower manifests itself in a 'sense of personal identity' and a 'sense of a sameness' through time" (James in Hermans 1996, p.31). Likewise, Thompson (1997, p.447) defines self-identity as a "process of negotiating a fundamental existential tension" between stability and change. Change depends on one's ability to incorporate new elements into an existing self-identity (*Ibid*). Consumers are most often expected to use physical transformations intentionally to manage the incorporation of new identities into

an existing sense of self or to sustain continuity in their self-identity narratives (Bengtsson et al. 2005).

A significant number of studies in consumer research acknowledge the construction of the self to be "located within consumer culture" (Bordo 1993, p.15). Such a construction often involves physical transformation. One way of expressing the relationship between this transformation and a consumer self-identity narrative is through the concept of symbolic consumption, which refers to the use of consumption objects and practices to communicate a specific identity (Sørensen & Thomsen 2006). Consumption objects and consumption practices, then, can *support identity construction* in their use and also in the decision to reject their use (*Ibid*, p.574). In conveying the way in which identities change over the course of life, studies highlight consumers' use of symbolic consumption in the transitional or *liminal* phases (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969; 1974). Amongst these studies, several acknowledge physical transformation as a form of symbolic consumption and emphasize the way in which it can facilitate identity-transition (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Sørensen & Thomsen 2006). Broadly speaking, they show that consumers' choices of specific products and services to transform their bodies can ease incorporation of a new identity (Noble & Walker 1997). Moreover, with physical transformation acknowledged as symbolic consumption, they underscore an understanding of the body as a "site of different choices and possibilities" (Askegaard et al. 2002, p.800).

In a related way, the body "may be best viewed as […] in process" (Joy et al. 2010, p.355). This means that while the body may be transformed to facilitate identity construction, it will also "transform" over the course of a life, through natural or accidental causes. To extend current understanding of these transformations, Borgerson (2005, p.439) suggests that consumer researchers start considering what they actually mean by "consumer selves are 'transformed'". When applied to physical type, it can be argued that transformations might in fact engender identity construction. The literature suggesting this has investigated a number of physical transformations that are known to disrupt the continuity of consumer self-identity narratives (Joy et al. 2010; Pavia & Mason 2004; Sayre 2013; St-James et al. 2011; Thompson & Troester 2002; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). Through sickness, weight-gain and aging, the body is likely to communicate something new and possibly unexpected about, and to, consumers.

In sum, the CCT literature can be divided according to two sources of physical transformations: those that consumers undertake themselves to facilitate identity construction and those that happen to them. These latter engender identity construction to which consumers must adjust. Both sources are involved in identity construction, but in different ways. The following section develops a typology of this literature.

1.2 A Typology of Physical Transformations and Identity Construction

This section reviews the literature described above and develops a typology that articulates the relationship between physical transformations and consumer self-

identity narratives. The goal is decidedly purposive and selective: to organize relevant CCT studies on physical transformations, and to do this according to two dimensions. The first takes into account the two sources of physical transformation: those that (1) facilitate and those that (2) engender identity construction. The former, intentional physical transformations, is the subject of the largest stream of literature in consumer research, and encompasses the range of bodily practices that consumers adopt in order to support intentional identity constructions. The latter, unintentional physical transformations which may disrupt the continuity of a consumer's self-identity narrative, encompasses any bodily change that is not specifically undertaken by the consumer.

The second dimension draws from two metaphors of the body – body as battleground and body as playground – to express distinct embodied experiences (Bordo 1993; Joy & Venkatesh 1994). The body as battleground suggests a modernist experience regimented by rules, discourses and norms (Foucault in Butler 1993). From this perspective, physical transformations express an understanding of the body as a "site to define boundaries" (Falk in Tumbat & Belk 2011, p.50). Although the metaphor of the body as playground is also regimented by rules, discourses and norms, to a certain extent it evokes a postmodernist experience where boundaries are less clear and more open. This body can be conceived as a site of possibilities that enable multiplicity and "confusion" (Firat & Venkatesh 1995).

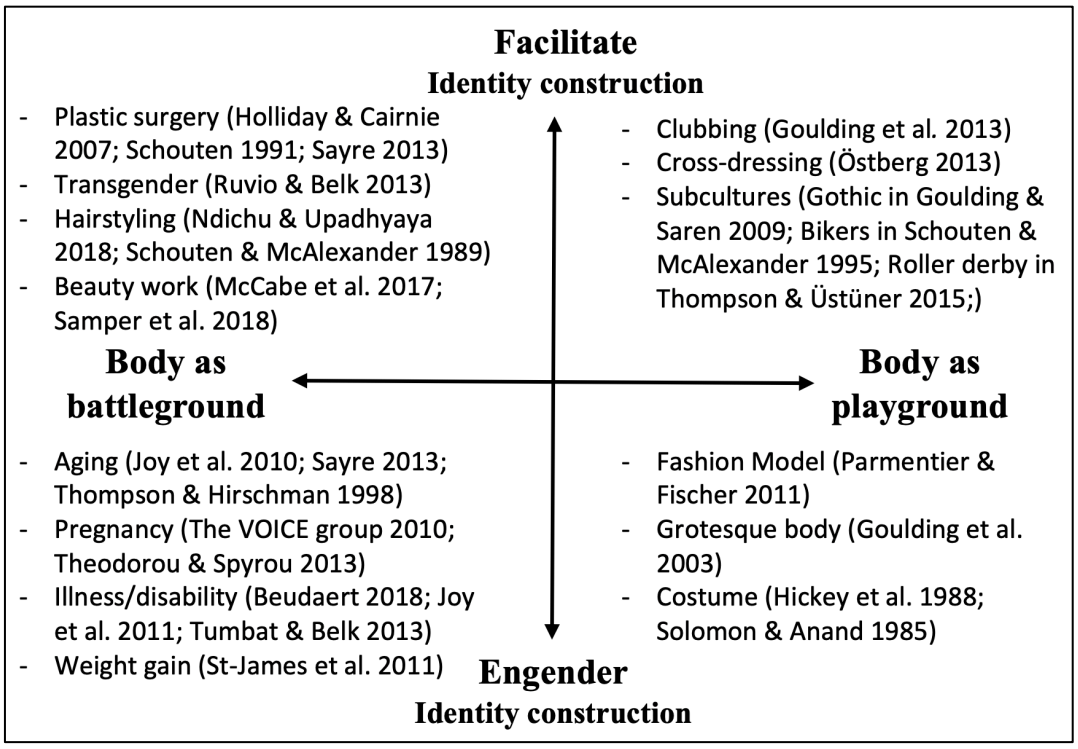

Figure 1.1 A Typology of Physical Transformations and Identity Construction

Integrating the two dimensions I propose a conceptualization of the literature as a 2 x 2 matrix corresponding to the four perspectives on the relationship between physical transformation and identity construction **(Figure 1.1)**. The following sections organize the literature on consumer physical transformations in each of the four quadrants.

1.2.1 The Body as Battleground

Within the metaphor of the body as battleground two perspectives complement each other by expressing consumers' continuous labour to sustain a coherent sense of self. In relation to physical transformation, consumers seek this coherence through an understanding of their bodies as "sites of identity management," "products of labor," and "advertisements for such labor"

(Schroeder & Zwick 2004, p.25). The body as battleground metaphor conveys the idea of an identity construction to follow regulatory norms by materializing conventional boundaries (e.g. female/male, young/old, married/single, etc) (Butler 1990; 1993) that appear to define and predetermine identities. On the one hand, intentional physical transformation offers a means to *anchor* these identities into the body (Belk 1988, p.159). On the other hand, through unintentional physical transformations, consumers experience their identities as being *washed away* (Belk 1988, p.159) or imposed upon their bodies. Physical transformation that engenders identity construction thus tends to disrupt one's sense of a coherent self.

Physical transformations that facilitate identity construction

A prevailing discourse in existing consumer research positions the body as a malleable resource in service to identity construction (Featherstone 2000). Indeed, a significant stream of literature emphasizes consumers' use of physical transformations in the process of identity transitions i.e. in passages from one identity to another (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Noble & Walker 1997). For example, a physical transformation following divorce - from a haircut (McAlexander & Schouten 1989) to a more dramatic plastic surgery (Schouten 1991) - can ease the transition toward the identity of a single person. Solomon and Anand (1985), observing identity transition particularly in the context of role incorporation, highlights the transformational use of the female business suit as a "ritual artifact" that can facilitate internalization of a professional identity.

Certain physical transformations are noted to be more instrumental than others. For example, in the context of Indian weddings, Fernandez, Veer and Lastovicka (2011, p.246) underscore the culturally significant role of gold in transforming the appearance of the *liminal bride* into a *worthy daughter* of the groom's family. Also, for transgender people, whose aim is to embody a specific gender identity, dramatic physical transformations is normally crucial to a definition of "who they are and who they want to become" (Ruvio & Belk 2013, p.147). Studies such as these illustrate consumers' use of physical transformations to facilitate an identity construction that evokes a specific set of sociocultural norms. This type of physical transformation, facilitating identity transition as opposed to identity play, is more likely to be defined by permanence and clear-cut boundaries.

Physical transformations that engender identity construction

A smaller set of studies in consumer research recognizes those physical transformations that engender identity construction, such as undesirable weight gain (St-James et al. 2011), illness (Joy et al. 2010), or aging (Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). Studying consumers who are dealing with sickness or an illness that is taking over their bodies, for example, Thompson and Troester (2002) underline how consumers are "listening to their bodies" in order to make consumption decisions that could improve their well-being (p.565). In contrast to experience of the body as "a site of identity management" (Schroeder & Zwick 2004), sickness triggers an experience of the body as a "site of environmental degradation" (Thompson & Troester 2002, p.556), where nature is literally taking

over. In the context specifically of aging, Thompson and Hirschman (1998) note a range of difficulties that consumers may encounter as they face inevitable bodily changes. One informant recounts how "controlling the greying of her hair offers one means to better cope with the undesired transformations of aging. Yet the materiality of the body can refuse to succumb to such symbolic manipulations" (p.425). The authors, in articulating the conditions under which the "lived body is instead a site of struggle" (p.440) reveal the way in which some physical transformations make consumers feel impotent.

Examining how consumers perceive their overweight bodies as at odds with their true selves, St-James et al. (2011, p.640) uncover weight gain as leading to an experience of "being 'trapped' inside one's body". In the same study, an informant who is trying to lose weight, expresses the belief that her overweight body is threatening to project an image of an 'Other': "You are not that fat person (…) Everyone knows fat people are unpleasant people, sweaty people who dress ridiculously and have no self-control, who are affront to aesthetics" (p.638). This reveals the way in which unintentional physical transformations pose a challenge to consumer identity projects. These studies, in addition, suggest that the physical transformations that engender identity construction entice consumers to attribute more agency to their bodies.

1.2.2 The Body as Playground

The metaphor of the body as playground also suggests contrasting experiences of physical transformations. It encapsulates the spirit of postmodernity, releasing the

self from "the obligations of full-time residence" (McCracken 2008, p.273). Through it, identity construction is most likely to integrate practices and changes that transgress predetermined dichotomies (e.g. female/male, young/old, married/single, etc) and more eclectic identities. On the one hand, consumers can embrace mobility through various bodily practices while sustaining a coherent narrative of self-identity. Here the body is used primarily as a *canvas* for self-expression (Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaard 2005; Noble & Walker 1997). It enables playfulness and creativity. On the other hand, it also suggests how ones' body can unintentionally become a theater to various identity plays, which in turn disrupt continuity in consumer self-identity narratives.

Physical transformations that facilitate identity construction

Belk and Costa's (1998) paper on the "Mountain Men Myth" offers an identity play perspective of physical transformation. In this context, transformations primarily involve the wearing of costumes and provide a "liberating opportunity to play a wildly different character whose behavior bears faint resemblance to quotidian life" (p.234). From this perspective, consumers physically transform to facilitate an identity construction that enables identity play. By acting on their bodies, consumers can deliberately choose to follow specific standards of body images or to contravene them in order to formulate marginal identities (Holbrook, Block & Fitzsimons 1998). Akin to "nomads", consumers refuse to be bounded to any category (Bardhi, Eckhardt & Arnould 2012; Braidotti 2002). Instead, they take pleasure in transgressing boundaries and experimenting with those that are

unclear (Thompson & Üstüner 2015). The ensuing physical transformations can thus be defined as "idiosyncratic and quirky" (Turner 1974, p.85).

"Bricolage identity construction" is one way for consumers to shift freely between multiple identities (Thompson 2000). In this way, they can use physical transformations to enact their "liminalizing projects" (Tumbat & Belk 2011, p.56) and seek boundary-crossing identities. Illustrating this, Blanchette (2013) has studied female consumers who construct their female identities through alternative neo-burlesque performances. She explains how, by means of bricolage, the carnivalesque and other creative practices, the performances can foster a reinterpretation of the present body through nostalgic body representations. By resisting a normative feminity, *fat*shion bloggers also exemplify bricolage identity construction by subverting dominant fashion discourses to a "non-normative" feminity (Harju & Huovinen 2015). Other subversive practices such as cross-dressing (Garber 1992) and gender-crossing (Peñaloza 1994; Thomspon & Üstüner 2015) further illustrate the creative use of bodily practices to facilitate identity construction and moreover, identity play between genders. In contrast to transgenders whose identity transitions are not meant to challenge masculine and feminine codes, many of those who engage in cross-dressing and gender-crossing practices embrace "self-shifting" i.e. a back and forth movement between these codes (Tian & Belk 2005). Michael Jackson can be cited as an iconic example of the body as playground. Indeed, drawing a parallel between the singer and a sequence of the video *Black and White*,

McCracken (1991, A.22) describes how the video "like the singer's own features, play[s] with identities which appear to dissolve and then return as something else".

In the context of brand communities and servicescapes (Belk & Costa 1998; Goulding et al. 2009; Kozinets 2002; Maclaran & Brown 2005; Tumbat & Belk 2011) physical transformations may also be instrumental to an outsider who seeks to become a legitimate member of a subculture (Goulding & Saren 2009; Kozinets 2002; Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Thompson & Üstuner 2015). Schouten and McAlexander's (1995, p.55) ethnography, for example, identifies several "stages" of self-transformation that an outsider to the Harley-Davidson subculture must go through in order to integrate the biker identity and ultimately become a legitimate member. Physical transformations play a part in this identity construction as adornment practices – clothes, tattoos and ornamentation of the ride – as well as in the riders' experiences (e.g. the "Halloweenish aspect of playing biker" in *Ibid*, p.55). Physical transformation also ensures the authenticity of a particular experience or event as in the case of roller-derby performances (Thompson & Üstüner 2015). With regard to clubbing experiences, Goulding et al. (2009) note the use of grooming rituals to facilitate construction of a temporary clubber persona.

Physical transformations that engender identity construction

In contrast, a much smaller set of consumer research studies suggest instances where consumers become spectators to the quirky physical transformations

happening to them. In these cases, the body is construed as center stage to surprising performances. McCracken (1995), in reference to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, proposes that some physical transformations may take us, by surprise, on a journey to unknown destinations. The body takes us by surprise, with delightful outcomes. Within this perspective, physical transformations recall the properties of metamorphoses: at once "mythical" and "whimsical" (Starr-Glass 2001). Illustrating this, an informant in Parmentier and Fischer (2011, p.17) recounts the surreal nature of her metamorphosis into a fashion model: "Then, at some point, I had turned 15, and I really looked like a model. It happened all very naturally, almost mystically". Parmentier and Fischer (2011, p.16) interpret this metamorphosis as that of the "ugly duckling to shimmering swan". For insiders to the field of fashion, such physical transformations may be perceived as instrumental to the process of becoming a fashion model but from the perspective of the model herself, they evince quasi-surreal properties. Although wearing a specific outfit – a business suit (Solomon & Anand 1985) or a fantasy costume (Hickey, Thompson & Foster 1988) – usually entails transforming one's appearance voluntarily, researchers also observe an "a priori effect" (Solomon & Anand 1985, p.318) that these outfits may exert on their wearers. For example, Hickey et al. (1988) observe that in addition to being forced to adapt to the morphology of a costume, a fantasy costume wearer must tailor his actions to public expectations. However, the authors insist that, consistent with the spirit of identity-play, this forced becoming remains a temporary one. Also, relating to a unique context – the body world exhibitions – analysis of the grotesque body by

Goulding et al. (2003) illustrates the possibility of experiencing one's own body differently upon looking at the unusual body of another. Such experiences are capable of eliciting more visceral responses.

1.2.3 Synthesis

Drawing from consumer accounts of physical transformations in existing consumer research, the typology fleshes out four ways of understanding the relationship between physical transformations and identity construction. Each experience offers a particular understanding of the relationship between physical transformation and identity construction. By adopting a holistic view of this typology, three additional observations warrant discussion.

First, although some of the previously discussed examples tend to suggest consumers' purposive control over physical transformation and identity construction – especially within an understanding of physical transformations that facilitate identity construction – it should be noted that all physical transformations undertaken and undergone by consumers are *culturally mediated* (Foucault in Joy & Venkatesh 1994). That is, culture mediates consumers' intentions to use a specific set of specific physical transformations (e.g. tattooing) to facilitate the construction of a corresponding identity (e.g. biker). Yet, from a postmodernist perspective especially, it could be argued that consumers have significant latitude over identity construction (Thompson 2000). Indeed, from this perspective, identities are less fixed and the body is, at the extreme, perceived as a blank canvas in consumer identity projects. Goulding et al. (2009) suggest that

by changing their bodies, consumers can alternate between identities. In contrast, from the perspective of physical transformations that engender identity construction, consumer' intentionality is limited by their changing body.

Second, a particular physical transformation may be experienced differently from one consumer to another. The consumer stories used to represent each of the typology's quadrants were selected precisely because they displayed the properties that lay at the crossroad of the two dimensions i.e. source of physical transformation and body metaphor. However, the nature of a physical transformation does not guarantee its relegation to a specific quadrant. For instance, for one consumer, a plastic surgery may facilitate an identity-transition (Schouten 1991) but for another it may enable identity play (McCracken 1991). Speaking of the function of a business suit in changing one's general look, Solomon and Anand (1985) suggest that while the suit is often considered *instrumental* to facilitation of identity construction, the transformation can be experienced differently. In this regard, they posit that the "strategic use of products" (i.e. symbolic consumption) is not always possible: in some cases "the consumer passes through 'windows of vulnerability' where products and services are more likely to exert an a priori effect on behavior" (p.318). This account stresses the importance of considering how each experience of physical transformation can take on a different meaning from one consumer to another, and depend on situational and temporal circumstances.

Third, it is expected that consumers will experience more than one physical transformation over the course of their life. In some cases, one experience of physical transformation can lead to another. In regard to the typology, this suggests the possibility of migration from one quadrant to another, highlighting the fact that these quadrants are not mutually exclusive. For instance, examining the possibility of losing one's model identity in the hands of an aging body, Parmentier and Fischer (2011) discussed at first how aging, from the point of view of a teenager growing into adulthood, had engendered the construction of this model identity. Another example stems from the fact that consumers may find ways to overcome a situation of impotence that relates to a recalcitrant body, and to restore an identity. For example, both Joy et al. (2010) and Sayre (2013) discuss how an experience of an aging body can become a springboard to a physical transformation that will help regain a form of control over the changing body (e.g. cosmetic surgery).

1.3 Summary

The purpose of this literature review was to articulate the relationship between physical transformation and identity construction in order to shed light on under-theorized aspects of consumer experiences of physical transformations. In this regard, the typology used reveals an emphasis in the existing literature on transformations that facilitate identity construction. Such emphasis underscores the dominant view of the body as "an object ready for transformation" (Featherstone 2000, p.2). From this perspective, bodies are also viewed as "sites

of identity management," "products of labor," and "advertisements for such labor" (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, p.25). This literature stream thus construes physical transformations as means through which consumers can exert some agency over identity construction. However, physical transformations that engender identity construction evince situations where the body poses a challenge to consumer identity projects. In seeking to better understand consumer experiences of physical transformations, and in particular of those that engender identity construction, this research proposes to adopt a CCT-enabled sociomaterial lens that integrates two performativity perspectives.

Table 1.1 Physical Transformations in Extant Consumer Research Literature

Physical transformations	Context
1. Dressing (Solomon & Arnand 1985)	Ritual costumes and professional identity
2. Grooming (Rook 1985)	Grooming rituals
3. Dressing; Masking (Hickey, Thompson & Foster 1988)	Becoming a mascot
4. Alteration; Sculpting; Reconstruction (Schouten 1991)	Plastic surgery
5. Adorning (Bloch & Richins 1992)	Grooming practices
6. Camouflaging; Enhancing; Grooming (Domzal & Kernan 1993)	Grooming practices
7. Enhancement; Cleaning; Cutting; Shaping; Rearranging; Correcting (Joy & Venkatesh 1994)	Gendered body
8. Imitation; Socialization (Schouten & McAlexander 1995)	Becoming a biker
9. Regimenting; Disciplining; Altering; Becoming (Thompson & Hirschman 1995)	Aging; physical training; plastic surgery, etc.
10. Transfiguration; metamorphosis; reconstruction; mutilation; cross-dressing (Holbrook, Block & Fitzsimons 1998)	Personal appearance and consumption
11. Revitalization; Reshaping; Disciplining; Concealing; Displaying (Thompson & Hirschman 1998)	Aging; weight gain, plastic surgery, etc.
12. Emulating; dressing (Belk & Costa 1998)	Costume
13. Masquerading; Body decoration; Denaturalization (Negrin 2000)	Cosmetics
14. Declination (Catterall & Maclaran 2001)	Aging

15. Disciplined body; body regulation (Murray 2002)	Fashion
16. Degradation (Thompson & Troester 2002)	Sickness
17. Restoration; Alteration (Askegaard, Gertsen & Langer 2002)	Aging; Cosmetic surgery
18. Degradation; Purification (Thompson & Troester 2002)	Illness and health
19. Reconfiguring (Schroeder & Zwick 2004)	Advertising and masculinity
20. Adorning; Modifications (Bengtsson, Ostberg & Kjeldgaarrd 2005)	Tattooing
21. Decorporealization; Technologization; Subversion (Campbell, O'Driscoll & Saren 2006)	Cyborg and Technologies
22. Dressing; Grooming (Jantzen, Østergaard & Sucena Vieira 2006)	Lingerie and female identity
23. Correcting; Exercising; Grooming; Enhancing (Holliday & Cairnie 2007)	Aesthetic surgery and masculine identity
24. Body preparation and clothing selection (Goulding, Shankar, Elliott & Canniford 2009)	Clubbing and grooming practices
25. Enhancement (Kleine III, Kleine & Brunswick 2009)	Tattooing; Dieting, etc.
26. Self-stylization; Molding; Refiguration (Goulding & Saren 2009)	Gothic subculture and androgyny
27. Personalization; Aestheticization (Sandicki & Ger 2010)	Veiling practices
28. Regimenting; Maximizing (Brace-Govan 2010)	Physical training
29. Pregnancy (THE VOICE group 2010)	Pregnancy and motherhood
30. Beautification; Cleansing; Purifying; Desintegration (Joy et al. 2010)	Grooming practices; Aging; Sickness
31. Weight gain/loss (St-James, Handelman & Taylor 2011)	Weight management
32. Self-regulation; Self-discipline (Tumbat & Belk 2011)	Climbing; training and sickness
33. Purification (Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka 2011)	Hindu wedding rituals
34. Restoration (Rountree & Davis 2011)	Cosmetic surgery
35. Maturation (Parmentier & Fischer 2011)	Fashion models and aging
36. Restoration; Enhancement; Revitalization; Dehumanization (Giesler 2012)	Cosmetic surgery
37. Transgression; Bricolage; Subversion (Blanchette 2013)	Neoburlesque and female identity
38. Reconstruction; Alteration; Enhancement (Sayre 2013)	Cosmetic surgery
39. Dressing; Accentuating (Ogle, Tyner & Schofield-Tomschin 2013)	Maternity dress consumption
40. Pregnancy (Theodorou & Spyrou 2013)	Pregnancy and motherhood
41. Transgenderism (Ruvio & Belk 2013)	Transgenderism
42. Cross-dressing (Östberg 2013)	Cross-dressing
43. Cross-dressing (Peñaloza 2014)	Cross-dressing
44. Appearance management; dressing (Sanghvi & Hodges 2015)	Appearance, gender and politics

45. Adornment; physical training (Thompson & Üstüner 2015)	Roller derby and gender
46. Accentuating; Dressing (Tsaousi 2016)	Underwear and female identity
47. Enhancement; Experimentation (McCabe, Malefyt & Fabri 2017)	Makeup practices, gender and beauty
48. Enhancement; Self-styling (Samper, Yang & Daniels 2018)	Appearance and beauty work
49. Hair straightening; Going natural (Ndichu & Upadhyaya 2018)	Hair care and black women's identity
50. Disciplining; Tailoring; Hiding; Shaping (Zanette & Brito 2018)	Fashion and Plus-size consumers
51. Becoming disabled (Beudaert 2018)	Impaired and disabled body

Chapter 2: Towards a Sociomaterial Understanding of Identity Construction

The objective of this chapter is to establish the usefulness of sociomateriality and present it as a lens to gain additional insights into consumer experiences of physical transformation, and in particular of those engendering identity construction. Inspired by sociomateriality research in IS, which combines multiple perspectives to account for the entanglement of multiple sources of agency (Orlikwoski 2007; Orlikowski & Scott 2008; Orlikowski 2010), this chapter advances an integration of two performativity perspectives: identity performativity (Butler 1990; 1993) and posthumanist performativity (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003). This integration aims to illuminate the effects of external agentic forces from a number of sources (i.e. sociocultural, material and temporal) on identity construction. Also, in order to gain a better understanding of what is here defined as a sociomaterial identity construction, I draw on Janet Borgerson's (2005; 2014) notions of provocations and intersubjectivity. This chapter, in sum, lays the foundations for an investigation of the ways in which consumers interpret and negotiate identities imposed by a body that can not only be changed, but that also changes against their will.

