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FASHIONING CHANGE