2.1 Introduction

Sociomateriality, a theoretical lens that is receiving increased attention in the management and information system literatures, considers the ways in which

social and material forces intertwine in human experience (Leonardi 2011; Orlikowski 2007; 2010). Because it centers on the notion of performativity, which has been tackled by many prominent authors, the sociomaterial approach is best understood as a combination of multiple perspectives (Orlikwoski 2007; 2010; Orlikowski & Scott 2008). In the management and information systems literature especially, it most often draws from Actor Network Theory (ANT), inspired by the works of Latour and Pickering, as well as agential realism theory, introduced by Barad (Orlikowski & Scott 2008). Although the work of Butler is also recognized to fall under the sociomateriality rubric (*Ibid*), it can be argued that its focus on the construction of the self has so far limited its use in the literatures considered here.

Of special interest to the present research is the possibility of combining Butler (1990; 1993)'s identity performativity perspective with the posthumanist performativity perspectives advanced by material feminists (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003). These works are particularly relevant to consumer research on the centrality of physical transformation to creation of consumer self-identity narratives. In the discussion below, Butler's identity performativity perspective is shown to highlight the sociocultural norms that regiment identity construction and related disciplining of the body (Butler 1990; 1993). This is a perspective that has received significant attention in the CCT literature, more recently in attempts to dispute the fixity of naturalized norms (e.g. embodied resistance in Thompson & Üstüner 2015); a proposition that can be found in Butler's (2004a; 2004b) later

writings. The posthumanist performativity perspective, as inspired by material feminists (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2003; 2008), then advances the greater role played by matter while also giving more importance to lived experiences of a recalcitrant or changing body. Its conceptualization of material agency resonates with a growing CCT literature on object agency (Chitakunye & Maclaran 2014; Epp & Price 2010; Fernandez & Lastovicka 2005; Miller 2001; Strengers et al. 2016; Türe & Ger 2016; Valtonen & Närvänen 2015).

The next two sections use the concepts developed within the literatures of identity, and posthumanist, performativity to formulate a relationship between physical transformations and identity construction that will inform the research presented here. To this end, it is important to get an initial grasp of the notion of agency and intentionality given their central role in both perspectives. For instance, agency is traditionally viewed as a human property that refers to a "capacity for action" (Giddens 1984), or an "ability to act" (Borgerson 2014). A loss of agency thus implies a failure or incapacity to exercise this human property. Then, intentionality refers to a "decided effort to make things go one way rather than another" (Pickering in Borgerson 2014, p.131), and is often viewed in relation to a desired outcome or goal. Together, agency and intentionality help clarify the main tenets of each perspective as discussed in the next sections.

Beginning with the identity performativity perspective, the concept of conditioned agency is introduced followed by an explanation of the distinction

between disciplined and abjected bodies. Concrete applications and proposed extensions to this theoretical perspective from the CCT literature are discussed. An overview of Barad's theory of agential realism then provides the founding premises of the posthumanist performativity perspective. This brief introduction leads to a more focused discussion of the related concepts of material, and corporeal, agency which draws a parallel between the concept of abjected body and material feminist Alaimo's (2008) analysis of an embodied experience of wilderness.

2.2 Identity Performativity

Butler (1999) defines performativity "not [as] a singular act, but [as] a repetition and a ritual, which achieve[s] its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (Preface 1999 in Butler 1990, p.xv). Identity construction is thus understood as an effect produced by a series of acts, i.e. performances wherein individual agency is, essentially, conditioned. For example, construction of the biker identity involves a series of repeated acts, and moreover of "stylized" acts (Butler 1990; 1993). Physical transformations such as growing a beard or getting tattooed may be part of this construction. In contrast, the wearing of a pink jacket would likely be viewed as a violation to the subcultural norms regimenting this performance.

Building on Foucault's work on the influence of disciplinary regimes (society and culture) on human subjects, including their bodies, Butler elaborates

upon the relationship between a conditioned agency and a disciplined body in the specific context of gender performativity. A concept that she proposes to express the construction of gender identity is materialization. Materialization entails this process whereby bodies materialize regulatory norms. The materialization of identities requires individuals to perform and act in a manner coherent with the regulatory norms associated with them (see Foucault's disciplinary gaze in Butler). Butler's work on identity performativity underscores the power of these "regulatory norms" over identity construction through their disciplining of the body. These regulatory norms correspond to what Thompson and Üstüner (2015) describe as "the broader matrix of cultural conventions, norms, symbolic distinctions, and expectations that regulate consumers' [gender] practices" (p.236). The expression "sociocultural norms" is used throughout the following discussion to emphasize how individuals' physical transformation and identity construction are shaped by these social and cultural agentic forces.

Building on these ideas, the next section discusses how the identity performativity perspective was applied in the CCT literature that examined the relationship between physical transformations and identity construction. Following a discussion on conditioned agency and the related distinction between disciplined and abjected bodies, the concept of "embodied resistance" (Thompson and Üstüner 2015) is presented as a distinctive contribution of the CCT literature to our understanding of the role of intentionality in identity performativity.

2.2.1 Conditioned Agency

From an identity performativity perspective, actions are understood as performances, and aimed specifically at materializing an identity. Individual agency, i.e. one's capacity for action, is regulated by external agentic forces, in particular by the sociocultural (and subcultural) norms that regiment identity performances. Agency is essentially conditioned; the identities that individuals are seeking are thus conceived as fixed and pre-determined. Within a given society, culture or subculture, materializing an identity implies performing this identity as it is socioculturally conceived, hence by incorporating the norms and imperatives regimenting its materialization (Butler 1990; 1993).

Drawing on De Beauvoir's (1973) aphorism: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman," Butler explains that sociocultural norms shape gender and sex identity. While "to become woman" is taken to mean "purposefully assume or embody" (p.36), Butler (1986) specifies that human agency and in particular, intentionality, is essentially conditioned since "the choice to assume a certain kind of body, to live or wear one's body a certain way, implies a world of already established corporeal styles" (p.40). Ultimately, while individuals may end up believing that they hold the power over identity construction, this is not the case, since their sociocultural norms condition them to act in a particularly way (Foucault in Butler 1993).

Related to the idea of conditioned agency is the distinction between a disciplined body and an abjected body. Although this was not made explicit in the

previous chapter, a significant number of studies from the literature has incorporated these concepts to highlight limits to consumer agency. These studies are reviewed below to illustrate the relevance of the identity performativity perspective to this research stream. Also, these concepts are applied to differentiate further between physical transformations that facilitate identity construction (c.f. disciplined body) and those that engender identity construction (c.f. abjected body).

Disciplined Body. The disciplined body is a recurring topic in the CCT literature (e.g. Joy & Venkatesh 1994; Murray 2002; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998; Thompson & Üstuner 2015). Illustrating the notion, researchers have examined consumer physical transformations as part of a broader set of performances enabling the socialization or enculturation of consumers to legitimate membership in a given culture or subculture (Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Thompson & Üstüner 2015). For example, the physical and symbolic transformation of an Indian bride into "a worthy daughter" of the groom's family is one of many acts that underscore the assimilation of sociocultural norms central to the Hindu religious culture (Fernandez et al. 2011). In the context of wedding rituals, this series of acts ensure the materialization of gender, heterosexual and racial norms amongst other identity-related norms. Body disciplining evokes fashion dictates that regiment physical appearance in terms of weight, height, age, and so on. Although the standards of this industry are gradually shifting to embrace new canons of beauty (e.g. *fat*shion bloggers in

Harju & Huovinen 2015; frustrated *fat*shionistas in Scaraboto & Fischer 2013; Zanette & Brito 2018), fashion models are still most commonly expected to be thin and thus to reflect sociocultural norms naturalized by the industry. In sum, testifying to a metaphor of the "body as bounded system" (Douglas 1966), the disciplined body is the outcome of the actions taken by individuals to ensure internalization of the sociocultural norms that regiment the performance of a given identity. In contrast, a body that does not reproduce such norms is considered "matter out of place" (Douglas 1966). An abjected body corresponds to this concept (Butler 1990; 1993).

Abjected Body. An abjected body is a body that violates sociocultural norms (Kristeva in Butler 1990; 1993). Sick bodies, disabled bodies, transsexual bodies, overweight bodies, old bodies, all may be considered abject precisely because they fail to materialize sociocultural norms. The consequence for resisting, or failing to incorporate, sociocultural norms may involve stigmatization of the subject or its exclusion from that society or (sub)culture (e.g. aging and fashion industry in Parmentier & Fisher 2011). This phenomenon illustrates McCracken's (2008) proposition that transformation is both a right and a responsibility given by culture. Hence, expectations and norms exist that regulate the "legitimacy" of certain performances over others (Thompson & Üstüner 2015). In an investigation of the "little woman" experience, consumer researcher Valtonen defines agency as "a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act offering ideas about who can act, what can be done, and how to act in a

particular context" (2013, p.201). The little person, as described by Valtonen (*Ibid*, p.197), is a "body in trouble" falling outside the sociocultural norms regulating gender and height, in other words an abjected body. The labelling of performances – inappropriate vs. appropriate; fake vs. natural; suspicious vs. convincing – that are socially approved or disapproved varies greatly from one work to another (Rinallo 2007; Thompson & Haykto 1997; Valtonen 2013).

In sum, the distinction between a disciplined body and an abjected body stems from the overarching idea that agency is essentially conditioned and that sociocultural norms shape consumers' intentionality. However, consumers may at times display intentionality, and thus a form of agency, for example when they select and discard identities at will or when they intentionally act against the norms. Identity play, as previously discussed in relation to physical transformations that facilitate identity construction, suggests such counter-examples. The assumption that consumers hold agency and intentionality in these situations is rejected from an identity performativity perspective since it stresses that norms shape the performativity of these seemingly subversive gender identities (Butler 1993). Thus, even transvestite performances that would read as subversive or "parodies" of existent identities, only reiterate existing "naturalized" norms of gender. Nevertheless, those studies in the CCT literature that have claimed a form of agency and intentionality, have helped us better understand how identities and the norms regimenting them can potentially be

challenged. The notion of embodied resistance, as introduced in the CCT literature, advances one such possibility.

Embodied Resistance. With regard to identity construction, a determined effort to defy sociocultural norms implies a form of intentionality, and hence agency, through an active act of resistance (subversive performances in Eräranta, Moisander & Pesonen 2009; Goulding & Saren 2009; Harju & Huovinen 2015). In particular, the empirical investigation of gender performances in the context of roller derby by Thompson and Üstüner (2015) describes a form of "embodied resistance". Borrowing from Bourdieu's notion of habitus and embodied capital, the authors describe the roller derby as a subversive gender performance. The construction of the roller derby identity involves an assertive incorporation of codes that would normally be associated with the opposite gender. Roller derby participants' toughness and bruised bodies defy conventional feminine codes. In such a context, the authors introduce the notion of "gender as embodied resistance" to distinguish it from the more common notion of "gender as a disciplined body". In a related way, Goulding and Saren (2009) propose that consumers can intentionally choose to internalize the abject. The authors draw on Foucault's notion of self-stylization to argue that these consumers hold agency in this intentional construction of "marginal or abject sexualities" (*Ibid*, p.43).

While the identity performativity perspective distinguishes between a disciplined body and an abjected body, it does not fully acknowledge the ways in which consumers may at times interpret their body as an active force that is

exerting a unique agency onto them. This thus limits the insight that the perspective can bring to consumer experience of the physical transformations that engender identity construction. In contrast, the posthumanist performativity perspective grants materiality a more active role (Barad 2003). The objective here is not to privilege the posthumanist perspective over the identity performativity perspective. Rather, it is suggested that the two perspectives be seen as complementary. This affords the possibility of articulating the interplay between, sociocultural agentic forces, material agency and identity construction. Of particular interest to the present research is how the above conceptualization of a conditioned agency can be complemented by one of a material (and corporeal) agency.

2.3 Posthumanist Performativity

Similar to the identity performativity perspective, posthumanist performativity also views actions as performances. A notable difference lies in an understanding of these performances as "intra-actions" (Niels Bohr in Barad 2003; 2008). As opposed to the term interactions, which generally refers to how distinctive and separate things communicate with each other, intra-actions expresses the intertwining and inseparability of things from which agency is emerging. Barad explains in her theory of agential realism that agency is thus "not an attribute but the ongoing reconfigurings of the world" (2008, p.135). Building on Butler's conceptualization of materialization, Barad (2008) asserts that this position enables for a greater consideration of the ways in which the body's materiality

"actively matter to the process of materialization" (p.127). As pointed out by material feminist Stacy Alaimo, Barad's inspiration in quantum physics makes her posthumanist reconceptualization of material agency and performances relatively abstract and difficult to apply. Alaimo (2008) thus proposes that in order to uncover just how materiality actively matters to the process of materialization, we begin by acknowledging the unique material agency of the body as well as that of "non-human natures". To this end, she discusses the implications of material agency for our current understanding of materialization i.e. the way that our bodies partake in identity construction.

2.3.1 Material Agency

While agency is traditionally conceptualized as a human property, the posthumanist performativity perspective advances a non-humanist understanding of this concept. From this perspective, agency is "cut loose from its traditional humanist orbit" (Barad 2003, p.826), it is "not aligned with intentionality or subjectivity" nor can it be possessed by anything or anyone (p.827). However, under this posthumanist label, researchers do not subscribe to a common conceptualization of agency. The conceptualization adopted here rests on the proposition that agency may still be conceived as a human property, but that it may also be perceived through the effects that other humans as well as non-human actors produce on us (Borgerson 2005; 2014).

Material feminist Alaimo (2008) has, for example, introduced a material agency that specifically pertains to the body and which she defines as a

"corporeal agency". This corporeal agency takes into account the perceived agentic capacities of the body through the ways that it acts and also reacts to the external world. Under the posthumanist performativity perspective, the emerging "new materialism" movement, to which Alaimo subscribes, advances the belief that a focus on bodies that exude normalcy has prevented the identity performativity perspective from accounting for the material agency of the body. Its proponents display an interest in "the body that baffles, annoys, disappoints, or falls ill", and propose that such performances of the body may disclose a peculiar form of agency, more particularly a "negative agency" (Alaimo 2008, p.249). Butler's conceptualization of the abjected body resurfaces in these posthumanist propositions in regard to bodies that "resist the processes of normalization, or refuse to act, or act in ways that may be undesirable to those who inhabit them or to others" (*Ibid*, p.248). The identity performativity perspective describes the abjected body as a body that does not matter. And it does not matter precisely because it has failed to materialize, internalize and perform sociocultural norms that regiment identity construction.

In a related way, the posthumanist performativity perspective suggests that an active materiality can precipitate the abjection of the body. In addition to an abjected body as one that is socioculturally co-constructed in relation to others', and which fails to internalize the expected norms, individuals may also, at times, experience their own bodies as foreign and thus potentially abject (Shildrick 1999). "An understanding of the body as "changing and changeable, as

transformable" (Birke in Alaimo 2008, p.241) recognizes a materiality that may not only constrain or resist human actions but that may also set the scene for surprising performances. In particular, Alaimo explains that "some avenues of approach to 'the' body, or even one's own body, sometimes echo wilderness imaginings of nature as an external foreign unknown and perhaps unknowable space" (2008, p.252). More specifically, she advances "the value of the 'wild' as a kind of material agency" (*Ibid*, 249). Citing novelist Linda Hogan, Alaimo adds that the body, and particularly the interior of the body, can be experienced as an unfamiliar space denying any form of journeying (*Ibid*). Consequently, there are potential actions stemming from this material agency that may "surprise, annoy, terrify, or baffle" us (Alaimo 2008, p.249). This work underscores a unique "corporeal" agency in relation to the material agency of the body.

The Body that Performs Us. Although the posthumanist performativity perspective has so far not fully addressed the implications of this active materiality for identity construction, there are some noteworthy suggestions in that regard. For example, Alaimo's (2008) conceptualization of corporeal agency features a body that can "talk back" and that can "affect its cultural construction" (2008, p.242). Recent applications of Butler's identity performativity perspective in CCT discussed situations where consumers leverage the body and perform it in a way that offers resistance to its sociocultural construction (e.g. embodied resistance in Thompson & Üstüner 2015). Following a similar rationale, it can be argued that a changing materiality might at times take part in the "reconfiguring"

(Barad 2008) of a sociocultural construction, although an unplanned and unintentional one. How the body may change or present itself, in other words, can unsettle an identity construction that was considered fixed and predetermined. Material feminist Samantha Frost (2011, p.70) also offers useful remarks in this respect by proposing a rethinking of the relationship between language, culture, politics and matter or the body according to which the latter "are formed" by the former. Like Alaimo (2008), Frost (*Ibid*) further invites us to consider the unique agency of the body, "one that is neither a direct nor an incidental outgrowth of human intentionality but rather one with its own impetus and trajectory".

Butler's (2004b) later works show a new openness to the ideas above by revisiting previous statements on the disciplined body. Butler stresses how the body may also at times act against an individual's intentions. Changes may occur to us and transform us as opposed to us undertaking changes. Illustrating this possibility, cultural theorist Kathleen Woodward's critical analysis of the artworks of various artists on the aging female body suggests a posthumanist perspective of identity performativity. In one passage in particular, the author articulates the distinction between a body performed by an individual and the "materiality of the body in age" that performs the individual (Woodward 2006, p.180). Therein lies the distinction between the performance of gender identity and that of age identity with the latter being more likely to be imposed by the changing materiality of the body over time.

The sociomaterial lens resonates with a growing stream of the CCT

literature on object agency that acknowledges how the entanglement of sociocultural and other agentic forces structure consumer experience and practice (Cherrier, Türe & Özcaglar-Toulouse 2014; Epp & Price 2010; Fernandez & Lastovicka 2005; Türe & Ger 2016). Scott, Martin and Schouten (2014) make the case for a material turn in consumer research, specifically in relation to the "powerful agentic roles of materiality in social life" (p.282-283). Valtonen and Närvänen (2015, p.1587) provide a concrete example in their investigation of the ways in which consumers' capacity to sleep, is "shaped by the social and material nature of both the body and the bed". The authors recognize, amongst others, the actor-network theory and material culture theory at the origin of this material turn. The work presented here is inspired by sociomateriality and its goal of offering fresh insight into human experience. The present chapter specifically aims to articulate a sociomaterial integration of the two performativity perspectives through the concepts of provocations and intersubjectivity.

2.4 A Sociomaterial Integration

In this section, I integrate the previously discussed performativity perspectives by building on their mutual interest in the interweaving of individual agency and external agentic forces (**Table 2.1**). As previously stated, this integration draws inspiration from an exercise that was undertaken in the management and information systems literature, where multiple performativity perspectives were combined to give rise to a "sociomaterial research approach" (Orlikwoski 2007; 2010; Orlikowski & Scott 2008). However, the present integration is first and

foremost CCT-oriented and specifically draws on the work of consumer researcher Janet Borgerson (2005; 2014). Her work provides an articulation of object agency as provocations i.e. an agency that is perceptible through more intensive material effects. It also explains the intersubjective formation of the self, i.e. its formation through experience with others including subjects, events, and objects.

Table 2.1 A Sociomaterial Integration

	Identity Performativity	**Integration**	**Posthumanist Performativity**
PHYSICAL TRANSFORMATIONS	Conditioned Agency: Sociocultural norms that dilute consumer agency; Physical transformations as a product of labor (disciplined body vs abjected body). *Performances in CCT: Body as a product and medium of transformation.*	Provocations: The more intensive effects of object agency, *including corporeal agency*	Material Agency: Negative agency of the body that resists, constrains, baffles, terrifies and so on; Active materiality and body as a site of unintentional physical transformations (wilderness). *Posthumanist performances in CCT: Object agency as experienced through temporal and material effects.*
IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION	Identity Performances: Identity construction involves a series of reproduced and stylized acts (performances). *Performativity in CCT: A series of reproduced and stylized acts YET Possibilities for embodied resistance/self-stylization.*	Intersubjectivity: The self is formed in experience with Others, *including a changing body*	Identity Performances: The body that performs us and identities that are co-constructed with a changing body. *Posthumanist performativity in CCT: Possessions that can alter or determine our identities.*

Provocations. The CCT literature offers several conceptualizations of object agency. For example, Fernandez and Lastovicka (2005, p.5) explain that cherished possessions as fetishes can partake in the "illusion" that the "locus of

agency arises from the object". This perspective of object agency underscores the manifestation of an object agency that is simply an illusion produced by what are actually sociocultural agentic forces. We can also consider in this respect Miller's auto-ethnography of home renovation in which he elaborates on the agency of his ancestral home. When Miller (2001) highlights the constraints that the historicity of the home pose to his agency and intentionality, he makes it clear that these constraints do not stem from the home per se but rather from the sociocultural agentic forces that relate to the characteristics of an ancestral house (e.g. city regulations for renovation). Another interpretation of object agency is advanced by Epp and Price (2010, p.822) who propose that objects, although not demonstrating purposeful intention, "are active, or mobilized as part of a network and nested in a set of practices". While temporal agency has received less attention than object agency, its influence is growing. Some researchers are now considering temporal and material agentic forces in hand with one another (Chitakunye & Maclaran 2014; Strengers et al. 2016).

The varying intensities of object agency necessitates an expansion of our vocabulary, one capable of describing the effects that objects are producing on us, apart from their constraint of, or resistance to, consumer agency and intentionality. While one should refrain from attributing intentionality and thus, agency, to objects, Borgerson explains that attention can be drawn to the effects that these objects are producing on us. In this regard, Borgerson (2014) recently proposed consideration of provocations as potential material effects. Citing

Drucker (2009) on "aesthetic provocations," she has identified these effects as a promising area of research, advancing that "agency be thought of, not only as effects, but also as 'provocations'" (p.133).

Intersubjectivity. An understanding of the self as intersubjective entails that the self is "formed in experience with others," including material objects (Borgerson 2005, p.440). In this regard, Borgerson, draws on Pickering to explain that "objects, environments, and other humans – as well as pre-existing culture and historical moments – influence, engage, push back and change us" (2014, p.129). Moving away from the consideration of the consumer as the center of agency, she invites us to consider the co-creation of subjects and objects (2005; 2014). This notion of co-creation is considered by the present research to be synonymous with "co-construction" (Belk 2013), and is specifically applied here to the notion of identity. Although Borgerson does not discuss a potential relationship between provocations and intersubjectivity, some studies have suggested such a possibility. For example, a recent paper by Türe and Ger (2016, p.2) highlights "heirlooms' materiality as a restrictive force" that "disempowers consumers who want to preserve the symbolic". Decay in this context is suggested to be an external agentic force, combining a material and temporal agency that may not only damage the heirloom, but also detract from its present value. Moreover, providing evidence for Belk's (1988) proposition that possessions as extensions of the self can impose (unwanted) identities onto the self, research into the rejuvenation of heirlooms suggests that the "out-datedness"

of family heirlooms can end up contradicting their heir's identity (Türe & Ger 2016). Decay is then identified as an external agentic force engendering an unwanted outdatedness, which is at odds with the owner's identity.

3.4.1 A Sociomaterial Understanding of Identity Construction

Organization of the CCT literature into a typology (chapter 2) highlighted two primary sources of physical transformations: those that facilitate identity construction and those that engender identity construction. As emphasized by this typology, physical transformations that facilitate identity construction are intentionally undertaken while the latter are not. This intentionality, i.e. "a decided effort to make things go one way rather than another" (Borgerson 2014, p.131), does not necessarily presuppose a fully agentic consumer since this agency is for the most part conditioned by the external agency of sociocultural norms (Butler 1990; 1993). What is less clear however, is how consumers interpret and negotiate identities co-constructed with their changing bodies. In these situations, physical transformations that engender identity construction highlight how agency is also a loss at the hands of material agentic forces. In this respect, a sociomaterial integration of the two performativity perspectives offers an elaborated conceptual frame to account for the entanglement of consumer agency, i.e. their "ability to act" (Borgerson 2014) with the external agentic forces that structure and constrain their actions. A sociomaterial integration of these perspectives thus invites us to consider the combined effects of these forces

on consumer experiences of physical transformations and related-identity constructions.

What the tenets of provocations and intersubjectivity entail for the present investigation is the possibility of enriching current understanding of consumer experiences of the physical transformations that engender identity construction. Indeed, some studies reviewed in the previous chapter, evoke an experience of physical transformations whereby the consumer feels entrapped or possessed by a body that constrains their agency and intentionality. Of particular interest is the observation of Thompson and Hirschman (1998, p.425) that "the materiality of the body can refuse to succumb" to consumers' manipulations. This observation implies the potentially perceived material agency of the body.

In line with the identity performativity perspective, the loss of agency over the body is experienced as a failure to meet the sociocultural norms that regiment physical transformation and identity construction. This is apparent as consumers express shame and moral failure for being unable to control an unwanted physical transformation. The body can resemble a prison, as consumers recount feeling trapped in an "old" or "over-weight" body (Askegaard et al. 2002; St-James et al. 2011). These studies feature a body that resists or constrains.

The body has also been compared to a besieged site (Thompson & Troester 2002) with others lurking within (Sayre 2013; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998) seeking to rear (Sayre 2013), intrude (Murray 2002), or invade (Giesler 2012). From a posthumanist performativity perspective, these

experiences draw attention to the unique effects of a corporeal agency in relation to a body that not only constrains or resists but that may also act in undesirable ways (Alaimo 2008; Alaimo & Hekman 2008) to the extent of performing us (Woodward 2006). A body that fails to perform as expected "can come to appear 'Other' and opposed to the self" (Leder 1990, p.70). Such a statement conveys another facet of an intersubjective formation of the self: an intrusion by the Other. This implies the potential intermeshing of the self and other in situations where consumers cannot control the changes that are occurring to them. If we extend the proposition of Borgerson and Rehn's (2003, p.4) that the agency of an object can be understood as a "nonintentional capacity to facilitate alteration," it can be argued that this can also include a nonintentional capacity to engender alteration, and moreover identity construction.

2.5 Summary

In the previous sections, two performativity perspectives have been discussed, with their respective conceptualizations of the relationship between physical transformation and identity construction highlighted. Then, based on Borgerson's (2005; 2014) notions of provocations and intersubjectivity, a CCT-enabled sociomaterial integration of these perspectives was presented to account for the entanglement of sociocultural, material as well as temporal forces in consumer experiences. The chapter that follows describes the empirical research that was conducted to investigate the interplay of these forces in relation to consumers' interpretation and negotiation of identities co-constructed with a changeable and

changing face over time.

Chapter 3: Research Agenda

This research aims to examine consumer experiences of physical transformations that engender identity construction and to understand how consumers interpret and negotiate identity construction in relation to a changing body. This chapter describes the empirical research conducted to answer these goals. The context of this research, the changing face over time, is first presented. The method is then outlined, including the interviewing techniques adopted to uncover consumer experiences of facial transformations in relation to their identity projects. The chapter concludes with a detailed presentation of the procedures used for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Context: The Changing Face over Time

The changing face over time was chosen as context because it exhibits desirable characteristics to meet the objectives of this research. First, it exhibits a strong identity-related component, thus constituting a rich domain in which to observe a variety of situations of identity construction. Second, it offers the possibility of examining contrasting experiences of agency with regard to physical transformations that facilitate and those that engender identity construction. Third, in relation to the broader context of aging, it reveals a number of assumptions about body disciplining that can be assessed through the ideology of progress and its related cult of a youthful and agentic consumer self.

The Face and Identity. As conceptualized by Synnott (1993, p.73), the face "symbolizes the self, and signifies many different facets of the self. More

than any other part of the body, we identify the face as me or you". From a face, one can infer a person's lifestyle, habits, and emotional experiences. As an undeniable locus of identity (Le Breton 2013; 2003), the face further marks the difference or separation between the self and others (Levinas in Joy et al. 2010; Synnott 1993). Within the economic and productive spheres, the face is a particularly loaded artifact. Identification documents, from passports to license pictures and even mug shots, testify to the value given to the face in our society (Le Breton 2003). Likewise, modern self-portraiture (selfie) reveals the undeniable significance of a face that maintains a captivating hold on us (Iqani & Schroeder 2016). Many writers have reflected on the symbolical and aesthetic qualities of the face, including Walter Benjamin (1931), Roland Barthes (1957) and Georg Simmel (1901). These authors have also emphasized the importance of the face as the locus of the gaze, a powerful device at the basis of the relationship that ties the self to others and to the exterior world.

The phenomenological account of "face-to-face" encounters of French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1981) specifically elaborates on the face as a marker of identity that is defined on the basis of an ethical relationship. That is, a face-to-face encounter with the Other entails feeling a responsibility for an Other and acknowledging at the same time his difference. Following this, Goffman's (1955) *On face-work* is particularly useful in distinguishing between situations where individuals feel in control of their self-image in their interactions with others and those where they feel "out of face" (e.g. social etiquette; demeanour).

In the latter situations, Goffman refers to the maintenance of face or saving of face to protect a certain image of the self. While Goffman (1959)'s concept of face is used as a metaphor to explain these social interactions, his writings on role performances provide examples where face-saving practices involve the maintenance of outward appearance in order to ensure that the performance of a role will be deemed "credible" and "believable" by others. Besides the maintenance of outward appearance, individuals will experience a range of facial transformations over their life time. The changing face over time relates in this respect to the broader context of aging, including the aging of the face.

*Aging and the Aging face***.** Aging as a context in consumer research is one that is gradually benefitting from new conceptualizations that are expanding the usual reflections on age-related differences, segmentation and cognitive age. Cognitive age, for example, now "reflects wider expectations that we must maintain a youthful, fit body through our consumption practices" (Catterall & Maclaran 2001, p.1124). Researchers are also investigating the ways in which both cultural and social systems help to strengthen consumers' attitudes towards aging (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Schau et al. 2009). Aging shapes collective as well as personal narratives that allow consumers to experience the embodiment of more than one self at once (Gullette 2004). Cultural critic Margaret Morganroth Gullette stresses the fact that age studies can be framed by many perspectives, including "anthropological, psychosocial, historical, materialist, humanistic," and it entails the "study of difference like others" (e.g. ethnicity or gender) (2004,

p.118). A single perspective on aging can summon a rich repertoire of images and references that can assist in an understanding of an aging face, let us say, as the extension of a gendered self, or sexual, self.

As one's face ages and changes through time, it encodes one's history. It can summon multiple memories, many of which can be traced back in time (Le Breton 2003; Sarbin 1986).

> The chronicle of memory has many lacunae, yet it gives access to a past that one who remembers claims as his own, an identity through many metamorphoses. This identity is not simply a matter of the organic continuity of a body through its various stages of maturation. The face I see looking back at me out of a mirror does not remind me much of the one that looked back when I was a child, yet I do not hesitate to claim both faces as my own" (Sarbin 1986, p.156).

This excerpt highlights the many "metamorphoses" that occur as the face ages, setting the stage for identity-changes as well. In this respect, consumer researchers have explored the face as the site of many transformations taking place over time, and have also recognized the identities associated these transformations. On one hand, consumers may modify their facial features through hair colour, make up, or plastic surgery, ultimately to project who they are or seek to be (Bloch & Richins 1992; Giesler 2012; McCracken 1995; Negrin 2000; Sayre 2013; Schouten 1991). A young girl can wear makeup in order to experience herself as older and project herself into the future (Cook & Kaiser 2004). A daily routine such as shaving can be considered as part of a broader gender performance of masculine identity (Schroeder & Zwick 2004).

A facial transformation can be undertaken to overcome the aging process (Sayre 2013). As a highly-commoditized body part, the face is a window into the world of anti-aging consumption, where transformational practices and other products (e.g. botox injections, anti-aging creams) are treated as magical solutions and remedies for the aging process (Cook & Dwyer 2017; Coupland 2007; Giesler 2012; Joy et al. 2010). Interdisciplinary artist Katherine Behar (2016) recently proposed an extension of Levinasean "face-to-face" encounters with paralyzed Botox-injected faces which she argues constitute dead faces. Investigating the content of anti-aging ads from a gender perspective, Coupland (2007, p.38) stresses that "there is no shortage of reference, within consumer culture, to the semiotic politics of the aging face".

On the other hand, some facial changes simply happen to consumers. In particular, the face manifests the aging process from puberty on, as signs of aging appear. These changes can have significant implications for identity construction (Le Breton 2003). In their discussion of the socialized body, Thompson and Hirschman (1995, p.142) refer to a 54 year-old informant "for whom graying and thinning hair - a culturally salient sign of aging - evoked insecurities over his professional standing." Age and gender performances that are materialized in the face are always subjected to an external gaze and judged by others (Goffman, 1959). Through facial changes, consumers may experience identities as "imposed" (Gullette 2004) as opposed to voluntarily chosen.

For all of these reasons, the changing face over time was determined to be a suitable context for the deepening of our understanding of the ways in which consumers interpret and negotiate identity construction in relation to a changing body. The above description integrates a number of assumptions in relation to the broader context of this research, aging. More specifically, the following sub-section presents an overview of an ideology of progress which, it is here argued, can help us take into account these assumptions that shape consumer experience of a changing face over time and related identity construction.

Aging and the Ideology of Progress. Notwithstanding early conceptualizations of progress that can be traced back to classical antiquity, the ideology of progress here presented, is historically linked to modernization and the industrial revolution (Moon 2018). This ideology of progress centers on improvement, particularly in the human condition. As such, it also emphasizes individual agency as a determinant of human progress. It is believed that consumer culture continues to strengthen this ideology of progress by tying it to the idea of a capable, able and agentic consumer self. Kozinets (2008)'s paper, in particular, describes ideological elements that supports the existence of this ideology of progress. From the perspective of a "technopian ideology" that celebrates scientific and technological progress, he presents a conceptualization of progress that is tied to an understanding of change as an "improvement" (Pollard in *Ibid*, p.869) and also, to an understanding of human progress achieved by means of "material improvement" (Wright in *Ibid,* p.869). Within the context

of this research, the existence of an ideology of progress can be claimed and more specifically, one that integrates similar assumptions about the centrality of material improvement to the progress of the consumer self. As outlined above, several facial transformations that are undertaken to overcome the aging process evokes such ideology: "in the march to human progress and aesthetic perfection, age has become yet another hurdle to overcome" (Klatz in Ellison 2014, p.21).

Following this, it should be noted that what constitutes progress often tends to reflect dominant sociocultural values and norms. Prior research suggests that under such influence, consumers will not hesitate to undertake major transformations in order to be perceived as "progressive" in the sense of "modern" and "normal" rather than "backward" (Sandicki and Ger 2010, p.29). Of particular interest to the present research context is the existence of a youth-obsessed culture that tends to equate progress with a youthful appearance. A closer examination at prior literature suggests the existence of a certain youth bias according to which progress tends to favor a young adult in becoming (Castilhos & Fonseca 2016; Keinan & Kivetz 2011; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; Weinberger, Zavisca & Silva 2017). Gullette (2004) states in that sense that while progress is a "promise" to American youth, "an ideology of decline" is in contrast imposed onto those who are aging and even more so, to those who look older. Sociologist LeBreton (2013, p.5) also contends that within a youth-obsessed culture, aging amounts to deviating from the "norm of youthfulness" and from other values that are central to modernity such as seduction, vitality and

performance. Since these values evoke possibilities of progress, it also follows the assumption, in several cultures and societies, that older consumers are not capable of such progress.

Given that an ideology has significant influence onto how consumers make sense of who they are (Kozinets 2008), it is here expected that this ideology of progress would structure consumer experience of a changing face over time and related identity construction. The next section describes the research methodology used to develop an understanding of these experiences. It discusses the rationale for using the techniques of in-depth interviews and photo-elicitation, describes the research sample, gives an overview of the research design and methods of data collection, and lastly, describes the methods used to analyze and interpret the data.

3.2 Data collection

The purpose of this empirical study was to examine the ways in which consumers interpret and negotiate identity construction in relation to a changing face over time. Consistent with this objective, a qualitative approach was adopted. More specifically, phenomenological interviews were conducted (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989) with 23 participants during which photo-elicitation was used as a prompting tool. Recruited participants were informed that the purpose of the research was to investigate the relationship between consumption and the evolution of the face over time.

Prior to interviewing the participants and throughout the data collection and interpretation phases, I have sought to immerse myself in the broader context of aging and aging-related consumption. By doing so, I achieved a better understanding of the potential ideologies, myths and market trends (see context of context in Askegaard & Linnet 2011) that shape participant experiences of a changing face over time. To achieve this immersion, I tracked and reviewed references from a variety of sources including essays, autobiographical accounts, newspaper articles, and documentaries (**Table 3.1**).

Table 3.1 Immersion in the Context of Aging and Aging-related Consumption

Sources	**Examples**
Essays on aging	• *Age Matters: Re-Aligning Feminist Thinking* (Calasanti & Slevin 2013); • *Facing Age: Women growing older in Anti-Aging culture* (Clarke 2011). • *On the Coming of Age* (De Beauvoir 1972); • *Uncanny Subjects: Aging in Contemporary Narratives* (DeFalco 2010); • *Images of Aging: Cultural Representations of Later Life* (Featherstone & Wernick 1995); • *Key Issues in Modern Sociology: Ageing, Corporeality and Embodiment* (Gilleard & Higgs 2013); • *Aged by Culture* (Gullette 2004); • *Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People* (Gullette 2017); • *Restorying our Lives: Personal Growth through Autobiographical Reflection* (Kenyon & Randall 1997); • *Représentations et discours sur le vieillissement: La face cachée de l'âgisme?* (Lagacé 2015); • *La Vieillesse : Visages du Vieillir* (Le Breton 2013); • *Aging and its Discontents* (Woodward 1991);
Autobiographies related to aging	• *La vieillesse par une vraie vieille* (Bertrand 2016); • *I Feel Bad About My neck : And Other Thoughts on Being a Woman* (Ephron 2006) • *Les femmes vintage* (Robert 2010);
Documentaries related to aging	• "A User's Guide to Cheating Death" (Peacock Alley Entertainment 2017)
Published articles on a specific aging-related theme (ex: agelessness; timelessness)	• *Vogue* • *GQ* • Others *(New Yorker, The Telegraph)*
Archival data on specific facial transformations (ex: hair loss)	• "Chauve qui peut" (*L'Actualité*) • "La perte de cheveux: Une réalité aussi féminine" (Raymond 2015). • *Hairlossdaily.com*

There are facial transformations for which I sought to achieve a richer understanding. In this respect, I reviewed articles, documentaries and blogs on hair loss to gain a richer understanding of this specific transformation. Also, whenever an informant referenced a particular sociocultural phenomenon, this was looked into in order to gain a richer understanding of the participant's frame of reference (Thompson, Pollio & Locander 1994). Familiarization with these phenomena enriched the analysis of the participants' narratives. For example, as the findings developed, a purposeful search was conducted through the Factiva database on the notion of agelessness. Forty-one articles were retained that used the words "ageless", "agelessness" or "timeless," in a way that conveyed a specific meaning, including 24 in *Vogue* and 8 in *GQ*.

3.2.1 Interviews

A preliminary interview guide was designed and approved by the committee of ethical research before recruiting participants for the interview sessions **(see Annex 1)**. Following preliminary introductions, each interview began with an exercise of self-description, which required the participant to describe his/her face as if making a self- portrait. Follow-up questions were used to engage participants in a narrative mode ("Tell me about a facial feature that you particularly like/dislike"; "Tell me about comments you have received on your face"). This exercise helped to set the tone for the interview by singling out the face at the onset and stimulating recollections of facial transformations. The interview guide

ensured that relevant dimensions were explored with "grand-tour" questions (McCracken 1989). However, no order was followed and the discussion allowed participants to tell their story in their own words (Thompson 1997). Even though the face was explained to participants as the interview focus, the hair, previously defined by McCracken (1995) as a strong "cultural artifact", emerged as a focal feature to several participants.

When it did not emerge spontaneously, participants were asked directly to reflect on the facial transformations they had experienced over the course of their lives, recent or not. For each transformation, participants were invited, through follow-up questions, to unpack their experiences thoroughly ("How old were you?"; "What were you doing at that time?"; "Can you tell me how it made you feel?"). While the pictures engaged participants in retrospective descriptions ("What do you feel looking back at this face?"), they were also invited to engage in prospective descriptions ("Imagine your face in 20 years"). At the end of each interview, a list of keywords (e.g. teeth whitening; botox) was used to prompt other stories that may not have come to participants' mind during the interview. As they talked about and made sense of their own facial transformations over time, participants also spontaneously referred to facial transformations they observed in others. These unprompted positional shifts were particularly revealing of the sociocultural references mediating participant experience. Although separate questions were designed to elicit these descriptions ("Describe someone's face, relative or celebrity, that you particularly like/dislike"), it was

left to participants' discretion to integrate others in their narrations. In sum, participants set the dialogue, which was a way to ensure that the interviewer would not interfere with the meaning of their experiences (Thompson, Polio & Locander 1997).

According to previous research, pictures can stimulate an individual's recollection of specific experiences, including those of a physical change (Sayre 2013). Prior to the interviews, participants were asked to select and supply pictures with the only restriction that these pictures, including identification documents such as passports and driver's licenses (e.g. identification documents in Le Breton 2003), should feature their face as a focal point. The objective was thus to use pictures as a prompting tool in order to provide participants with sufficient visual material to reflect on the changes that have occurred to their face over time (Sayre 2013). The pictures helped participants to recount specific experiences of facial change that had occurred in the past (Johnstone & Todd 2012; Heisley & Levy 1991; Nations, Baker & Krszjzaniek 2017). It also fostered impromptu descriptions of others' facial changes over time (e.g. family relatives; old acquaintances, etc.).

More specifically, participants were asked to have on hand one or more photos in which they did not particularly like the appearance of their face and one or more with which they were particularly pleased. It was important that participants did not restrict themselves to pictures that they liked in order to increase the chances that they would also discuss unwanted facial changes. They

were also asked to have on hand photos that represented them at different ages (e.g. children, teenagers, and young adults). All participants had photos but the quantity of pictures brought to the interview varied substantially for each. Some participants did not own (or keep) more than 2 to 3 photos while others had on hand 2 to 3 picture albums. While the interviewer did not reference the pictures until the last part of the interview, participants could turn to them at any time – to illustrate an idea or to recount a specific memory – in a way that seemed natural and comfortable to them.

Supplemental observations were recorded through field notes which were used to complement the analysis and interpretation stages. For example, a participant produced a drawing to illustrate what aging meant to him. Another shared a picture of an older woman she had encountered during one of her trips whose facial features were particularly captivating to her. Several participants discussed pictures on social network sites (e.g. Facebook) or from other sources, like videos. Some participants were showing their pictures to the interviewer while others were keeping those private. Participants' reactions to the pictures and impromptu improvisations were also taken into account when interpreting the collected narratives.

3.2.1.1 Research sample

Sampling was purposive and participants were recruited through a network of contacts. Following this, snowballing technique was used to identify new informants. The objective was to recruit participants with varied backgrounds and

at different stages in the aging process, which would provide access to different experiences and perspectives. The interviews took place in the participants' homes, offices or place of their choice where they would feel comfortable. Recruitment continued until theoretical saturation was reached. Twenty-three phenomenological interviews were conducted, and lasted for one and a half hours on average, ranging from one hour and a quarter to three hours. The age of participants ranged from 30 to 68 with the sample composed of eleven women and twelve men (**Table 3.2**).

Table 3.2 Informants Profiles

Name (Fictive)	Sex	Age	Nationality	Marital status	Child	Occupation
Kevin	M	30	Canadian	Single	0	Graphic designer
Steven	M	30	Canadian	Common law	0	Actor
Sandra	F	35	Canadian	Single	0	Artist
William	M	35	(British) Canadian	Single	0	Financial advisor
Kate	F	36	Canadian	Common law	0	Sales and marketing*
Max	M	36	Canadian	Single	0	Industrial designer
Pamela	F	38	Canadian	Common law	0	Teacher
Zack	M	39	Canadian	Common law	0	Poker player
Lionel	M	40	Canadian	Single	0	Musical instrument maker*
Simon	M	45	Canadian	Common law	0	Graphic designer
John	M	47	Canadian	Single	0	Teacher and consultant*
Helena	F	Late 50s	Canadian	Common law	0	Professor
Damien	M	51	(French) Canadian	Married	2	Communications*
Emma	F	51	Canadian	Common law	1	Personal stylist*
Monique	F	55	Canadian	Married	2	Dental Hygienist
Nancy	F	56	Canadian	Common law	0	Department manager
Florence	F	58	Canadian	Divorced	3	Temporary worker
Clara	F	59	(British) Canadian	Common law	0	Company manager
Adele	F	64	Canadian	Common law	3	Waitress
Henri	M	67	Canadian	Common law	0	Consultant
Robert	M	67	(French) Canadian	Divorced	1	Professional cyclist*
Rouben	M	68	(Armenian) Canadian	Common law	1	Illustrator*
Marlene	F	68	(French) Canadian	Common law	1	Life coach*

*Second career; All informants are permanent Canadian residents but some were not born in Canada. Other nationalities are indicated where applicable.

Age and sex were considered throughout recruitment to ensure that possible differences and similarities in personalized narratives were considered. With regard to age, previous research suggests that midlife, from mid to late thirties to approximately 60, is a period of important, and potentially dramatic, change (Gullette 2004; Hostetler 2013). This change can be multiple and includes the first signs of aging that begin to appear in the middle years, such as wrinkles, sagging skin and hair loss (Coupland 2007). Several recent studies in the aging literature suggest that midlife aging is likely to be interpreted by both men and women as an experience of "identity stripping" and that anti-aging practices are used by both groups (Biggs 2004; Gilleard & Higgs 2013; Gullette 2004). Informants from both genders were recruited to account for any gender-based differences.

Diversity was also introduced in terms of culture, occupation and marital status. The majority of the sample is constituted of French Canadians but include as well first and second-generation immigrants from British, French and Armenian origins. In terms of occupation, the sample includes participants working in very diverse domains as well as several participants who undertook a second career before or after they retired. In the earlier stages of the data collection, I noticed that participants included meaningful descriptions of the physical transformations in others close to them. Seeking to account for these relationships, two couples, two brothers and two sisters were included in the sample. The sample also includes the 40-year-old son of an interviewed couple

(divorced for at least ten years). Last but not the least, three men from the final sample are homosexual (Kevin, Steven and Simon), two of which were in a relationship at the time of the interview. The analysis disclosed some sociocultural references, especially with regard to the aging of certain celebrities, that were specific to the homosexual subcultural frame of reference. Apart from that, sexual orientation did not play a central role across participants' narratives.

3.2.1.2 Ethical Considerations

Participants received a summary of the research context prior to their interviews. To be considered for the study, they had to have agreed to have personal photos on hand. However, they were assured that the interviewer would not look at the pictures unless they were invited to do so. To ensure informed consent, participants were also assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews were transcribed from audiotapes, and pseudonyms were used to ensure that no participants could be identified by name or through any other personal information. The verbatim transcripts of the audiotaped interviews as well as some of the photos used during the interviews were used only as material for analysis and interpretation. Before and after the interviews, participants were assured of anonymity and that access to their data would be restricted to the study researchers.

3.3 Analysis and Interpretation

Verbatim transcripts of the taped interviews, photos consensually shared by the participants, field notes and supplemental references served as the data set for the analysis. Conceptualization of the literature on physical transformations and identity construction provided the background knowledge for a preliminary categorization of the collected accounts according to the two sources of physical transformations highlighted in the typology previously developed (see Chapter 2-2.2). An initial interpretation of the facial transformations involved a within-person or idiographic analysis (Thompson et al. 1989) to uncover the specific facial transformations and identities mentioned by each informant. A second interpretation involved a cross-case analysis of the interviews to flesh out thematic relationships between the facial transformations and identities mentioned by the participants. Memos were created on specific facial features. For example, a memo on hair gathered participants' stories about facial hair, hair loss, hair dye and long hairstyles. These stories were interpreted in the context of other collected references on related topics. The intersection between gender and age was taken into account throughout the analysis.

Following an emic approach, memos were created on age identities that emerged from participants' accounts. Then, through an etic analysis of the data in light of the theory of performativity, I proceeded to identify the "subversive identities" (Butler 1993) and "abject others" (Kristeva 1982) that emerged from descriptions of facial transformations. As the majority of interviews were

conducted in French, and more specifically French Canadian, some of the words used by participants to refer to specific age identities were rooted within a particular vernacular: *vieux schnock, vieux crouton, matante, mononc', madame, monsieur*. Also, it was not uncommon for definitions provided for the same term to vary from one participant to another, sometimes with and sometimes without, pejorative connotations. Most native terms (e.g. *mononc'*) were not "foreignized" (Dion, Sabri & Guillard 2014) since an English translation (e.g. old man and old woman) could bring about a different set of (ageist) meanings. A quick survey of a selection of studies on stereotypical age identities confirmed the diversity of labels from French to English but, overall, with common definitions (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Featherstone and Hepworth 1991; Kenyon & Randall 1997; Ussher 2006). While many original French terms were retained, participants were asked to define what they meant by specific terms. Consistent with an emic approach, the personal definition determined the meaning of the term in the context of the participant's lived experience (Thompson, Locander & Pollio 1989).

Content analysis of the interviews was carried out iteratively i.e. by allowing interpretations to be revised by subsequent ones and also by enabling a dialogue between the interviews (Thompson et al. 1989). The narrative accounts were then analyzed using a hermeneutic approach which treated participants' narratives as a part of a broader sociocultural set of meanings and practices related to aging and the face as a locus of identity (Thompson 1997). I initially

sought patterns across the stories based on the relationships described by participants between their facial transformations and identities. Three themes emerged from which I could gain a hermeneutic understanding (Arnold & Fischer 1994; Thompson 1997) of consumers' interpretation and negotiation of facial transformations in the context of sociocultural expectations and material constraints. These themes also revealed participants' integration of a broader set of sociocultural ideologies and myths (Askegaard & Linnet 2011), in particular, the progress versus decline aging script (Gullette 2004; 2017) that structures participant experiences of their aging faces. Principles derived from the performativity concept were used to inform a "[pre-] understanding" of these themes (Arnold & Fisher 1994) by articulating the relationship between ideology and the entanglement of multiple agentic forces in experience. This was a process that included, for example, assessment of the sociocultural, material and temporal connotations of progress. The aim here was to allow this "[pre-] understanding" to be challenged by participants' narratives and prior consumer research adopting the performativity lens. I also developed my understanding of the emerging themes in participants' experiences in relation to relevant aging-specific literature (e.g. *Journal of Aging Studies*; *Journal of Aging Identity*). The next chapter presents the findings.

Chapter 4: Findings

Three themes emerged from my analysis of participant experiences of a changing face over time and its related identity construction. With respect to the unique context of aging, these themes constitute my interpretation of contrasting experiences of facial transformations in which multiple sources of agency partake in either facilitating or engendering identity construction.

The first theme, "Agentic Selves and Abject Others", reveals how participants' experience of agency over the malleability of their faces, colors in turn their perception of others' lack of agency over their aging process. Based on their experience of a malleable face within a sociocultural ideology of progress, participants interpret visible signs of aging in others as a failure to mobilize the face to perform desired identities. Their interpretation further reveals the abjection of others based on what they perceive as insufficient efforts to tame an appearance of agedness as well as an excessive disciplining of the aging face, deemed ridiculous.

In the second theme, "Unveilings of an Otherness Within", an abjection that was observed in aging others reemerges suddenly as participants describe their experiences of unintentional facial transformations, particularly those involving the appearance of signs of aging. These meaningful unveilings of an abjected otherness within are experienced as provocations that are based on participants' perception of the unique agency of the aging face. That is, they feature an aging face that is performing an abjected otherness against

participants' will. My analysis draws on the uncanny, as a peculiar commingling of the familiar and the strange, to theorize participant experiences of this abjected otherness within.

Participants' interpretation and negotiation of this abjected otherness within is examined as a third and final theme: "Beyond the Looking Glass". The construct of (re)productive death is introduced to convey participants' fears of no longer being capable of performing desired identities in a credible manner because of a provoking aging face. In response, they look for ways to reenergize these identities. My findings highlight in this regard a set of practices that participants use to recover a sense of agency. Beyond practices aimed at disciplining the aging face, my findings show that participants also engage in practices that do not include facial transformations to establish the credibility of desired identities in later life. Those suggest the entanglement of material, temporal and sociocultural agentic forces in identity construction, and the de-centering of the malleable face as a primary resource of identity construction.

4.1 Agentic Self and Abject Others

Emma is a beautiful 51-year-old and a mother of a young woman in her early twenties. Emma is confident in people's innate ability and capacity to express themselves by transforming their appearance as they see fit. As a personal stylist, she also explains that part of her job involves helping others to "enhance" their appearance and self.

Looking at pictures of herself that she brought for the interview, Emma shared recollections of various transformations she undertook over the years. She recalls for example that while modeling for a local hairdresser as a teenager, she started to experiment with different hairstyles and colours: "I had all the colours ! Even blue and green when I was punk. And I would go from one to another after that, brown-red-blond, and I had my hair blond for the last ten years. And red like this only for a couple of months … Chanel used to say, 'When a woman changes her hair, she is in need of a change'." Emma's account of her hair colour changes conveys the malleability of the hair that is also related to the malleability of the self. According to her description, the transformations that she undertook were aligned with her changing desires to perform multiple identities over time: "Once I was done with my hippie phase – although it was not really of my age, it was the end of that era – I then got into disco, the new wave, especially wave, and punk. I was really into that, and at the same time I was granola, a bit vegetarian."

While part of Emma's narrative conveys an experience of the face as an object that can be molded and reshaped in order to become a desired self, her descriptions of some others highlight the condemnation of an inappropriate mobilization of the face. For example, her description of men of her age emphasizes a reprehensible appearance of agedness: "Some really look teeeerrible. It's scary. They don't take care of themselves! They look *mononc'*, they look outdated and they don't look like they fit with the times." This description stresses the extent to which not caring about one's aging appearance

and basically giving up, is something that Emma experiences as repelling and displeasing – abject. Moreover, Emma's use of a stereotypical old age identity (*mononc'*) to label these men – in Quebec French, *mononc'* describes an old fogey – illustrates the entanglement of an abject untamed appearance with an abject identity.

A clear element of this first theme relates to an experience of the face as a malleable resource in support of desired identity performances (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka 2011; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991). The sociocultural ideology of progress and its reversed script of decline (Gullette 2004), structures participants' self-experience by comforting them in their capacity to leverage this malleability in order to become who they want. It also entices them to interpret others' visible signs of aging as proof of their inability to mobilize this malleability. This underscores the contrast between participants' perception of themselves as agentic selves and their perception of others as abject.

4.1.1 Malleable Self-in-Progress

The Malleable Face. While participants state that they are dealing with a certain number of constraints, a sense of the face as a malleable feature offering little resistance to one's desire to transform, or even to become someone else, is still very much present in their descriptions of facial transformations. Consider for example Steven, a professional actor, who experiences the malleability of the face as an integral component of his acting roles:

> I have learned to feel things inside that are going to show from the outside. When I'm playing a character or when I'm on stage, I imagine my face changing as well. I believe also that something changes in my eyes. Hence, it is peculiar – the relation that I can have with my face. I'm always into this projected image of who I am … I also see the possibilities that one has to be something else. – Steven, 30, actor

Since Steven made a profession out of his ability to morph into different characters, his narrative is a unique example of acute awareness of the face's malleability. While other participants are not professional actors, they share Steven's view of the "possibilities that one has to be something else" by leveraging the malleability of the face. The face thus emerges as an object that can be molded and reshaped according to its owner's wishes. This malleable face supports desire for change, experimentation and self-authorship.

A number of participants describe how facial transformations can be undertaken for aesthetic or practical reasons. Sometimes, both reasons are evoked:

> I've been wearing a beard for 8 years … For aesthetic reasons, because I think that it frames my face nicely with my hair. And also for purely pragmatic reasons. I work in consulting and I notice that it inspires trust. Without the beard, I have sort of a baby face. – John, 47, consultant and lecturer

> The beard, at a certain point, just to amuse myself, I decided to leave this part black and this part white. Then I shaved this side and left this one just for fun. And now I leave it because I don't have to shave every morning. One day, it just speaks to me, and I shave. – Rouben, 68, illustrator

Resonating with previously studied physical transformations that evoke identity play, self-shifting and the free spirit of postmodernity (e.g. Belk & Costa 1998; Holbrook et al. 1998; McCracken 2008), these accounts illustrate the use of the face as a raw material to be leveraged in order to support one's becoming. Rouben's account conveys for example the freedom of being able to go from one look to another, almost instantaneously, when shaving. If the activity of shaving the face is iconic (Schroeder & Zwick 2004), facial hair, including the beard, also stands out as an undeniable iconic feature for the male participants. John, a professional in his late forties who recalls his motives for wearing a beard, explains that he adopted this facial feature not only to help conceal a juvenile look but that it also proved to be a definite advantage in the exercise of his profession, adding credibility to his performance as a consultant ("it inspires trust"). In addition, John notes the aesthetic appeal of the beard ("it frames my face nicely"). Although it is clear that participants do accommodate their personal features, for example by camouflaging certain flaws, these findings specifically underscore a view of the face as a blank canvas for possibilities of becoming someone better.

Besides what a facial feature can do to add credibility to a professional performance, other participants explain how it also adds credibility to the performance of a more attractive self. Max, a 36-year-old industrial designer, explains for example that the beard has endowed him with sex appeal: "In the end, I was told by certain persons who were important in my life that it was sexy,

so I was like 'damn!'…If SHE, if she finds me sexy then I am going to keep it." This example conveys the use of facial transformations to support progress towards a desirable becoming ("sexy"). This capacity and ability to leverage the malleability of the face in order to perform sought-after identities also illustrates a view of a malleable self-in-progress. The next section introduces in this respect the sociocultural ideology of progress which I find to structure participants' experience of their face as a malleable resource. This ideology favors a capable, able and agentic self, and is most often associated with an adult in becoming (Castilhos & Fonseca 2016; Gullette 2004).

Becoming and the Young Face. Participants' accounts provide a range of examples that suggest an intentional aging of one's facial features in order to accelerate time and specifically, advancement in a professional context. Mirroring John's use of the beard to "inspire trust," Henri recalled growing a mustache when he was a young professional in his late twenties to appear older and more credible:

> When I became information director of [an important telecommunication network], I was still quite young. I was not even 30. And to make myself older, I grew a moustache … I wanted to make myself older because I was in a situation… I was in a key position and to give me more authority… I thought it was giving me more authority at the time. – Henri, 67, consultant

Henri offers the example of growing of a moustache – an iconic and fashionable symbol of maturity at the time he was starting his career – in order to facilitate a transition toward higher professional status. A number of participants explain that

as younger adults or as teenagers, they were eager to be taken seriously. We can also consider Rouben's account in light of Henri's reference to a moustache that conveys authority: "I thought to myself: A beard seems to suit me. Maybe it ages me a little, but being younger, I can capitalize on it [*laughs*]."

In these instances, the malleability of the face produces an acceleration of time, at least in appearance. An intentional aging of the face emphasizes a strong association between progress and an emerging adulthood that nourishes hope of better things to come. Early adulthood is a period that can be associated with many facial transformations and life turning points. It does not refer to a specific age but essentially to a time of "emerging adulthood" (Weinberger, Zavisca & Silva 2017) characterized by an envisioning of new or better things to come. In this respect, participants' recollections of their young face convey the manipulation of both matter and time in order to bring the future closer.

> Between the ages of 15-16, I started wearing makeup. *Interviewer: How did it make you feel?* Grown-up. An adult… When you are young, you want to be older. That's the paradox. You want to be older… You want to get your own apartment, you no longer want to stay at home, you want to take your life into your hands, to live: that's what you want. – Clara, 59, company manager

Clara describes here the autonomous and self-sufficient women that makeup helped bring closer. In relation to aging theorist and cultural critic Margaret M. Gullette's definition of progress as a "promise" to American youth, this example illustrates how aging the face, by applying makeup, means progressing towards something better ("to get your own apartment"; "to take your life into your

hands"). Progress also refers in that sense to the prospect of an accumulation of "valued traits" over time, traits such as attractiveness, efficacy, creativity and so on (Gullette 2004). My findings show how these valued traits seem to manifest through mature features, especially during early adulthood.

"Intentional aging" (Fernandez & Lastovicka 2011) may involve the transformation of an object in order to give it a desirable vintage feel. Here the intentional aging of the face similarly aims for a simulated desirable more mature appearance. It is not meant to bring back the past, however, but to move forward into a promising future. With the help of makeup or the growing of a beard, one can get a foretaste of this future, while remaining flexible in going back and forth between younger and older selves. Implied by the malleability of the young face that allows for identity play and self-shifting (Goulding et al. 2009; Thompson 2000; Tian & Belk 2005), the malleability of both matter and time provides this additional flexibility to go back and forth between age identities. Participants' facial transformations during early adulthood reveal the benefits of imbuing the face with more mature age-related cues (e.g. authority, credibility, and maturity). Rouben's remark about "capitaliz[ing] on it" shows him leveraging matter for the sake of a bettering of the self. Mature facial features are desired and experienced positively ("it inspires trust"). This positive script of aging resonates with the idea of progress as an improvement over time (Gullette 2004; Kozinets 2008). Over the course of my inquiry, I have observed that the materialization of such a

positive script of aging, or progress, is reflected in the intentional aging of the face.

This experience of malleability from the perspective of progress contrasts with what participants perceive in others' faces that do not appear as disciplined. Looking at others' faces where matter and time are both found to be uncontrolled, participants discuss the appearance of others who do not take actions to discipline their aging face or who do so, yet in an excessive way. Here, my findings reveal an abjection of others, combining an abject appearance and abject identities.

4.1.2 Abject Others

Abjection of Agedness. At the time of my interview with Florence, she had just come back from a funeral that gave her the opportunity to reunite with relatives that she had not seen for a while. As she recalled this occasion, she provided a rich description of one of her cousins who shocked her with her outdated appearance:

> I think of my cousin whom I saw recently. She's a bit younger than me and she looks 5-10 years older. Perhaps because of the way she dresses or the way she styles her hair… or the face. I thought to myself, "Oh, she looks like my aunt who passed away." She has her mother's features who died in her 55-60s. And me, I got past that age and I think I don't look like a *madame*. And her sister was next to her. She's older than me, yet she cares about her appearance. She always looks well-turned out, cute and everything. For her, it is im-por-tant. And it's her sister… The other one, she wears what she likes, for sure… but, when you don't see people often and then you see them, you think "My God!" You don't get why. Does she usually dress differently? Is she wearing this only for the funeral and once she gets home, she'll put it aside? Maybe! The thing is, it leaves an impression, it looks bizarre. – Florence, 58, temporary worker

Participants' descriptions of others' faces often shift to an overall assessment of their appearance. In this passage, Florence reports several elements in her cousin's appearance (e.g. clothing, hairdo and facial features) that contribute, together, to produce this "bizarre", baffling impression ("you think 'My God!' You don't get why"). Most shocking to Florence is the fact that although this cousin is younger than her, she looks older ("she looks 5-10 years older"). Florence's discomfort with an "appearance of agedness" (Gilleard & Higgs 2013) in her cousin evokes the reversal of a sociocultural script of progress: decline (Gullette 2004). In a follow-up to the above description, this script of decline is even more salient as Florence ties the appearance of agedness to the identity of someone who lives a secluded lifestyle: "Even though we are about the same age, she looks older than me. And her sister was explaining this by…and perhaps she was right… by the fact that she's a woman who stays at home and doesn't go out much."

Originally, the abject refers to what "disturbs identity" (Kristeva 1982, p.4). For example, the abject single person is an identity that opposes the prevailing heterosexual partnership status quo (Lai et al. 2015). Following a similar rationale, the abject "woman who stays at home" or "*madame*" reflects an identity that opposes the prevailing malleable self-in-progress ideal. In particular, Florence's use of the term *madame* extends its habitual use ("Me, I got past that age and I think I don't look like a *madame*"). While *madame* and *monsieur* (i.e. Mrs. and Mr.) are terms of politeness commonly used to underscore a "polite age

hierarchy" (Gullette 2004, p.131), Florence's use of the term rather exemplifies how these presumably polite terms may also conceal stereotypical connotations, for example when they are imposed on others to stress their old age, an appearance of agedness, or a certain lifestyle that evokes a script of decline. The English term *ma'am* holds a similar double-meaning (Angier 2010).

As such, participants' descriptions of others shed light on an abjection of old age that merges together an abject old age identity and an abject appearance of agedness. Higgs and Gilleard (2015, p.93) have observed that abjection – in the case of an appearance of agedness – "is pitiable at best, despicable at worst." In addition, my findings specifically show that an appearance of agedness is more likely to be read as a failure at mobilizing the malleability of the face, also suggesting a certain carelessness towards existing standards of care.

Consider for example Emma, who was particularly disturbed by the appearance of men her age: "I'm going to tell you, a single girl, you know when she's looking for a guy, she almost has to go 10 years younger to get a guy that in general looks well enough. Because guys in their early fifties, I'm telling you, oof [*discouraged*]… some really look teeeerrible." Emma spoke bluntly and did not hide her disapproval when referring to these men that she labelled as "*mononc"*". Like other abject identities mentioned by the participants (e.g. *madame*), the *mononc'* constitutes a "compound stereotype" (Andreoletti, Leszcynski & Disch 2015) in the sense that it is a stereotypical identity at the intersection of age and gender. Emma's use of the term *mononc'* evokes the abjection of an untamed

outdated appearance ("they look outdated and they don't look like they fit with the times"), particularly in relation to men of a certain age. The abjected otherness thus construed conveys a visual cultural imagery that echoes a collective imaginary of archetypal monstrous masculine (e.g., Higgs & Gilleard 2015; Wadenius 2010) and feminine (e.g., Creed 1993; DeFalco 2010; Shildrick 1999) identities. The untamed outdated appearance of these men reveals an overtly outdated appearance that can be contrasted with an overtly rejuvenated appearance (e.g., sexy oldie in Attwood 2015; anachronistic appearance in Woodward 1991), and which speaks to Kristeva (1982)'s conceptualization of the abject in relation to "temporal disorders".

Emma's distinction between herself and men of her age reveals her perception of these men's outdated appearance as failures to the underlying assumption of malleability and agency from the perspective of a self-in-progress. This distinction can be extended to how Emma experiences the aging of her parents:

> My father has aged and he has significantly changed. He completely let himself go and he no longer takes care of himself… My mother is well-turned out, she is beautiful, she takes care of herself, she also maintains a beauty ritual, she's in shape and everything. My father him, he's a hermit and he gave up. So he doesn't really take care of himself. – Emma, 51, personal stylist

This comparison between the mother and father illustrates the distinction between an appropriate disciplining of one's appearance and a reprehensible carelessness.

When commenting on her father's appearance, Emma did not choose the term *mononc'* this time, but drew instead on the metaphor of the hermit. This metaphor helps to express here her perception that her father fits this category of individuals who are totally disengaged from caring for their appearance ("He completely let himself go and he no longer takes care of himself"), which Emma also observed in other men of her age ("They don't take care of themselves"). As explained by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, p.162), categorization, through the use of metaphors, can help us describe and make sense of "the way our bodies are and the nature of our interactions with other people". Here, like the previously cited *madame*, the hermit evokes an abjection of old age that ties together an abject appearance and an abject identity. This abject appearance can be affiliated with homelessness and unacceptable standards of appearance and cleanliness (Hodgetts et al. 2010). Hence, the hermit is a metaphor that highlights these abject properties of individuals living in seclusion from society. Generally speaking, the appearance of visible signs of aging conveys a reprehensible disregard for sociocultural norms of care. This interpretation thus underscores participants' perception that by not taking responsibility of their physical appearance, some individuals are allowing themselves to be transformed by the passage of time and to become abject others (e.g. *madame*, *mononc'*, hermit).

In continuity with these findings, participants state that undertaking certain facial transformations, such as hair colouring, is a matter of utmost necessity in order to overcome an appearance of agedness:

> I don't think that I'd be the girl with gray hair. Some find it cool but I'd be more the type to dye my hair white if it was turning white. What I mean is that the "in-between", the "all natural" look that comes with time and then you get the manly grey sideburns: I think that this looks hippie-ish, this looks too granola for me and who I really am right now. I just don't want… I have nothing against the idea of helping nature a little. I just don't want it to be too drastic. … I am certain that even cavewomen found something to put in their hair. On the other hand, cutting one's face, it's way different. I hope that this will never be part of my plans. – Kate, 36, marketing sales representative

Kate, who has not yet found her first white hair, is already planning to colour her hair when she does. In reference to those women who do not colour their hair, Kate and Marlene mentioned an unappealing hippie look. While the hippie look may reflect for some the "belief in the natural, the authentic" (Wilson 1985, p.194), here, it rather implies a certain carelessness in relation to an untamed agedness in appearance. This reprehension of both the untamed and natural resonates with a conceptualization of the "wild" as the "wrong kind of nature" (Cronon 1996), one that differs from what consumer researchers have defined as a desirable primitive otherness (Belk & Costa 1998; Canniford & Karababa 2013; Canniford & Shankar 2007; 2013). And while these studies have identified the potential unveiling of a desirable primitive otherness through proximity with nature, the above excerpt rather expresses how such an untamed appearance may bring undesirable, abject identities closer. In particular, Kate's account reveals, as an outcome of the "all natural" hair look, the internalization of a masculine grey hair pattern ("manly grey sideburns") and the performance of an abject hippie-ish persona.

While an untamed appearance of agedness can evoke abjection, my findings suggest paradoxically that the disciplining of this untamed appearance may also lead to abjection. Transformational practices deemed "excessive (vs. appropriate)" (Samper et al. 2018) attract participants' disapproving gaze. These excessive transformational practices constitute an additional source of abjection.

Abjection of Ridiculous Excess. Recalling a recent reunion with a friend that she had not seen for a while, Marlene, a colourful 68-year-old woman, describes the unsettling effect of excessive cosmetic surgery, stating:

> It was strange, it was "Huh?", it was as if she was wearing a mask. It was as if it was no longer the same person. It was artificial, like a mask. When I was working at [*luxury retailer*], I used to see a lot of these *madames* who had had tons of surgery and it showed right away. It seems like they all share the same features, they all share the same… the same face. – Marlene, 68, life coach

First talking about her friend's mask-like facial appearance, Marlene then moves on to explain the depersonalizing effects of excessive cosmetic surgery by referring to the *madames* who end up all looking all alike. The above excerpt emphasizes this relationship between artificialness in appearance and the loss of individual' identity ("It was no longer the same person"; "they all share the same features"; "the same face"). Several participants similarly insist on the unsettling effect of a generic surgically-transformed facial appearance, making references to "plastic dolls", "things" and "mascots".

Technologies are empowering means that help consumers manufacture age-proof bodies and exert control over matter that otherwise "deteriorates over time" (Thompson & Hirschman 1995, p.143). From a modernist perspective, "material progress" and "human progress" go hand in hand with technological interventions (Firat & Venkatesh 1995; Kozinets 2008). One might also expect these technologies to solve the "problem" of aging (Askegaard et al. 2002; Clarke & Griffin 2007). However, my findings emphasize that an excessive disciplining of the aging face is equally abject, in its own way:

> It's a bit ridiculous, it's like the phenomenon that we see with women and botox … They look unreal, they look retouched. It looks ugly, distorted … It looks manufactured because it shows that it's not real, that it's plasticized. That it's not a person, it's a thing. – Clara, 59, company manager

> Sometimes we are so eager to look young that we end up looking ridiculous. Whether you are 35, 30 or 40 years old, when you really want to transform yourself, there is according to me a line that should not be crossed. We have an identity and we have to keep that identity with what we are.– Nancy, 56, department manager

Participants' descriptions of others' transformed faces as the outcomes of excessive rejuvenating practices are characterized by references to what is ridiculous, strange or crazy-looking. These rejuvenating practices do not always involve intrusive anti-aging practices like cosmetic surgery. Hair dye helps in camouflaging an appearance of agedness. However, consistent with Butler (1990)'s argument that some performances fail to conform to expected norms, participants see in these excessive rejuvenating practices age performances that lack in credibility. Nancy brings up for consideration these potential unsettling

disconnects between an individual's appearance and identity ("we have to keep that identity with what we are"). She specifically elaborates on the use of eccentric hair colour by older persons: "I see some examples where the line has been crossed a little … blue hair, pink hair… It is a trend with younger people these days and I find it quite pretty, but for a woman of a certain age, I am not sure." Likewise, Florence who consider the long hairstyle to be inappropriate on a woman "of a certain age," explains her views as follow:

> About women's hair, when you see a woman of my age with long hair, for me it's like no, tie you hair. I have a problem with that… At a certain age, you have to tie your hair and style it like a woman of your age. Those who seem young from the back and then, they turn around and "OMG!" No. I have a problem with that. When you're at home, it's okay to let them loose. But in public… I think that it's not… even some actresses. I am sorry but… long, long, and they give themselves a younger style. No, it bothers me. – Florence, 58, temporary worker

Echoing Goffman's (1959, p.59) observation that "the more closely the impostor's performance approximates the real thing, the more intensely we may be threatened," Florence stresses the disturbing illusion that this choice of hairstyle ends up producing on others. She specifically recalls these moments when she felt cheated on the age of a woman, believing for an instant that she was young until an uncomfortable truth unfolded as the woman turned around. This description implies that wearing a long hairstyle might bring closer an abjected otherness (e.g. "sexy oldie" in Attwood 2015). Some male participants similarly expressed finding the practice of hair colouring excessive when used by men. Consider Steven's claim: "Hair dye for guys! Come on! Who are you kidding?

Why are you doing this?" And this statement from Kevin: "Old *monsieurs* with dyed hair, it's a little… I don't find it particularly attractive, it's a bit bizarre." These excerpts reveal that some transgressions of what is socially or culturally acceptable can lie at the intersection of age and gender identity performances.

Drawing explicitly on popular culture references, including local celebrities, some participants elaborated on such transgressions of acceptable transformative practices:

> I believe that aging well is about accepting the direction that one's body is taking and not going the opposite way. You know, some women, they look crazy and like this [*pulling on the sides of his face*]. I saw a picture of Julie Snyder recently and I found her ugly. I was like "stop!". She is stuck in that… poor them… Me, I want my face to evolve in a natural way. – Steven, 30, actor
>
> It does not look natural, especially for men… Éric Salvail, he looks redone… parts of his face… and I don't find it attractive. He looks like he is fighting signs of aging, and that makes him look like a mascot. It's bizarre. – Kevin, 30, graphic designer

Celebrity culture often promotes such encounters with others' faces, perceived as either good or bad examples of disciplining (Attwood 2015; Clarke & Griffin 2007; Marshall & Rahman 2015). Participants' descriptions of others resonate with popular media analyses of celebrity faux pas regarding appropriate standards of care (Dold 2013; Praetorius 2016; Woolf 2016). Whereas the malleable self-in-progress illustrates an understanding of transformation (physical or else) as a "right" and "responsibility" (McCracken 2008), these descriptions rather underscores others' failures to exert this right in a responsible manner.

4.1.3 Summary: Agentic Self and Abject Others

The face can be the site of a number of transformations, many of which are aimed at fulfilling identity projects. In this regard, this theme expounds participants' experience of malleability in relation to their own faces, as opposed to their interpretation of others' visible signs of aging. Given that this malleability is intended to support the progress of the self over time, my interpretation also highlights how the sociocultural ideology of progress structures participants' perceptions of others as abject individuals who have failed to mobilize this malleability as expected. This opposition between agentic selves and abject others seems to justify the use of technologies that can help one embody the former while keeping the latter at a comfortable distance. Yet, an additional form of abjection characterizes others' excessive attempts at disciplining an aging face. These findings, that so far portray participants as agentic consumers who leverage the malleability of the face in order to perform desired identities, strongly resonate with extant literature on physical transformations that facilitate identity construction (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Sørensen & Thomsen 2006). But then, most unexpectedly, unintentional facial transformations expose cracks in the façade of the agentic self. The next theme reveals how one's own aging face unveils the presence of an abjected otherness within that performs participants' selves against their will.

4.2 Unveilings of an Otherness Within

Recall that Emma described playfully transforming her appearance, notably by changing her hair colour from time to time. During the interview, Emma also mentioned that she takes care of herself on a daily basis: "A tonic in the morning to clean the skin. I try to favor lighter coverage foundations. I use day creams and night creams. I wear makeup all the time." The effort she invests seems to her to pay off: she is often referred to as a "more than average" beautiful woman. She believes that indeed, she is "aging like a good wine": " I look at myself and I think, I am 51, I do not look like certain women of 51." Emma's perception of herself, and behavior, point to a sense of personal agency over a malleable face, and with it, a capacity to express a desired identity. In accordance with the first theme of my findings, these examples testify to Emma's experience as an agentic self in progress.

However, she also recounts experiences, such as remarks from others, which expose the changing materiality of her face and threaten that identity of a beautiful woman. These experiences reveal cracks in the façade of her agentic self. Emma recalled, for example, a recent encounter with an aunt who commented bluntly:

> "Ah you're starting to have the [*family name*]'s jowls." This is it, this is sagging and this, they all have it, it's sagging and… well you see! I think that this is what made me "Ding-ding" [*alarm sound*] and I thought "Wo wo wo" and I started to look for ways to get it fixed. I don't recall the exact term that she used but… it was not positive! So I thought to myself "OMG, no!" I don't want to look like that!

In contrast to a malleable face capable of supporting a desired identity performance, this episode reveals the unsettling experience of a face changing in ways that are unwanted. Pulling on the sides of her cheeks, Emma mimicked what she clearly perceived as an unflattering family resemblance with elderly relatives from her father's side. She expressed much concern and she referred repetitively to the characteristic as "it". Emma found within herself an abjected otherness that she had thus far only perceived in others who are not only older but who are also looking visibly old, a visible testament to failure at mobilizing the malleability of the face to control the aging process ("and this, they all have it"; "I don't want to look like that"). Not only did "it" threaten to jeopardize her beautiful features but it also fostered an uncanny resemblance to an abject aging other who does not conform to sociocultural ideals of youth.

Accordingly, this second theme examines participants' experience of unintentional facial transformations as provocations. As such, it is argued that these not only engender feelings of disempowerment but also of 'Otherness'. In particular, my analysis of these experiences calls attention to participants' interpretation of the unique agency of the aging face, including the abjected otherness that it unveils, most uncannily, against their will.

4.2.1 The Face that Provokes

Cracks in the Façade of the Agentic Self. More than any other body part, the face is expected to symbolize the self (Synnott 1993). As the experiences

detailed below show, however, this expectation can contrast markedly with reality. In these moments of sudden realization of the changes brought by the slow, yet provoking, aging process, participants are unable to recognize themselves and must make sense of a different self, of someone Other. Unintentional facial transformations are provoking because they unsettle the agentic self and shed light on an external locus of agency:

> When you're losing hair… when you're having a shower and you're losing hair… more than average. During one of my last visit to my hairdresser she told me: "My God, you lost so much hair!" I had noticed… but to have someone else notice it … It was bothering me. I wondered, my god, will I have to wear a wig at some point? I was almost losing sleep over it … it cannot be, what will I do without hair? – Florence, 58, temporary worker

> I don't recognize myself. I don't recognize myself at all. Nothing is working in that picture. It is a *madame* that came out that evening … And this is not what I want. If there is really something that I don't want, it is that. – Helena, late 50s, professor

The interviews provide a range of examples to suggest that a surprising image of one's face in a photo or the experience of an unintentional facial change, in addition to the comments of others, can bring about a momentary encounter with a face that is changing in unexpected and unwanted ways. These transformations were neither planned nor desired; rather, they were experienced as surprising, shocking and baffling. Although the provoking effects of the changes varied in intensity, participants' tone as they narrated their experiences often conveyed anxiety and apprehension ("It was bothering me"; "I was almost losing sleep over it"; "This is not what I want"). These were emotions that contrasted greatly with

those expressed in relation to intentional facial transformations ("to change my look"; "to shake things up"; "just to amuse myself"). Whereas accounts of intentional facial transformation conveyed participants' sense of ease with the malleability of their face, accounts here express dismay at this same face taking on unwanted characteristics.

These descriptions often include references to a 'normal' face or the features that participants are used to and that are acknowledged as a part of who they are. This can be observed in one of the above excerpts where a participant recounts a normal hair condition and appearance that would not presage a sudden and unexpected "more than average" hair loss. Sometimes documented in the literature as the "referential" (Le Breton 2003; 2013) or "default" face (Gullette 2004), the familiar face is analogous to a well-functioning body, i.e., notable by its absence since normalcy tends to go unnoticed (Leder 1990). In contrast, the changing face, and specifically one that is changing in undesirable and unwanted ways, is a face that attracts and disturbs the gaze ("It cannot be"; "Nothing is working in that picture"). This perceptual shift sets the scene for a discussion of the provoking effects of the changing face.

Figure 4.1 That's What Aging Is

In his interview, Rouben shared his experience of these provoking effects in an original way when he grabbed a pen and a piece of paper, and started to draw the face of a young man with the confident and skillful hand of an experienced artist (**Figure 4.1**). Pausing a few seconds, he then moved on to vigorously attack the face, adding lines in strategic areas: around the eyes, on the forehead and on the sides the mouth. "That's what aging is," said Rouben, adding that if he had not used a permanent pen, he would have also removed some hair. As he was drawing, the attack mounted by the rapid movement of his pen quickly conveyed the signs of aging. Aging can be a slow, gradual process but my findings endorse a sudden, unexpected encounter with a changing materiality as a gale force wind or a "slap from the time glove" (Sayre 2013). Resonating with Miller's (2001) investigation of the material agency of the home in which he suggests that "where we cannot possess we are in danger of being possessed" (p.120), participants' accounts of unintentional facial transformations reveal

provoking effects produced independently of their intentions and actions. In contrast to the malleable face, one that provokes is a face that is slipping out of one's control. Provocations evoke this combination of matter and time as untamable forces that actively impinge on the appearance of the familiar face. Given that these changes are occuring unwillingly and in a manner that conflicts with their desired identities, participants are unable to predict or choose the way in which aging will transform them. Unintentional facial transformation thus literally exposes cracks in the façade of the agentic self.

Florence, a mother of three, who at the time of the interview was experiencing the unexpected hair loss described earlier, moved on to suggest an analogy between this loss and bereavement:

> The face is always showing. It is not like a hand or a tie … or even a foot. The face, it's you. So, it sucks. You try to… you hope that it will not happen often … Hair loss… it doesn't grow back again. It's serious. Hair loss, I'd say… it's like a missing finger, a limb that is not working like it used to. You must live with it, you must live differently. You have to accept, it's a bereavement. – Florence, 58, temporary worker

The description of the loss of her "normal" hair condition as a situation to mourn illustrates the vulnerability imposed by the loss of one's familiar face and the anxiety that that can bring about ("You hope that it will not happen often"; "It's a bereavement"). The loss recalls natural disasters and other documented unplanned events (Barrios, Piacentini & Salciuviene 2012; Belk 1988; Cherrier & Murray 2007; Delorme, Zinkhan & Haggen 2004) that make consumers feel disempowered. In addition, since this loss is woven closely into an existing self-

identity, its experience particularly intensifies the associated levels of anxiety. In this respect, the excerpt above highlights how changes such as unwanted hair loss can jeopardize the boundary between one's face and one's self ("The face is always showing (…) The face, it's you"). The next section takes a closer look at how these provocations can engender identity construction against one's will.

4.2.2 The Uncanny

The Otherness Within. The use of pictures as visual aids during the interviews conducted for this study inspired participants to provide rich descriptions of the changes occurring to their faces over time. Some pictures also triggered powerful memories of instances of misrecognition. Helena for example described a picture of herself that she particularly disliked and in which she can hardly recognize herself:

> I look like a *madame*. For me, to look like a *madame* is… it's the image that I can make myself of someone who is very very tidy in a life and… who has a certain lifestyle and has no intention to evolve into something else… Ultimately, this is what I think I look like… So maybe sometimes I look like a *madame* also… It looks like a picture from a wax museum [*laughs*]. It is as if one [*picture that she likes*] has a lot of presence, and we can feel the presence of a person, and the other [*this picture*], not at all. It is completely artificial.– Helena, late 50s, professor

Helena described herself as a "woman of her time", a "woman of her generation", and as "full of energy". She was proud of her active lifestyle, notably referring to her daily/weekly workout ("I run 50k every week"). In her elaborate interpretation of her unrecognizable face, she noted the presence of an intruder, a

madame. This *madame*, who emerged from participant descriptions of agedness in others, reemerges here, but in the context of a self-description. Helena describes the *madame* as a creature of habit, trapped in a routine, who "has no intention to evolve". To her, the *madame* represents a secluded lifestyle. The "completely artificial" appearance of her facial features in this picture invites Helena to pinpoint a resemblance to a "wax figure," one that is particularly evocative when it is set beside her interpretation of the *madame* as someone with "no intention to evolve". The inanimate appearance of the wax figure communicates stagnation and lack of movement ("It is as if one has a lot of presence, and we can feel the presence of a person, and the other not at all"). The account uncovers an "uncanny experience of splitting" (Woodward 1991) between what this participant considers to be her true self ("woman of her time", "of her generation", and "full of energy") and the self projected by the double-image. Consider for example how the *madame* contradicts Helena's self by evoking an abjected otherness usually found in aging others. A distinction thus appears between what (and how) Helena feels, what she does (body disciplining), and what she actually sees when she looks at a picture of herself.

Whereas the participants' descriptions of others developed under the previous theme centered on an external source of abjected otherness (e.g. *madame*, *mononc'*, hermit, etc.), this source of abjected otherness, although felt as external, is encountered on the inside. This echoes Lacan's (1960) French translation of the uncanny as *extimité* which refers to a peculiar commingling of

the outside (abjected otherness) with the inside (familiar self). The relationship between the provoking effects of the face and the unveiling of an otherness within thus describes a peculiar form of intersubjective self-othering, one formed by an abjected otherness experienced by the self.

Consider next Florence's story, particularly as she elaborates her experience of hair loss:

> I have aunts on my father's side of the family who lost so much hair that… Like one of my aunts, I don't see her often but I know she wears a wig. So I told myself that perhaps we have the same genes. Hey! I wouldn't find that funny! And I saw another one of my aunts recently and her hair is sparse too. She wears her hair short and it looks like she has less of it. So, I told myself… well maybe that's it, I'll end up like my aunts with less hair! And when you age, these things happen. You know, we often see elderly people with sparse hair and it's not that bad. But not now, I am too young! At some point it might happen and I would have to deal with it… later… like when I'll be 80 for example. It would be more acceptable I think…- Florence, temporary worker, 58

Hair loss is here suggested to pose a threat to Florence's desired identity performance as a mature (but not yet elderly) woman. The feared prospect of an uncanny resemblance to others specifically involves Florence's aunts. Like Emma previously, Florence insists on the power of genetics. That is, the prospect of becoming like her family relations constitutes a sword of Damocles hanging over her head ("maybe that's it, I'll end up like my aunts"). Florence explains that sparse hair in elderly people, while not desirable, can be expected ("At some point it might happen"; "It would be more acceptable"), but not in someone her age. It is, rather, an abjected otherness that contradicts her self-identity. The

feared prospect of an uncanny resemblance to others does not stop there, as Florence's account also highlights the shared properties of her hair loss pattern with that of balding men:

> When you always had tons of hair, quite a lot of hair and then there's less of it… not everywhere but just here… like a bald person, like someone with a receding hair line. Ultimately, men slowly lose their hair like this, gradually at the front, but they keep hair on the sides… can you see the picture? For men it's acceptable, but women without hair… Guys that lose their hair must feel a shock at first but after that, well… they get used to it. But for a woman, it seems that we're supposed to keep our hair as long as possible. - Florence, temporary worker, 58

Pointing to another picture of herself that she likes, Florence asserts that this masculine pattern of hair loss poses a threat to her desired self-identities: "Here I look more like a mother, a woman." The uncanny resemblance to balding men prompts Florence to speak of an "unnatural" pattern of hair loss and an abnormal "more than average" degree of loss. This conveys an understanding of the uncanny resemblance as an additional form of abjection, highlighting a "crisis of the natural" (Royle 2003, p.1). Florence's own "nature" as a mother and woman is jeopardized by this masculine pattern of hair loss ("for a woman, it seems that we're supposed to keep our hair as long as possible"). While Florence does not consider balding men as abject others ("for men it's acceptable"), she does consider abject the masculine pattern of hair loss that poses a threat to her motherly and womanly self-identities. This instance of unveiling suggests that what is other to the self and not perceived as abject at first, can become abject once encountered on the inside, and can equally help to elicit the uncanny.

This account of female hair loss illustrates how unintentional facial transformation can contribute to blurring the separation, which the face is expected to mark, between the self and the other (Synnott 1993). Whereas forced transformations occur "when we are confronted with something new in the self" (McCracken 2008, p.236), an uncanny resemblance evokes something new that is also disturbingly familiar ("Like a bald person, like someone with a receding hair line"). The two excerpts also highlight how an uncanny resemblance with others can engender a sense of similarity between two unrelated individuals, and from this, an illusion of fusion between the familiar and strange. When Florence asserts that female hair loss could be "more acceptable" at a later age ("it's not that bad"), she considers sex and age identity differences simultaneously. In addition to emphasizing the multiple identities that constitute a consumer self (Ahuvia 2005; Bahl & Milne 2010), this underscores the multiple others that also constitute the self.

Confrontations such as these between participants and their distorted self-images recall the uncanny manifestation of the doppelgänger (i.e. double) (Freud 1919; Lacan 1966; Rank 1914; Woodward 1991). This is particularly apparent when participants recount feeling like an Other different from the self ("Maybe sometimes I look like a *madame* also") or at once self and other ("It's the same person but it doesn't look like it"). These statements illustrate the power of doppelgänger imagery which usually resides in its capacity to raise doubt and uncertainty about an individual's identity (Freud 1919).

Uncanny unveilings, as examined here, occur as participants encounter an otherness as part of themselves. These unveilings relate to some extent to the phenomenon of abjection and alienation. Indeed, they connect participants to others whom they have deemed abject (e.g. *madame*). Failure to recognize oneself is also an experience that borders on self-alienation, that is, the "experience [of] the self as alien" (Allison 1978, p.564). Whereas abjection and alienation are focused on the boundaries separating the familiar from the strange and the self from the other, however, the uncanny is focused on the blurring of these boundaries: "the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation (...), it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar" (Royle 2003, p.1). The concept of the uncanny, introduced in the works of psychiatrist Ernst Jentsch (1906) and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1919), here helps to convey the entanglement of the familiar and the strange, the self and the other. In addition, as discussed in the section that follows, it helps to explain the mixture of animism and anthropomorphism that further characterizes participant experiences of unveiling.

Performed by Aging. Max reminisces about a key moment when he decided to shave his head. He anticipated the day that he would have to abandon the long punk-hairstyle:

> Now that I have less hair, it would be silly to wear it long … I shaved because I have been balding for some time at the front. I never wanted to be like these old guys with sparse long hair. I never wanted to be that guy [*laughs*] I used to have this biology teacher in high school and I was always reminded of that guy when I started to go bald. – Max, 36, industrial designer

This instance reveals the connection between hair loss and a potential abject becoming ("I never wanted to be that guy"; "I was always reminded of that guy"). The source of the abjection was specific: this older man who, by choosing not to abandon his youthful long hair, engaged in a performance that lacked credibility ("these old guys with sparse long hair"). While he was experiencing his own gradual hair loss, Max also began to see this abjected otherness lurking within. Implied was the unsettling possibility that if he did nothing, this abjected otherness would eventually take over.

In a second story, Max recounts how he once felt overpowered by an abjected otherness as he grew a mustache for a role:

> I was playing a part in a music video clip last year … I had a fuller beard at the time so I just shaved it and kept the moustache. Over one weekend, I was wearing that moustache for the videoclip. And obviously, others see you differently when you are wearing a moustache. It almost scares them off … People of my age, we're all a bit traumatized by moustaches. We all have a *mononc'* with a big moustache dipping in his soup. So, when I was working at RadioShack at that time, I can swear to you, I had the worst sales in the world with my moustache. I just looked like a pervert. It's as if you become cheesy, the moustache forces you… – Max, 36, industrial designer

With the moustache, Max describes feeling "forced" to become this *mononc',* which he associates with a displeasing appearance and inappropriate or deviant sexuality ("pervert"; "cheesy"). Although Max does not explicitly refer to old age, his description of the *mononc'*, which he later also describes as a "dirty uncle" resonates with previous interpretations of stigmatized older subjects and

more specifically with that of the "dirty old man" i.e. an old fogey "abjected for his desire" (Higgs and Gilleard 2015). The moustache is found here to materialize this stereotypical age identity and to give Max the impression of being possessed, and performed, by an external entity.

The fact that the face constitutes the locus of one's self-identity can explain why participants express difficulties with disentangling themselves from the doppelgänger image that it is materializing ("It's as if you become cheesy, the moustache forces you"). This is a feared becoming at odds with their existing self-identities and my findings suggest that participants here foresee the imposition of an abjected otherness that they do not want to become. This is an intersubjective self-othering wherein participants' selves are formed in relation to a face that provokes. Moreover, this provoking face recalls that of abject others. Although it is a thing without agency and intentionality in a human sense, this provoking face, through the effects of aging, takes part in an intersubjective formation of the self by stimulating a unwanted change (Pickering in Borgerson 2005). By doing so through the imposition of an abjected otherness, my findings show that it effectively supports the perception of human agency and intentionality. This perception can be explained by an uncanny combination of anthropomorphism and animism, according to which participants attribute their provoking face with human intentions and a life of its own (Freud 1919; Jentsch 1906). Unlike self-othering practices that center on the intentional internalization of a desirable otherness (Canniford & Karaba 2013; Sobh et al. 2014), the

intersubjective self-othering uncovers the unintentional unveiling of an abjected otherness within. Instead of being observed from a distance and experienced as separate from the self (Goulding, Saren & Follett 2003), this abjected otherness is found within, entangled with the self. And as mentioned, some participants' descriptions imply that it may actually take over. This feeling of being taken over by this abjected otherness within resonates with traditional uncanny manifestations of anthropomorphism and animism, especially those that features a body, which by defying an appearance of normalcy, elicits the experience of being inhabited by a life of its own (Jentsch 1906).

Consider another excerpt from Florence's narrative where the perceived threat of being performed by an abjected otherness is particularly salient. Looking at the picture on her drivers' license, Florence notes several anomalies. From there, she cannot help but notice an uncanny resemblance to her brother:

> I find that old age plays tricks on you. It is the same person but it doesn't look like it … I don't know, I look like my brother. What do I think… I think my god… no, well it's me at the same time! – Florence, 58, temporary worker

Comparing this unflattering photo with another that she likes and in which she better recognizes herself ("I look like a mother, a woman"), Florence points to the usual suspect, old age, and states eloquently: "Old age plays tricks on you". This interpretation of old age as a mischievous actor recalls the Jungian archetype of the trickster i.e., the malicious and deceitful joker that materializes when an individual "feels himself at the mercy of annoying 'accidents' which thwart his

will and his actions with apparently malicious intent" (Jung 1931, p.262). It shares properties with the uncanny where familiar objects, including bodies, take their viewers by surprise by displaying a sudden strangeness in their liveliness (automata in Dolar 1991; Freud 1919; body in epileptic crisis in Jentsch 1906; haunted house in Vidler 1987). By manifesting the strange features of an Other, a familiar face can seem to be animated by a will of its own ("Old age plays tricks on you"; "the moustache forces you"). Contrary to a body that resists or that "refuses to succumb" (Thompson & Hirschman 1998) to one's manipulations, 'the joker' provokes and performs participants against their will. As a quasi-subject (Serres 1980) the face that provokes is no longer experienced as a malleable resource waiting to be sculpted. It is, rather one that incites new possibilities of becoming (Zwick & Dholakia 2006), including feared becomings. The face that should be malleable and at the service of one's identity constructions seems to be performing the self instead.

4.2.3 Summary: Unveilings of an Otherness Within

Hair thinning, the appearance of wrinkles, the sagging of the skin: these unwanted and often baffling actions of the aging face over time constitute a set of unintentional transformations that can engender identity construction. My analysis of participant experiences of these unintentional facial transformations sheds light on a face that provokes. These provocations consist in participants' perception of the unique agency of an aging face, culminating in a meaningful set of experiences described as unveilings of an abjected otherness within. My

interpretation draws on the uncanny, a concept that helps to explain the intermeshing of participants' selves with an abjected otherness that is, in fact, a reflection of abject others. With a provoking face revealing an abjected otherness, the last theme of my findings elaborates on the mourning of desired identities and, in response, the reenergizing of these identities by participants seeking to gain a renewed sense of agency.

4.3 Beyond the Looking Glass

Recall the abject otherness within that Emma encountered when her aunt pointed out her developing jowls–a trait she shares with older family members. This was not the first time Emma had encountered an otherness within. Her striking resemblance to her daughter had earlier made Emma realize how distant she was growing from that attractive youthful glow:

> Look at my daughter here [*picture*], I used to have a face like this, round like that. She has long hair, a bit blond… And there was this time when I went to pick her up and spend a weekend with her. At some point we looked at each other and "aaah" [*amazed*], we recognized one another in each other … But I saw youth in my daughter and it did something to me because I told myself, I don't look like this anymore. … It touched me, made me feel sad a little, it did something to me…then I thought "Come on Emma, that's how it is!" So it was me, noticing… her beauty, her youth and then thinking: "I won't have this anymore."

Pleasing at first glance, the resemblance to her daughter had also had the opposite effect. Her daughter's youthful features confronted her with her own aging face ("I saw youth in my daughter and it did something to me"). Admiring the characteristics that she shared with her daughter, Emma was reminded of the face

she'd once had ("her beauty, her youth (…) I won't have this anymore"). The mother-daughter relationship here resonates with traditional fictional manifestations of the doppelgänger, whereby the competition for attention with one's double eventually leads to the actual death or social alienation of the main protagonist (Dostoïevski 1866; Freud 1919; Lacan 1966; Rank 1914). As the youthful appearance of her doppelgänger daughter calls attention to Emma's own fading glow, it sets the stage for the mourning of her youthful self-identity.

In response, Emma undertakes a number of practices in a conscious attempt to reenergize the desired identities threatened by her aging face. These include direct facial transformations such as a change of hairstyle and a cheek filling procedure. She does however acknowledge the limited support that these disciplining practices can bring to a credible performance of her younger-looking self ("No matter if I was doing a Botox or juvederm, I would never get back this magnificent glow"). By thinking and acting in a way that is time appropriate, however, Emma suggests the possibility of performing youthfulness differently:

> In the end it's not about looking too young like… like a young oldie or an old youngster. It's about being of the moment. To look at least the age which we think we are. You know they say, 50 is the new 40. Well this is it. We all feel sharper, everybody. Sometimes I am dancing like crazy with friends of mine and I do not feel at all like I'm 50, 51, not at all. So I don't want to look like it either.

This claim about the *zeitgeist* emerges as a key component in the reenergizing of Emma's self-identity as a modern and energetic woman, here without specific

mention of an actual facial transformation. Rather, Emma insists that the way she looks correspond to the youthfulness that she feels and acts ("We all feel sharper"; "I am dancing like crazy"; "50 is the new 40"). This energy, sharpness and silliness, is what makes her youthful. Unlike the youthfulness of actual youth and its features, this youthfulness knows no age and has no featural requirements.

Under this third theme, I discuss the ways in which participants experience and negotiate the threat posed by an aging face to the credible performance of desired identities, especially those related to the productive and reproductive domains. As participants look for ways to reenergize these identities, their course of action is consistent with prior consumer research that has emphasized the use of facial transformation as a means of disciplining an appearance of agedness (Joy et al. 2011; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). My findings, however, reveal perceived limits to these disciplining practices. In spite of all efforts, the credibility of desired identity performances will still be undermined by a face that is performed by age. In addition to leveraging the malleability of the face, the reenergizing of desired identities thus highlights a broader set of practices that take advantage of the interplay of material, temporal and social factors in support of alternative performances.

4.3.1 (Re)productive Death

Productive Death. My analysis reveals that, consistent with a progress-oriented culture that equates a youthful appearance with "work, performance," and with "seduction" and "vitality" (Le Breton 2013, p.5), participants were

sensitive to the numerous social expectations in the workplace whereby appearing young and vital reflected employee productivity:

> We, women, we don't allow ourselves to look aged, to look non-energetic. Youth is really associated with energy and vitality. And there is this huge phenomenon of ageism and body shaming in companies that systematically associates an athletic body with someone who can work well, and who is wise. Someone who looks rather young is someone who is believed to be smarter. Therefore, we're living in a society where the pressure to look young is extremely high. – Emma, 51, personal stylist

In this passage, Emma evokes the cult of youth that attributes more energy, more skills, and higher levels of creative intelligence to younger people in the workforce. Indeed, a youthful appearance is often considered a testament to ones' capabilities (Catterall & Maclaran 2001). Emma expresses here the need to take action against the threat of an appearance of agedness ("the pressure to look young is extremely high"), which is at the same time, a threat to her desired identity as a productive professional woman.

Although the first theme of my findings suggested that mature features are valued at a younger age, it is clear here that these features are unwelcomed later in life. Clara, in particular, recalled welcoming her first white hair with a certain pride: " I started to get my first white hairs when I was 25 and I was proud … I thought : well, congrats, you are serious, you are a business woman". However, the meaning of this feature morphed into something less positive over time: "Maybe around my 35, I started to find it less fun. So, I started to dye my hair." Today, Clara believes that showing signs of aging in the workplace makes one is

more likely to be viewed as a liability: "A woman of 59-60, even if she is fashion oriented, she'll start to look outdated, no matter what." Participants describe an evolution in the meaning of mature features over time: from a young self-in-progress to an aging self-in-decline.

My findings highlight the aging face, at this stage, as a *mementori mori* i.e., an unsettling reminder of one's finitude. Drawing on this rationale, they reveal that in the workplace specifically, an appearance of agedness acts as an omen of "productive death". The concept of productive death is proposed here as a means to express participants' fears of the value lost in the workplace at the hands of the aging process. Although the idea of "social death" precisely conveys this value lost in the workplace, productive death is used here to emphasize how an appearance of agedness can lead to an assumption that "productive contribution" to society is no longer possible and thus that older individuals have no "future worth" (Sweeting & Gilhooly 1997). Productive death resonates with the Butlerian notion of ceasing to "matter" and by extension, of being denied a particular identity, on the assumption that its credible performance can no longer be delivered (Butler 1993). This denial of identity drives the construction of an abject self. In this regard, the following excerpt shows how an appearance of agedness triggers an experience of self-abjection in the workplace:

> Newcomers are impeccable, all 'fweeet' [*whistle*] fresh, and super cool… When it comes to age, if you hire someone who's 50, you tell yourself "So, he's 50, he might not look like it but…" When you don't look like it, it helps your cause but if you look like 50, beat-up, then you are going to tell yourself: "So, he'll finish his career over here this one, his days are numbered…" Like me, I will leave for the countryside one day so, it

> becomes less important than if you are surrounded by all these youngsters and that you want to prove that you are still capable, and that you are not the old fogey of the gang. – Simon, 45, graphic designer

Simon, who works in a creative and design-related domain, is planning to eventually retire in a secluded area where he will not experience the burden of a youth-oriented culture. With the arrival of a new generation of co-workers, and the age of retirement ever closer, Simon envisions the gap between his aging appearance and the "impeccable" and "fresh" appearance of newcomers to continue to grow. That is true, as well for Lionel, who recently turned 40, and who, as the eldest of his coworkers, experiences age alone as a signal of dwindling capabilities:

> Lots of my friends were 7-10 years younger than me. And it seems that I was feeling guilty or an old bag to be the eldest … They, at the end of their twenties, they are in full effervescence, at the beginning of their career when there is a kind of professional momentum. And you, you are like… I felt like "over the hill." And it's just a number! But I always had this feeling that I had to be apologetic about my age. … It is when I turned 40 that I decided to be honest… but it took me a lot of time still. – Lionel, 40, musical instrument maker

How participants view themselves is very much influenced by their interactions with others (Joy et al. 2011). In the case of Simon and Lionel, it is particularly clear that their interaction with younger colleagues is making them feel less productive ("I was feeling guilty or an old bag to be the eldest"; "the old fogey of the gang"). This points to a specific kind of disciplinary gaze (Foucault in Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998), tying together the cult of youth and the

workplace, that shapes participants' experience of self-abjection. The disciplinary gaze is the gaze that cannot be escaped and that regulates identity performances. Here this disciplinary gaze puts under surveillance identity performances at work, identifying the older looking worker as the abject other. In a way, participants imply becoming the abject other they once looked down upon: the abject other to a new generation of young adults.

If the ultimate form of abjection is found in the image of death, the decaying body or corpse (Kristeva 1982; Nations et al. 2017), the passages above reveal a derived form of abjection, a mature labor force characterized by an appearance of agedness ("beat-up"; "old fogey"; "old bag"). Participants' choice of words push the image further as they describe fears of productive death ("over the hill," "his days are numbered") supporting previously established connections between ageism and death-related metaphors (e.g. Gullette in Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Catterall and Maclaran 2001; Featherstone & Hepworth 1991). In addition, they apply them to a mature, yet not necessarily elderly generation.

Reproductive Death. My research reveals that participants also perceive an appearance of agedness as a threat to identities that are performed in the midst of interpersonal relationships and in particular, romantic interactions. Rouben, for example, made a straightforward statement about an aging face that undermines his performance as an attractive man: "At the time I was a young male lead and now I became an old schnook." In a follow-up explanation that featured an aging otherness ("old schnook") taking over the image of a young male lead, Rouben

went on to describe the circumstances that made him particularly aware of his failing physical appeal:

> How can I tell you this without sounding stupid?... There are certain stares for instance that I used to get from young girls 20-30 years ago that I don't get anymore. I no longer have... or I need to make a lot of efforts for… a stare of… how can I say? Of [*pause*]… that I might please her physically speaking – Rouben, 68, illustrator

As Rouben explains how he no longer gets the attention that he was once used to, he conveys at the same time the experience of becoming somehow invisible in the eyes of others. It can be argued that it is this attention from others that would make him feel desirable and that would validate his capability to perform an identity coherent with reproductivity. Now, however, Rouben feels invisible, an experience that sharply contrasts with the attention-seeking image of the "young male lead". In a nostalgic tone, Rouben suggests that since his physical appeal belongs to the past, he may just consider leaving his image of the "young male lead" behind: "I am aware that I no longer have the same look as when I was 20 years old, when it was easier to charm…let us say a younger girl." The loss of others' stares constitutes for participants a bad omen, one of reproductive death.

The concept of reproductive death calls attention to the incompatibility between aging and the performance of a sexual identity in relation to romantic interactions. An aging and reproductive body is construed as a contradiction (Clarke 2011; McHugh & Interligi 2015; Woodward 2006). The fear of reproductive death thus essentially builds on these assumptions: that with the

appearance of age, we are no longer wanted or desired, and eventually disappear from sight. The person who confesses to no longer being recognized as desirable feels "invisible" (Joy et al. 2011). Building on the observation of sociologist and anthropologist Le Breton (2013, p.220) that aging is like "losing little by little the benefits of other's attention," a reproductive death, like the productive death just discussed, conveys a form "social death" (Sweeting & Gilhooly 1997). It is one that reveals the meaningful connection between the gaze (female or male) and the experience of feeling desirable. To be the object of the gaze constitutes an "affirmation" of one's masculinity or femininity (Thompson & Hirschman 1998), but also of one's youthfulness. A reproductive death thus suggests the loss of these identities through a loss of others' gaze.

Consider Kate who, although only 36 years old, also expressed recent feelings of insecurity about losing her appeal as she aged:

> When it looks like your boyfriend finds a girl cute and she is twelve years younger than you… it's special… you think, my god, I'm already there. And there is nothing you can do about it so, it is also about feeling powerless. Especially for women, I think that it is more apparent, the fact that…it seems that white hair on a guy, we all end up finding it cute, and wrinkles… bah, who cares, it gives their faces character. Whereas for us, women, it's less like that… – Kate, 36, marketing sales representative

As she ponders over the possibility that she might have become less desirable to her partner over time, Kate expresses her fears of being potentially outmatched by a younger woman ("When it looks like your boyfriend finds a girl cute"). A parallel can be made to Simon who similarly envisioned being replaced in the

workplace by “fresh,” “impeccable” looking younger others with whom he felt he could not compete. These examples make apparent that “norm of youthfulness” (LeBreton 2013, p.5) against which all identity performances are measured, and as a result, the threat of the aging face to the credible performance of desired identities related to (re)productivity. The aging face is, in this way, understood as a reification of the opposite script of progress, i.e., decline (Gullette 2004). That is, the aging face turns into a concrete thing the abstract idea of a decline.

In this section, I have introduced the concept of (re)productive death to explain the fears of participants no longer being capable of performing meaningful identities in a credible manner, and this, precisely because of an appearance of age. However, my analysis also revealed that in response to a provoking aging face, participants have looked for ways to reenergize their identities. Helena, who considers herself to be a very active woman, for example, explicitly discussed her struggle to look the age that she feels and acts, stating: “When we start to age, the challenge is to try to make our body and our face reflect what we feel inside.” The next section sheds light on participants’ use of practices, including (but not limited to) facial transformations, in support of the reenergizing of desired identities. They fall into three categories that together account for the interplay between material, temporal and social aspects of an intersubjective identity negotiation.

4.3.2 Reenergizing Desired Identities

Disciplining the Aging Face. We explored above Lionel's fear of a productive death as young coworkers in the workplace confront him with his own aging face and the associated sense of declining relevance. In this context, he considered ways to minimize the more pronounced signs of aging: "You know, as you get older, you start noticing certain lines, wrinkles and all. And these last 3 years I noticed that some are more pronounced than in my early thirties". Although Lionel had never had a formal skincare routine, he had recently started to wash his face more regularly and to apply facial treatments. When discussing practices that he might use in the future, he expressed not being opposed to Botox: "I'd be willing to try it, like an experiment, and see how it changes my face, how I would feel about it…To use it like a time travelling machine. You know, you do a treatment and then, suddenly [*expression of surprise*]…a flash back of 5 or 10 years…to reconnect with a younger me but in a really direct way. That would be interesting".

This example, amongst others, illustrates participants' planned or actual use of facial transformation to discipline their aging face. It follows, then, that a belief exists in a younger version of the self lying beneath the "mask of aging" (Featherstone & Hepworth 1995) waiting to be unearthed ("to reconnect with a younger me"). Consistent with a view of the malleable self-in-progress developed under the first theme here, is the conformation of the practice of disciplining to a modernist view of "human progress" facilitated by a form of "material progress"

(Firat & Venkatesh 1995, p.261). Such a view of progress "assumes that moral and social betterment go hand in hand with material improvement" (Wright in Kozinets 2008, p.869). An individual's progress is here bounded by the necessity of control over matter, which in this context, emphasizes the disciplining of the appearance of age.

A significant body of literature acknowledges the use of disciplining practices to resolve the tensions between consumer self-identities and their outward appearance (Askegaard et al. 2002; Joy et al. 2010; Sayre 2013; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). My findings, however, reveal that considering or adopting these practices can trigger additional identity concerns. First, participants express the fear that by engaging in physical transformations such as cosmetic surgery they will unveil an abjected otherness within, in the form of an excessively rejuvenated face that appears "artificial," "plasticized," or "dehumanized". Nancy, who was exposed to such excesses in close acquaintances, is afraid that one day she will also resort to the same measures. With an anxious tone, she said: "I would have never thought that she would have fallen into…this pursuit of wanting to look young, young, and young and young…Will I go through the same measures to look cuter?" Clara was similarly torn between the prospect of taking extreme measures and that of being taken over by the aging process, as her mother-in-law, whom she described as very wrinkly, had been: "Should I do something before I end up like my mother-in-law or should I stay like I am?"

Second, participants perceive that while disciplining practices could reenergize a youthful identity, they could, at the same time, jeopardize others that are meaningful. Lionel, for instance, displays a certain discomfort about the use of disciplining practices:

> You want to project a certain masculinity… without too much polishing or caring so it is just something that is sort of accidental. Or something that is not too controlled… you don't want to manicure the thing. … In my opinion, for a man, there is a happy middle. … I also think that there is something charming in what is neglected. – Lionel, 40, musical instrument maker

His thoughts underscores concern about a potential abjected otherness, that recalls an "effeminate man" (Rinallo 2007; Östberg 2013), which Lionel wants to keep at a distance all the while attempting to minimize the appearance of agedness. Caring is often "conventionally coded as feminine" (Holt & Thompson 2004; Thompson 1996) which may explain why Lionel perceives the act of disciplining as a potential threat to his masculine identity. The credibility of a normative masculine identity (Coupland 2007; Klasson & Ulver 2015; Moisio, Arnould & Gentry 2013; Rinallo 2007) performance is suggested here to rely on a form of masculine care that is deemed to be more gender appropriate ("accidental" ; "not too controlled"; "happy middle"). This example reveals how certain disciplining practices lie at the intersection of age and other identity performances, and as such have limits placed upon the intensity of their use. Practices, that are deemed gender inappropriate are suspected of leading to an

unveiling of an abjected otherness (e.g. the effeminate man) rather than the reenergizing of desired identities.

The fact that disciplining practices might set the scene for additional unveilings underscores limits to using the aging face as a malleable resource for the reenergization of identities. Acknowledging failures at disciplining an aging face that provokes, in other words, participants envision the lack of credibility that relates to the performance of desired identities coherent with (re)productivity in later life. Consider, for example, Clara and Emma's previous statements that portray disciplining practices as vain efforts that can never fully overcome an appearance of agedness nor bring back a younger-looking self ("even if she is fashion oriented, she'll start to look outdated, no matter what"; "No matter if I was doing a Botox or juvederm, I would never get back this magnificent glow"). The next section, however, reveals a silver lining to the limits of performing desired identities in a credible manner. Indeed, as participants perceive their efforts to discipline an aging face as either insufficient or excessive, they are inspired to turn to practices that do not rely on materiality alone. These are discussed below.

Incorporating the Zeitgeist. Recall Florence's referral to lifesltye in her description of one of her cousin's appearance as "outdated". Florence opposes herself to her "stay-at-home" cousin, taking pride in the fact that she recently went back to university to complete a bachelor's degree. The comparison inspired

her to elaborate on how she dresses (wears jeans); a fitting testament to her youthfully active lifestyle as a university student:

> She [*another family relative*] was telling me: "Ah you look good, it seems that you don't age, you stay the same, you're exactly the same as the last time I saw you." … You know, me, I went back to school recently. And I dress like… I don't dress like young people, no, forget that! I would never wear leggings and tank tops. But in a way, I wear jeans, and me, I feel good in jeans. – Florence, 58, temporary worker

Paradoxically, Florence suggests that although she might be changing physically, she nonetheless stays the same. Remaining "the same" in relation to identities that participants consider core is a desirable and sought after state. However, participants recount that to remain the same, they also have to change. Here change is viewed as an evolution undertaken to keep up with the times. Cherished possessions are relevant components of this evolution as they often function as "anchors of continuity" (Türe & Ger 2016). Jeans and the student identity, for example, play an essential role in helping Florence maintain a "sense of sameness" (James in Hermans 1996, p.31) integral to the continuity of her self-identity narrative. The passage quoted suggests that jeans, a cultural icon of longevity and a timelessly fashionable garment (Miller 2015; 1989; Solomon 1986), supports Florence' performance as a youthfully active woman. Unlike a face that is prey to signs of aging, the jeans will weather the passage of time. The manner in which objects are integrated into participants' self-identity narratives reveals a common essence: a "time appropriateness," known as *zeitgeist* (Türe & Ger 2016). Unlike those that age and become obsolete with time (Cherrier et al.

2014; Türe & Ger 2016), objects that embody the *zeitgeist* are forever relevant and always up-to-date. In the context of my findings, objects representing the *zeitgeist* further afford a sought-after temporal immunity to (re)productive death. By incorporating them into an "extended-self" (Belk 1988), participants leverage this temporal immunity to reenergize their desired identities. Although incorporation of objects reflecting the *zeitgeist* does not extend to direct facial transformations (e.g., cosmetic surgery), it is suggested that the effects of this practice are still perceptible by the self and by others ("it seems that you don't age").

Now consider Marlene who recently completed a training program for a second career as a life coach. Over the course of the program, taken by people who were mostly younger people, Marlene recalls being the center of attention for her age-defying choices:

> I shop in any department store and I'm wearing the same clothes as those who are 20 or 30. And I like colour. Sometimes I wear leather vests and people tell me "Marlene is wearing leather vests!" [*mockingly*] Well yes I am! And Perfecto style. Yes, I like it! What can I say!… When I was going to the life coaching training, some would say "Hey Marlene, you're so…" or "Look at her, she is wearing a leather vest." As if it was not normal, for her, in her head, that a woman of my age could wear a leather vest of THAT kind. And I am driving a car, a mini Cooper and so, there she was again: "Marlene drives a small car, a youngster's car and she has a boyfriend who is 11 years younger." My boyfriend is 11 years younger than me. She was always talking about me, saying "Marlene is my idol! Her boyfriend is 11 years younger than her, she drives a small car, and she wears leather vest." – Marlene, 68, life coach

What at first glance sounds like a critique of her age identity performance ("as if it was not normal, for her") turns out in the end to be praise for a style and a lifestyle that knows no age ("Marlene is my idol!"). Beyond time appropriateness, Marlene's incorporation of a number of key objects also helps her convey an agelessness, in the sense of an appropriateness or "relevancy" (Pell 2016), that is not age dependent. The younger boyfriend adds to Marlene's list of the various parts of her extended-self that help her maintain a sense of the present. This sense of the present illustrates an additional temporal dimension that can be leveraged through the use of the extended-self ("sense of [the] past" or a "sense of [the] future" in Ahuvia 2005; Belk 2013; Tian & Belk 2005). The beneficial effects of an association with, or proximity to youth, were also present in Marlene's narrative apart from relationship with her boyfriend. She discussed her experience as a teacher that put her into constant contact with the young: "When I was teaching, there were all these young people and me, I loved it, it thrilled me. I would have trouble being in a world with just people of my age." The vitalizing effects of mingling with younger others are particularly salient in this passage ("it thrilled me").

Other participants' narratives that featured teacher or mentor-like identity performances disclosed mixed incorporation of objects and younger others to keep up with the times:

> I teach in a fashion college and to be with younger people… them, they don't get old! [*laughs*] Because every year, there is a new cohort … To keep up with technology as well. Recently, I forced myself to develop a course that will be offered online and to teach it. To immerse myself in technology and

> to stop thinking that I am an oldie… a dinosaur. – Emma, 51, personal stylist

> We [*Rouben and his girlfriend*] have tons of friends who are almost half our age, or two thirds of our age, and with whom we get along very very well. When we talk, it's about an exchange of ideas, creativity and cooperation. – Rouben, 68, illustrator

Participants' experience of being in contact with younger people highlights the possibility to be in contact with novelty, innovativeness and freshness. In contrast to anti-aging practices that usually entail direct transformative practices (Askegaard et al. 2002; Giesler 2012; Joy et al. 2010; Sayre 2013; Türe & Ger 2016) undertaken to restore or recover the body's former state, or that of other objects, incorporating the *zeitgeist* entails a proximity to younger others ("tons of friends who are almost half my age") that can have significant reenergizing effects ("it thrilled me"). Both negative and positive experiences of youth are found within a single participant narrative, suggesting that the perception of youth is as context-dependent as "feel-age" is (Amatulli et al. 2018). A plausible explanation of the positive experience of contact with younger others, as opposed to experience of youth as a threat ("I was feeling guilty or an old bag to be the eldest"), highlights the aim of reenergizing desired identities. Participants here adopt a view of social interaction that contrasts with the neo-liberal celebration of competition and individualism central to the ideology of progress. Rather than fearing the prospect of being outmatched or replaced by younger others, they envision collaborating with them ("it's about an exchange of ideas, creativity and cooperation"). Contact with youth brings in what younger others perceive as

"now", novel and "in". For example, when she mentioned technology in her teaching, Emma used the expressions "keep up with" and "immerse myself in", which conveys the sense that incorporating new technologies is also a means to stave off one's decline, to remain in the present, modern. The belief that technology "keeps current" (Schau et al. 2009) and is an engine of progress (Kozinets 2008) takes on an even greater significance here as it is construed as an effective shield against an aging otherness within ("dinosaur"; "oldie").

Instead of putting all of one's efforts into rejuvenating the aging object (Türe & Ger 2016), here the aging face, the practice of incorporating the *zeitgeist* focuses on the benefits to the self of the rejuvenating properties of time appropriate objects and younger others. It is these objects and people, considered modern and forward looking, that help the individual to feel current and up to date. This practice can be understood as a form of positive temporal "contagion" (Fernandez & Lastovicka 2005; Newman & Dhar 2014; Smith, Newman & Dhar 2016) which, building on Belk's (1988, p.130) interpretation of object agency, results in "feelings of merged identity with objects". More specifically, in the context of this research, this practice leads to feelings of merged identity with the time appropriateness of objects. In addition to this temporal aspect of identity negotiation, my findings highlight a social aspect that is manifest particularly in the practice of performing neo-youthfulness.

Performing Neo-Youthfulness. Recall how Rouben reminisced about the loss of the "young male lead" image, which, as previously discussed, illustrates

the fear of no longer being able to perform identities coherent with reproductivity. Under these circumstances, he also admitted feeling insecure about the idea that his gradual hair loss might affect his chances of attracting a woman's attention: "At first, like any youngster who wants to seduce, it bothers you...you try to camouflage it". Unsurprisingly, in response to these insecurities, Rouben was, and still is, considering possible solutions to reenergizing this youthful identity:

> I would like, if there was a way… well I would not dye my hair black or put on a toupee but I would have liked… If I found myself single again, and that could happen with age for example, I don't expect to be able to charm a woman of less than 40. It would take heavy artillery! – Rouben, 68, illustrator

This passage not only addresses potential solutions but it also features Rouben's skepticism toward the effectiveness of any disciplining practice (e.g. hair dye, toupee) in helping him overcome an appearance of agedness and perform a credible identity of seduction. In situations where the body can no longer support the performance of a desired identity, it can be expected that consumers will opt for identity abandonment or will transition toward new identity projects (Parmentier & Fisher 2011). Accordingly, the passage above conveys Rouben's intentions to let go of an identity that he can no longer perform as he used to ("I don't expect to be able"; "It would take heavy artillery!"). However, another part of his account highlights the possibility of reenergizing this identity by performing it in an alternative way, and this, in spite of physical aging and an apparent lack of credible corporeal-based solutions. Consider how Rouben moves on to discuss an identity of seduction in different terms:

> When you're young, you try to charm with superficial means. But as you advance in life, it becomes more about what you have in your head than your physique. I see for example people who are ugly but who have developed certain charms. Actually, the more you are attractive the fewer the chances that you have developed other systems of seduction…well seduction may not be the proper term but let's say: to function in society, to make your place, to be respected, to be loved… these kind of things. – Rouben, 68, illustrator

This passage conveys an alternative identity performance of seduction by which, Rouben proposes, individuals can assert their desirability and relevance. This alternative performance is supported by the "development" of non-corporeal charms or "other systems of seduction". Rouben's counter-intuitive assertion that being physically unattractive can prove to be an asset underscores a shift of emphasis from external corporeal resources, notably the appearance of a "young male lead," to those that are more internal and socially-based ("it becomes more about what you have in your head"; "to be respected, to be loved"). Moreover, these new resources are potentially less accessible to those able to get by solely with the use of traditional (mostly physical) resources of seduction. The performance of an identity of seduction, traditionally tied to corporeal-based attributes such as physical appeal and youthfulness (Clarke 2011; Le Breton 2013; McHugh & Interligi 2015), can thus be reinterpreted to support the reenergizing of a desired identity.

The passage quoted above reveals a subversion of the codes of (re)productivity that is characteristic of the practice proposed here as performing neo-youthfulness. Similar to Thompson and Üstuner (2015)'s notion of "ideological edgework," this subversion supports the alternative performance of a

given identity in a way that expands related conventional associations. It is however different from the way in which an ideological edgework makes use of the material body to subvert (c.f. "embodied resistance") in that it uses resources other than materiality. My findings reveal that when the face, and particularly the malleable face, is no longer envisioned as the primary site of an identity performance, participants may consider the subversion of the codes that define the performance itself. That is, based upon the above example, the identity of seduction that relies on external corporeal resources (e.g., physical attractiveness and youthful appearance), can be substituted by one that relies on internal resources (e.g., intellectual appeal and charisma).

The practice of performing neo-youthfulness also involves the subversion of codes related to productivity. Consider for example how several participants dismiss the idea of retiring from the productive sphere in order to embrace instead the prospect of long lasting productivity. Rouben who compares his retired friends to "dead fishes," explains: "they no longer have anything interesting, their curiosity is dead." In opposition to the metaphor of productive death, participants' discussion of long lasting productivity evokes the archetypical figure of the artist:

> Me, I'm into arts so, it's not because you reach the age of retirement that you stop creating and I don't see myself stopping at all, at all. Look… I'm not saying that I'm just like them but, Picasso and Miro, at 85 they were still creating. – Rouben, 68, illustrator

> Me, it's because I have a relatively young mindset… I don't think that I'm aging … Me, I would never say that "I am old" because I don't believe it. Because I truly believe that everything is possible. We can do anything in life, if we want to … I have always been in a world like this, of fashion, decoration, and so, as artists, we are a bit timeless. – Marlene, 68, life coach

Although it has been suggested that retired individuals tend to privilege consumption over production (Schau et al. 2009), and that consumption, from a postmodernist perspective, can be viewed as a substitute for production (Firat & Ventakesh 1995; Keinan & Kivetz 2011), the passages quoted above reveal that the modernist dichotomy of production and consumption remains firmly in place when expectations of a termination of productivity in later years are defied. Recall that many of the claims of participants about productivity have so far stressed an association between a youthful appearance and a more energetic and skilled labor force. In this section, participants instead display a determination to show that they are, and will never stop being, productive. This is manifest in the way that participants redefine productivity as a display of curiosity and "creativity" (Firat & Venkatesh 1995). To establish the credibility of his performances, Rouben cites legendary artists – Picasso and Miro – who were productive until their death, producing in the sense of creating. The artist who never stops creating epitomizes a productivity that is not restricted to the youth.

With regards to productivity, the "creator archetype" (Mark and Pearson 2001) or the archetypical figure of the artist, describes a natural-born non-conformist who seeks not to fit in but to be guided by his/her own free will ("Everything is possible"; "We can do anything in life, if we want to"). This figure supports the general idea that the malleability of meaning affords consumers the chance "to be what they want to be" (Diamond in Brown, McDonagh & Shultz II 2013, p.597). The practice of performing neo-

youthfulness builds on this malleability of meaning to afford the chance to reenergize desired identities. It permits participants to adapt assumptions, including those that underlie the overarching ideology of progress, as one would adapt a myth (c.f. Brown et al. 2013). The substitution of one form of malleability tied to the face by another tied to meaning offers a more sustainable means to progress that is divorced from the limitations of corporeally-based practices. The malleability of meaning thus provides a space for alternative performances of identity coherent with (re)productivity.

4.3.3 Summary: Beyond the Looking Glass

This third theme has revealed participants' interpretation and negotiation of the aging otherness within. In view of the script of progress, it speaks broadly to participants' fears that the appearance of agedness robs them of recognition and value as productive and attractive beings. The concept of (re)productive death describes a general experience of the aging face as a threat to the performance of desired identities. In response, participants have looked to breathe new life into these identities in ways which include, but are not limited to, the disciplining of the aging face. The reenergizing of desired identities highlights instead a set of practices that make use of material, temporal and social resources, each salient to varying degrees. It has been conceptualized here as an entanglement of "sociomaterial practices" (Orlikowski 2007) where all aspects interact, but where in each practice features one in particular. In light of what these practices do and

say about the youthfulness of the aging individual, it becomes clear that there is more to the aging face than meets the eyes.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Research Contributions

The intent of this research has been to examine consumer experiences of physical transformations that engender identity construction, that is, unintentional physical transformations that threaten desired identities, as opposed to those that they undertake intentionally to create or sustain desired identities. By investigating the interplay between intentional and unintentional facial transformations in the context of a changing face over time, my research offers a number of contributions to the literature on the relationship between physical transformations and consumer self-identity narratives. More specifically, my findings enrich our understanding of this relationship by (1) fleshing out a sociomaterial view of identity construction, (2) theorizing a multifaceted otherness, and (3) introducing the notion of uncanny experiences in the context of embodied identity. The following sections detail contributions to the existing literature on consumer research and identify promising opportunities for future work.

5.1.1 A Sociomaterial Understanding of Identity Construction

This research articulates the provoking effects of a changing face over time as well as the practices consumers adopt to reenergize desired identities. These effects and practices underscore the entanglement of sociocultural, material and temporal agentic forces in the experiences of consumers; this section thus

discusses the implications of a sociomaterial understanding of identity construction.

Provoking unveilings. By integrating Borgerson's (2014) concept of "provocations" with a posthumanist performativity perspective (Alaimo & Hekman 2008; Barad 2008), my research theorizes an experience of body agency that features a provoking face which actively partakes in the construction of identities. From a performativity perspective, identity construction is understood as an effect produced by a series of "repeated" and "stylized" acts, i.e. performances (Butler 1990; 1993). In this research, I find evidence of these performances with respect to the facial transformations intentionally undertaken by selected participants. These transformations produce an experience of the malleable face that makes possible desired identity performances. While a significant number of studies in consumer research similarly underscore the use of a malleable body in the context of consumer identity projects (Cherrier & Murray 2007; Noble & Walker 1997; Schouten 1991; Sørensen & Thomsen 2006), this research also identifies a meaningful set of experiences, defined as unveilings of an otherness within, where participants suggest abjected identities are being performed by their aging face.

Building on the posthumanist performativity perspective that considers the ways in which the body's materiality can "actively matter" (Barad 2008, p.127) to identity construction, my analysis of these unveilings highlights a face that provokes through its changing materiality and through the identities that it

simultaneously performs against participants' intentions. These provoking unveilings challenge expectations about the malleability of the body and also about the ways in which identities are normally carved from and into it (Holbrook et al. 1998; McCracken 2008). Specifically, they account for a body that can "talk back" and "affect its cultural construction" ("corporeal agency" in Alaimo 2008, p.242). One contribution of my research is thus to flesh out a consumer experience of body agency that features a provoking body and its implications for identity construction. As illustrated in **figure 5.1**, the experience of the provoking body extends the traditional view of identity performativity, whereby identity projects are either afforded or constrained by the body, by shedding light on situations where the body is perceived to perform identities against one's will.

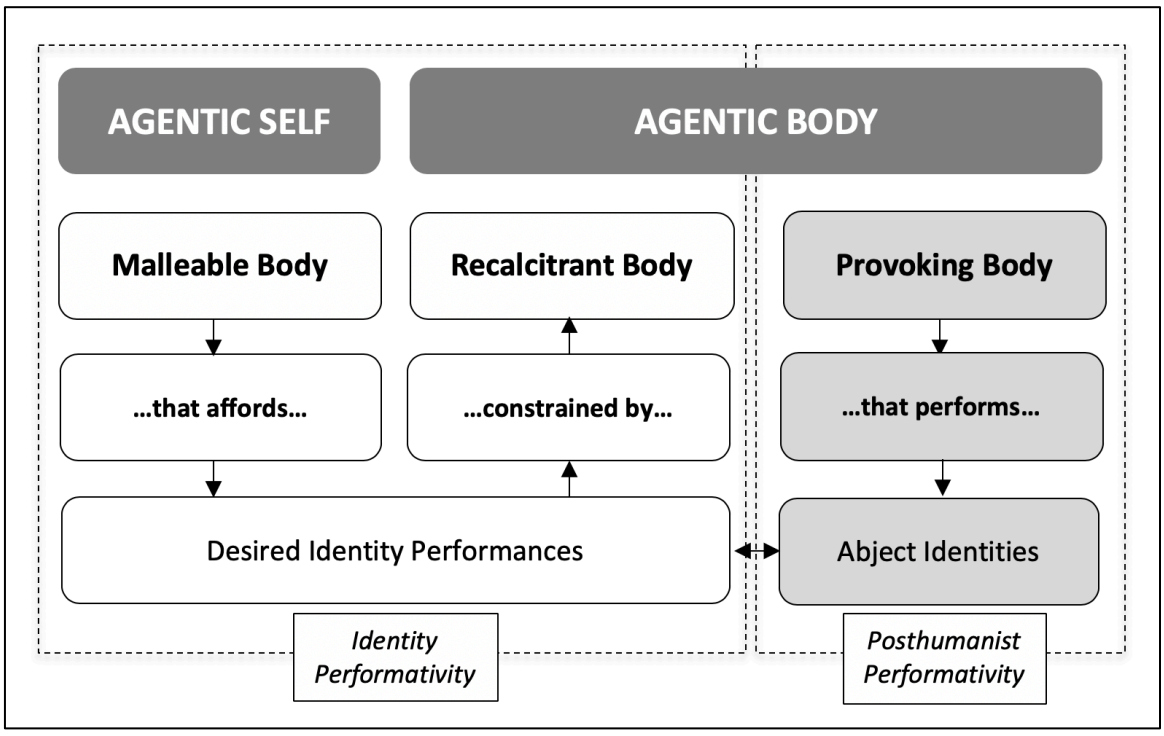

Figure 5.1 Provoking Unveilings in the Consumer Identity Projects Literature

Provocations are indicative of a more intensive form of object agency, specifically of their "nonintentional capacity to facilitate alteration" (Borgerson & Rehn 2003, p.4). Object agency is perceivable through the effects that objects, notably possessions, are able to produce in consumers (Borgerson 2014). Importantly, my interpretation of provoking unveilings illuminates an experience of "negative agency" (Alaimo & Hekman 2008) that is distinct from what has previously been noted as a form of resistance that they can put up. Consider in this respect Thompson and Hirschman's observation (1998, p.425) that "the body can refuse to succumb" to consumers' desired manipulations. Miller (2001) similarly conceptualized negative agency by reporting on the ways that his ancestral home, with its history and heritage, was constraining his renovation plans. Although taking place in different contexts, both studies account for an experience of objects as resisting consumer intentions and their desired identity projects.

By integrating the concept of provocation with a posthumanist performativity perspective, my research explains the ways in which a body provokes at the level of physicality and of identity. Unlike the recalcitrant body, the provoking body's changing materiality actively embarks individuals on a performance that they had not originally planned. As a result, although identity construction remains an effect produced by repeated "acts," understood as performances (Butler 1990; 1993), the author of these acts is the provoking body. My findings empirically extend the work of cultural theorist Kathleen Woodward

(2006, p.180) who proposed that the "effect of the very materiality of the body in age can be that at a certain point it performs us, reducing the latitude promised in part by the very concept of performance". In addition, my investigation introduces the dimension of identity to the sociomaterial view of material agency, which is currently defined as the "capacity for nonhuman entities to act on their own, apart from human intervention" (Leornardi 2011, p.148). Provoking unveilings are thus independent of the intentionality of an agentic self and include, as well, an unintentional identity construction.

A related insight from my analysis pertains to the occurrence of provoking unveilings in the midst of a "dance of agency" (Pickering in Epp & Price 2010) where agency over identity construction is shared between the self and the body. This is apparent in my findings as the face moves from supporting desired identity performances, to provoking the self. When the provoking face does take the lead, I find that participants not only fear the possibility of losing their grip on the identities anchored in the familiar features of their face, but also the possibility of being performed by abject identities. They fear the possibility, in other words, of becoming an abject Other. This recalls philosopher Drew Leder (1990, p.70)'s observation that a body that fails to perform as expected "can come to appear 'Other' and opposed to the self". It involves here, moreover, a face that is performing in a new, provoking way. This interpretation is also relevant to the notion of "intersubjectivity," and in particular, to the intersubjective formation of the self, which entails that the self is formed, or that identities are co-constructed,

in experience with "Others" which may include other consumers, material objects and culture itself (Borgerson 2005). Although the intersubjective formation of the self has received much attention in prior consumer research on consumer identity projects, I posit that provoking unveilings further illuminate this process by underscoring the connection between consumers' internal experience of a changing body and what they perceive externally as an undisciplined, and hence "abjected body" (Kristeva in Butler 1990; 1993). This connection helps to explain why participants not only experience themselves as Others but further, as abject others that they have already encountered before.

Provoking unveilings, then, shed light on a distinct experience of identity construction that involves consideration of unintentional physical transformations as identity performances in themselves. Consistent with the sociomaterial lens adopted in this research, these provoking unveilings also highlight the entanglement of social and material forces in identity performances.

Sociomaterial Identity Negotiation. Another contribution of this research is the fleshing out of a sociomaterial identity negotiation in response to the threat of a (re)productive death. This negotiation involves a set of practices that includes, but is not limited to, body disciplining, and identifies the de-centering of the malleable body as the primary resource for identity performance. This de-centering, in the sense of moving beyond the centrality of the body to identity construction, challenges an understanding of identity performance that is mostly accountable to consumers' ability and capacity to leverage their bodies'

malleability. Sociomaterial identity negotiation, which establishes the credibility of identity performance as the body ages, is a product of the entanglement of material, temporal and sociocultural aspects of human identity.

The concept of (re)productive death introduced here relates to participants' fears of no longer being able to perform desired identities in a way that is perceived to be credible. By underscoring the extent to which a provoking aging face undermines this credibility, my interpretation of (re)productive death adds a physical component to traditional concept of "social death" (Sweeting & Gilhooly 1997). In addition to the productive identities that consumers struggle to maintain in later life (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Catterall and Maclaran 2001; Featherstone & Hepworth 1991), my findings acknowledge the reproductive identities that consumers also struggle to maintain. Sociomaterial identity negotiation emerges as a response to a fear of this death and aims to reenergize desired identities consonant with (re)productivity.

In this respect, my findings first underscore the use of body disciplining practices, which include anti-aging practices and cosmetic surgery (Askegaard et al. 2002; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). However, they also reveal that participants envision these disciplining practices as presenting additional threats to their self-identities, specifically in their over- or underuse. A general belief exists that disciplining practices are vain attempts to recover a youthful appearance or overcome the appearance of age. This, in turn, helps to explain the de-centering of the malleable face as the primary agent of identity performance,

and, I find, the initiation of a more creative set of sociomaterial practices aimed at reenergizing desired identities. In particular, those I've labelled "incorporating the zeitgeist" and "performing neo-youthfulness" describe alternative ways through which participants have reenergized their identities. The "zeitgeist", referred to by Türe and Ger (2016) in their study of the use of "rejuvenating practices" to preserve the time appropriateness of cherished possessions, is a property that participants have sought to "incorporate" (Belk 1988) through external objects and subjects. The practice reveals the positive "temporal contagion" (Fernandez & Lastovicka 2005; Newman & Dhar 2014; Smith, Newman & Dhar 2016) of objects, including possessions and younger people, that make participants feel and look youthful in the sense of relevant and up to date. My findings further show, through the practice of performing neo-youthfulness, how participants reinterpret identities by subverting codes of (re)productivity. This practice I interpret as evidencing the malleability of meaning, as opposed to that of the face.

With the exception of countercultural forms of "embodied resistance" that push the boundaries of physical standards (e.g. *fat*shion bloggers in Harju & Huovinen 2015; frustrated *fat*shionistas in Scaraboto & Fischer 2013), a reenergization of identities is difficult to conceive (e.g. model identity in Parmentier & Fischer 2011). In the context of my research, I found that the ideology of progress structuring participant experiences of their aging face significantly undermines the perceived credibility of desired identity

performances later in life. I acknowledge this challenge by highlighting the connection between the bettering of the self and the malleability of face. This connection aligns with the modernist tenet concerning "the treatment of technical advancement as synonymous with material progress, and material progress with human progress" (Firat & Venkatesh 1995, p.261). Consumer research has documented the tendency of consumers to value control (i.e. disciplining) over nature (i.e. body) for the sake of self-betterment and progress (Askegaard et al. 2002; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). I would add that it is most probably this value of control that conditions consumers to think of body disciplining as the primary means of identity performance. My analysis suggests, however, that a sociomaterial identity negotiation that challenges the central role of the malleable body presents alternative ways through which identities can be performed.

My research thus opens up the possibility of alternative performances. The practices that participants used to reenergize desired identities, which I have termed sociomaterial identity negotiation, open up a range of non-corporeal acts that consumers can leverage to conduct alternative identity performances, apart from "embodied resistance" (Thompson & Üstüner 2015). Specifically in the context of aging, my research extends works on alternative gender performances (Blanchette 2013; Harju & Huovinen 2015; Thompson and Üstüner 2015) by uncovering alternative performances at the intersection of age and other identities consonant with (re)productivity. This sociomaterial identity negotiation enriches an understanding of consumers' struggles to perform desired identities as

expected (Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). For example, rather than substituting consumption for productivity in later life (Schau et al. 2009), my participants actively redefined productivity as an expression of creativity. These findings offer a different take on identity negotiation: consumers may be determined to keep certain identities alive; choose not to abandon them or transition to new identity projects as the older ones become impossible to perform with the body they are accustomed to (Barnhart & Peñaloza 2013; Parmentier & Fischer 2011; Pavia & Mason 2004).

5.1.2 A Multifaceted Otherness

In the context of the two opposing types of physical transformations, i.e. those are undertaken intentionally and those that are undergone unintentionally, my research highlights the role of multiple Others in the construction of the consumer self. On the one hand, participants' perception of themselves as agentic selves capable of leveraging the malleability of their face to construct an identity underscores progress towards a desirable otherness. On the other hand, the perception of others' insufficient or excessive efforts to control the aging process highlights the construction of an abjected otherness that signals a failure to embody the ideology of progress. As I documented participant experiences of their own aging face, my findings revealed the possibility that this abjected otherness would resurface. When it did, the experience was characterized by an unveiling of an otherness within, specifically an abjected otherness that participants had formerly encountered in others.

Another contribution of my research, then, is the conceptualization of a multifaceted otherness that reflects the cultural existence of "diverse kinds of otherness" (Kearney 2004). As depicted in **Figure 5.2**, this multifaceted otherness is decomposed into three forms of otherness: the abjected otherness, the desirable otherness, and the otherness that is unveiled within. The abjected otherness and desirable otherness are further decomposed into (abject or desired) identities (e.g. madame, professional), themselves regrouped into what are Others to the self but which can be internalized, or unveiled within.

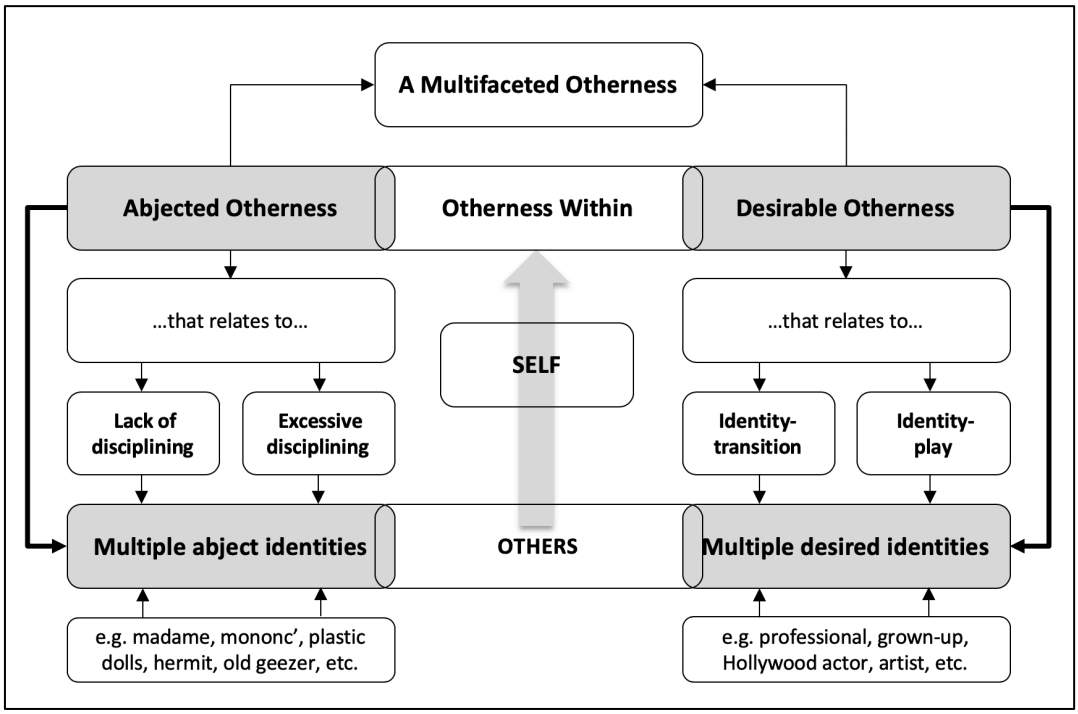

Figure 5.2 Conceptualizing A Multifaceted Otherness

With regard to studies that have examined the self-othering practices through which consumers choose to internalize an otherness (Belk, Ger &

Askegaard 2003; Canniford & Karaba 2013; Jantzen & Østegaard 1998; Sobh et al. 2014), the unveilings here convey an alternative form of self-othering i.e. the unintentional process by which one becomes an Other. Although both instances of self-othering account for an intersubjective formation of the consumer self through Others (Borgerson 2005), my findings highlight the notion of intentionality that differentiates between the form of self-othering that involves an intentional internalization of a desirable otherness and the form that is experienced as an unintentional unveiling of an abjected otherness within. My theorization of this abjected otherness further outlines the properties of an otherness that is not only opposed to participants' desired identities, but that mirrors an abjected otherness encountered before.

My interpretation of this abjected otherness underscores the existence of a number of abject identities (e.g. *mononc'*; *madame*) that together are embedded in a collective ageist imaginary (Lagacé 2015). In particular, I find that this collective ageist imaginary, interwoven into the ideology of progress, activates a categorization of other individuals based upon their inability to control their aging process, their efforts being either insufficient or excessive. Participants' use of metaphors (e.g. the hermit) embeds this "categorization" into descriptions of facial appearance (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). First perceived in others, the abjected otherness then later confronts participants in the context of unintentional facial transformations, this time as a doppelgänger image. Unintentional facial transformations also reveal an abjected otherness that incarnates specific

sociocultural taboos, notably in relation to the performance of sexual identities and the internalizing of properties related to the opposite gender or sex (e.g. the effeminate man; male patterned hair thinning in women). Relevant to the topic of the "abject," which most often characterizes that which is opposite to sociocultural normalcy (Goulding & Saren 2009; Kristeva 1982; 1991; Lai et al. 2015), the present research thus develops more nuanced forms of otherness. It expands, as well, the meaning of terms such as "others" (Holt 1997; Joy et al. 2011; Vicdan & Firat 2015), "otherness" (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard 2005), and alternative terms like "negative selves" associated to "negative body images" (Schouten 1991), that are used to characterize identities and selves that consumers view as opposed to who they 'really' are. As such, my findings have implications for an understanding of the nature of an otherness that is shaped both by sociocultural expectations about body disciplining and by a changing materiality.

Though first hand evidence was limited in this research, it can be suggested that encounters with an otherness within are not always experienced negatively. In some cases where the body has taken a consumer by surprise and engendered a delightful transformation, the otherness unveiled within can be desirable (e.g. model identity in Parmentier & Fischer 2011; weight loss in St-James et al. 2011). These cases present opportunities for future research to examine unveilings of more desirable forms of otherness, notably in investigations of consumers' former experiences with similar desired others and

also in attempts to understand the ways in which they appropriate this desired otherness once it is unveiled within.

5.1.3 The Uncanny

Another contribution of my research stems from the use of concept of the uncanny to interpret consumer experience of the physical transformations that engender identity construction. Building on the etymological roots of the concept, which portray a peculiar commingling of the familiar, known, and homely (*Heimlich*) with the strange, unknown and unhomely (*unheimliche*) (Freud 1919), my analysis of participant experience with an aging face highlights the commingling of additional opposing properties. In particular, the use of photo-elicitation as a prompting tool has helped to reveal an uncanny experience that is both visual and temporal.

I find the concept of the uncanny particularly useful in the interpretation of the unsettling visual experiences where participants do not recognize themselves. Previous consumer research has suggested that viewing others' strange bodies can elicit the uncanny (e.g. surgical extremes in Askegaard et al. 2002; sexy oldies in Attwood 2015; grotesque bodies in Goulding et al. 2003; assisted reproduction in Layne 2013). I establish a distinct form of uncanny visual experience, one that occurs while viewing oneself. This form, which speaks to the unsettling effects of unintentional physical transformation of the self, is relevant to consumer research that documents situations where consumers experience their bodies as at odds with who they are (Askegaard et al. 2002; St-James et al. 2011).

A closer examination of this literature underscores an otherness or foreign presence that is found to lurk in, rear up, besiege, intrude upon or invade consumer selves (Giesler 2012; Murray 2002; Sayre 2013; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; Thompson & Troester 2002). To explain the unsettling experience of being performed by an external agency or of suddenly not recognizing one's own familiar face, my analysis builds on traditional manifestations of the uncanny, including the doppelgänger, anthropomorphism and animism (Darveau 2013; Freud 1919; Jentsch 1906;).

My understanding of the uncanny visual experience of the self is also relevant to our current cultural context where the reproduction and proliferation of self-images has expanded beyond traditional photography. Research participants recounted their experience of a variety of self-images, for example, including those that were circulating on social media. As technologies contribute to a blurring of the frontiers between science and fantasy (Freud 1919), and between the artificial and the natural (uncanny valley in Mori 1970; Sherlock 2013), I speculate this context to be fertile ground for the uncanny visual experience of the self. More specifically, one may think of the rise of selfie culture (Iqani & Schroeder 2016) and with it, the intensified use of apps such as Instagram. With its filtering tools, Instagram enables consumers to share self-images that both enhance and distort the reality of appearance, and to follow others' transformed images as well (Peacock Alley Entertainment 2017). Given that many of these images use tricks to manipulate appearances (e.g. posture),

especially in fitness-related accounts, what is considered natural may not be as natural as it seems (*Ibid* 2017; Rajanala, Maymone & Vashi 2018; Toffoletti & Thorpe 2018). With the increasing digitalization of the self (Belk 2013), it would be interesting to investigate further, through the lens of the uncanny, how the blurring of fantasy and reality precipitates a loss of contact with the reality of the body. Researchers might seek to better understand how, by getting accustomed to these images, consumers could eventually experience the natural as the abnormal.

The use of photo-elicitation as a prompting tool during the interviews has also helped participants to connect with their past (Johnstone & Todd 2012; Heisley & Levy 1991). Based on the premise that time has the capacity to produce effects by relating us to "our temporal way of being in the world" (Van Manen 1990, p.104), a related contribution of this research is the light it sheds on the uncanny temporal experience. My findings reveal oscillations between age identities and between temporal orientations (past, present, future). Participant experiences of unveilings feature an aging otherness for example, which by performing the self, imposes a temporal reality disconnected from that which participants feel. An uncanny experience of time offers a distinct way to interpret the discrepancies perceived by consumers between the age that they are i.e., their chronological age and the age they feel i.e., their cognitive age (Catterall & Maclaran 2001; Thompson & Hirschman 1995; 1998). It reveals the presence of these discrepancies as well as in anachronistic juxtapositions of familiar features with ones that are strange and reminiscent of others' outdatedness or agedness.

This experience echoes the other uncanny temporal effects recounted in the literature on the uncanny (Stonehenge in Royle 2013; ruins in Vidler 1987; old garments in Wilson 1985; cosmetic surgery in Woodward 1991). In addition, it extends prior investigations of temporal effects in the literature on consumer research (Türe & Ger 2016; Woermann & Rokka 2015) by calling our attention to an experience of time that fails to follow a continuum or sequential ordering (Woermann & Rokka 2015), instead imposing its own anachronistic unfolding.

Further investigation is needed to better understand how and in what ways something abnormally uncanny can also be desirable. This connects to the use of the word uncanny in everyday English to define someone who possesses remarkable, extra-ordinary abilities. A phenomenon that falls into this category and that relates to my findings on the reenergizing of desired identities is that of late bloomers who defy age expectations in fashion or sport (e.g. the 80-year-old phenomenon Wang Deshun in Tatlow 2016). My research emphasizes opportunities to remain youthful in spite of age through alternative performances of youthfulness i.e. through a neo-youthfulness. As was previously suggested in relation to the abject (Goulding and Saren 2009), future work could also focus on additional instances where consumers find someone or something uncanny desirable.

In sum, with evidence that the uncanny emerges in everyday experiences such as aging and aging-related consumption, this study compels us to consider the possibility that something else extraordinary, normally found in the remote or

liminal spaces that favor escapism (Belk & Costa 1998; Canniford & Shankar 2013; Scott, Cayla & Cova 2017), may be found in everyday experience. Philosopher Bruce Bégout (2005, p.27) asserts for example that "all those who admit the everyday just as it offers itself are victims who fall prey to its trick. They don't consider what defines it besides its reassuring familiarity, the uncanny." In this respect, future research might target the sociocultural cultivation of the uncanny in everyday experience. The uncanny is, after all, a "*province* still before us, awaiting our examination" (Royle 2003, p.27) and ample room exists in the field of consumer research to shed additional light upon it.

5.2 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the contributions mentioned above, limitations to the present research exist that constrain the generalizability of its findings. These also present opportunities for future research, however, and are discussed below.

Restricting the context of the study to the changing face over time may have led to the emphasis of certain identities over others. The choice was motivated by the closeness of the ties between the face and individual identity (Le Breton 2003; 2013; Synnott 2003). It also offered the benefits of a more in-depth analysis of the experience of facial transformation. It needs to be stated, however, that several participants reflected, unprompted, on their experience of the aging body as a whole. Damien, aged 51, for example, described the powerful experience of agency loss with regards to his declining athletic capabilities ("I

feel totally disarmed"; "I am only human after all"). His narrative, which underscored the memory of a younger "invincible" and athletic self, lent support to the theorization previously discussed, yet without an emphasis on the face.

In addition, it can be noted that the sample did not include participants who were officially retired but several that chose instead to embark on a second career. This may have contributed to a view of aging-past-youth that is particularly productive, and thus resonant with what Gullette (2004, p.37) has described as "the desire of adults to continue to tell [a] progress narrative." In addition, given the North-American orientation of this research, the findings may not be generalizable to other cultures with their own perceptions about aging and aging-related consumption. Participants were also at different stages in the course of their lives with some experiencing more of a "tipping point" in their progress narrative at the time of the interview than others. Although there were a few noticeable within-age group similarities in participant descriptions of their relationship with their aging face over time, these were not sufficient to claim an age-related homogeneity.

Further, given the focus of this research on age identity, some gender differences have been overshadowed in the analysis of participants' narratives. This includes, for example, those across some participant experiences of gender blurring in relation to particular facial transformations (e.g. hair loss for female participants and anti-aging practices for males). My interpretation highlighted the intersection of age and other identity performances, including gender. Statements

about gender-(in)appropriate practices (Coupland 2007; Rinallo 2007; Östberg 2013) and age-(in)appropriate practices (Attwood 2015; Reed et al. 2012) emerged in several participants' narratives. Although Butler argues that other identities are equally performative, notably race, most of her work has centered on gender performativity. Likewise, a majority of CCT research that adopted the performativity lens, has considered gender identity to be the default difference (Arsel, Kirsi & Moisander 2015). Where one identity is performed, however, others may be as well. For example, a closer examination of Holt and Thompson's (2004) work on heroic masculinity reveals a consideration of age difference in relation to the performance of the "sporting man-of-action hero" identity. There is an opportunity for future research to investigate more of these intersections, notably between age and gender, in order to document the ways in which they influence each other in a single context.

Lastly, my research suggests directions for research on the management of mature brands, notably those that seek to prevent a decline or that are making a come-back. For instance, recent analyses of the decline of Harley-Davidson reveal that the iconic brand is struggling, once again, to stay relevant and to rejuvenate its customer base of "older white men" (Suddath 2018). I speculate my analysis of practices which reenergize desired identities to offer valuable insights into the revitalization of dormant brands (Brown et al. 2003; Dion & Mazzalovo 2016) or the re-launching of brands that have disappeared from the market for some time (Beverland 2018). It remains to future research to understand how

certain brands are perceived as outdated, and what can be done to recover more positive associations. The "refreshing" of the visual identity of brands also presents an interesting context for investigation of the effects of cosmetic decisions on consumer perceptions and inferences about a brand (Beverland 2018; Phillips, McQuarrie & Griffin 2014). For example, under what circumstances may brand refreshing, and conversely brand aging, damage its identity? Consumers' reception of Gap's first attempt to revamp their iconic logo in 2010, and more recently that of Instagram, tell us that a brand refreshing may sometimes unsettle consumers. I believe that the concept of the uncanny can offer a suitable lens for interpretation of consumer experience of brand refreshing that plays on visual elements of "familiarity" (Phillips et al. 2014) but also introduces something unexpected.

Conclusion

With the objective of cultivating an understanding of consumer experiences of physical transformations that engender identity construction, this research uncovered unveilings as a meaningful set of experiences where an otherness is unveiled from within. By doing so, it has articulated the relationship between a number of different sources of physical transformation and identity construction. By giving voice to provoking effects (i.e. material and temporal) that are often overlooked, and to an otherness that is usually examined as distant or opposed to the self, the study has attempted to rethink the centrality of physical transformation to consumer self-identity narratives. It suggests that only after this

otherness within is unveiled, and recognized as part of oneself, can one begin to learn how to cohabit with it and also, possibly, tame or even deconstruct it. One could think, for example, of reenergized identities as doppelgänger images of abject others.

In his posthumanist inspired essay *Parasite*, Michel Serres (2007) elaborates upon a tumultuous relationship between host and parasite which cannot be resolved by eviction of the parasite. In one particular story based upon the fable of the Gardener and the Rabbit, the gardener (the host) who is determinedly seeking to evict the rabbit (the parasite), ends up causing more damage to his garden than he would have if he had learned to cohabit with the unwelcomed intruder. Like the rabbit, it can be suggested that an otherness within is an unwelcomed intruder with which one must learn to live. To not recognize oneself is a constructive experience that allows for the acknowledgment of an Other as part of oneself (Benjamin in Butler 2004b), here, of an Otherness within.

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Annexe 1: Interview Guide

PRÉAMBULE (5-7 MINUTES)

Bonjour! Mon nom est Jessica Darveau. Je suis étudiante au doctorat en marketing à HEC Montréal. Je réalise présentement un projet de recherche qui s'intéresse au rapport que les gens entretiennent avec leurs visages et aux pratiques de consommation qu'ils adoptent dans ce contexte. Je m'intéresse autant aux changements naturels du visage qu'au recours à des produits ou services permettant de le conserver ou de le transformer. Je suis intéressée à connaître vos expériences de vie sur tout aspect touchant de près ou de loin votre rapport avec votre visage.

Avant de commencer, j'aimerais que vous lisiez attentivement ce formulaire de consentement. N'hésitez pas à me poser toute question avant de le signer. Comme indiqué dans le formulaire, je vais enregistrer l'entrevue pour faciliter la prise de notes et l'analyse des résultats. Avez-vous des questions avant de commencer?

Nous allons maintenant débuter l'entrevue. Rappelez-vous qu'il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises réponses. Je souhaite connaître vos expériences personnelles.

PRÉSENTATION (5-10 MINUTES)

Cette première partie vise à mieux connaître le/la répondant(e). Les données recueillies ici permettront de dresser un profil des candidat(e)s, ce qui facilitera la comparaison des données par la suite. Je souhaite mettre le/la répondant(e) à l'aise en lui posant d'abord des questions d'ordre général et en tentant d'établir un climat de confiance. Cette information permettra également d'interpréter les réponses du/de la participant(e) dans le contexte plus large de son milieu de vie et des gens qui l'entourent, une condition nécessaire de l'analyse phénoménologique.

1) Pour commencer, j'aimerais d'abord que vous vous présentiez brièvement :

- D'où venez-vous?
- Quel est votre cheminement scolaire? (parcours professionnel)
- Quelle est votre occupation? (Est-ce à temps plein ou partiel?)
- Avez-vous des frères et/ou des soeurs? Sont-ils plus jeunes ou plus vieux que vous?
- Vivez-vous seule ou avec d'autres personnes? Quel est votre lien (parenté, amis)?
- Avez-vous des enfants? Combien?
- Est-ce que je peux vous demander votre âge?

AUTOPORTRAIT (15-20 MINUTES)

Le but de cette section est de connaître le rapport du participant avec son visage.

2) Si je ne pouvais pas voir votre visage…

- Décrivez-moi votre visage de sorte que je puisse vous identifier.
    - *(Questions de suivi)* Quelles parties de votre visage permettent de vous identifier davantage que d'autres? Partagez-vous certaines parties de votre visage avec des membres de votre famille?
- Parlez-moi d'une ou plusieurs parties de votre visage que vous préférez à d'autres.
    - *(Questions de suivi)* Expliquez-moi ce que vous aimez de *(partie du visage)*? De mémoire, parlez-moi de votre relation avec *(partie du visage)*?
    - Qu'est-ce que les gens disent de *(partie du visage*)?
- De la même façon, parlez-moi de parties de votre visage que vous aimez moins.
    - *(Questions de suivi)* Expliquez-moi ce que vous aimez moins de *(partie du visage)*? De mémoire, parlez-moi de votre relation avec *(partie du visage)*?
    - Qu'est-ce que les gens disent de *(partie du visage*)?
- Parlez-moi d'une personnalité publique ou une personne de votre entourage dont l'apparence de son visage vous plait (ce qu'il dégage).
    - *(Questions de suivi)* Qu'est-ce qui vous plait de ce visage? Contrairement à *(personne)… (Explorer la négative)*

REPRÉSENTATION (15-20 MINUTES)

L'objectif poursuivi ici est d'amener le participant à partager des pratiques de consommations impliquant son visage.

- J'aimerais à présent que vous passiez à travers votre journée et je vous invite à me parler de rituels ou routines impliquant votre visage.
    - *(Questions de suivi)* Le matin…Décrivez-moi ces rituels ou routines. Quelle importance accordez-vous à *(routine/rituel)*? Quels objectifs poursuivez-

vous avec *(routine/rituel)*? Quels sentiments ressentez-vous lorsque vous reproduisez *(routine/rituel)*?

- J'aimerais que vous pensiez à une situation où vous avez vu votre visage dans un miroir, une photo ou autre, et avez été surpris(e) par votre image *(du mal à vous reconnaitre)*.

    - *(Questions de suivi)* Décrivez-moi cette expérience et expliquez-moi en quoi était-ce surprenant, différent de ce que vous imaginiez?

- J'aimerais que vous pensiez à un moment dans votre vie où vous avez ressenti une transformation au niveau de votre visage *(facteur externe ou autre, maquillage, accident)*.

    - *(Questions de suivi)* Décrivez-moi cette expérience. Qu'avez-vous ressenti?

TEMPORALITÉ (15-20 MINUTES)

Avant l'entretien, on a demandé au participant d'avoir en main des photos permettant de tracer une évolution de l'enfance à l'âge adulte. Pour cette partie de l'entretien, la technique de « photo elicitation » (Heisley et Levy, 1991) permet d'alimenter la réflexion du participant sur son rapport avec différentes versions de son visage.

3) Vous avez avec vous des photos de votre enfance, adolescence et d'autres plus récentes.

- Si vous me décriviez votre visage en vous appuyant sur ces photos, d'abord enfant, ensuite adolescent et adulte.

    - (Questions de suivi) En quoi votre visage est-il différent aujourd'hui? Parlez-moi de certaines choses qui vous manquent. En quoi votre visage passé correspond ou pas à qui vous êtes aujourd'hui? Parlez-moi de routines ou rituels impliquant votre visage que vous adoptiez à ce moment.

- Parlez-moi de certaines photos qui illustrent certains changements marquants dans votre vie d'un point de vue physique.

    - (*Questions de suivi*) Décrivez-moi votre visage dans cette photo. Que ressentez-vous lorsque vous regardez cette photo?

- J'aimerais à présent que vous me parliez de votre visage passé et du visage que vous entrevoyez pour le futur.

    - *(Questions de suivi)* Pensez à votre visage dans *X* années. Qu'est-ce qui vous attire de ce visage *(fait peur, plait moins)*? Comptez-vous adopter certaines pratiques de consommation pour modeler ce visage, *(lesquelles)*?

LISTE DE PRODUITS/SERVICES

- Chirurgie esthétique (restylane, botox) ou reliée à certaines parties du visage (incluant le cou)
- Traitements pour la peau (tâches)
- Traitements pour les dents (blanchiment)
- Cheveux (teintures, greffes)

POUR CONCLURE (3-10 MINUTES)

Avant de terminer l'entrevue, cette dernière section permet au/à la répondant(e) de s'exprimer sur des aspects ou sujets non couverts durant l'échange et que le/la répondant(e) juge important/pertinent de partager avec le chercheur. De cette façon, nous pouvons obtenir des informations supplémentaires qui permettent d'approfondir la discussion et d'améliorer notre compréhension du phénomène.

5) Avez-vous des opinions, questions ou commentaires supplémentaires à ajouter?

Je vous remercie infiniment de votre collaboration. J'apprécie votre générosité et votre disponibilité. Merci encore de votre participation!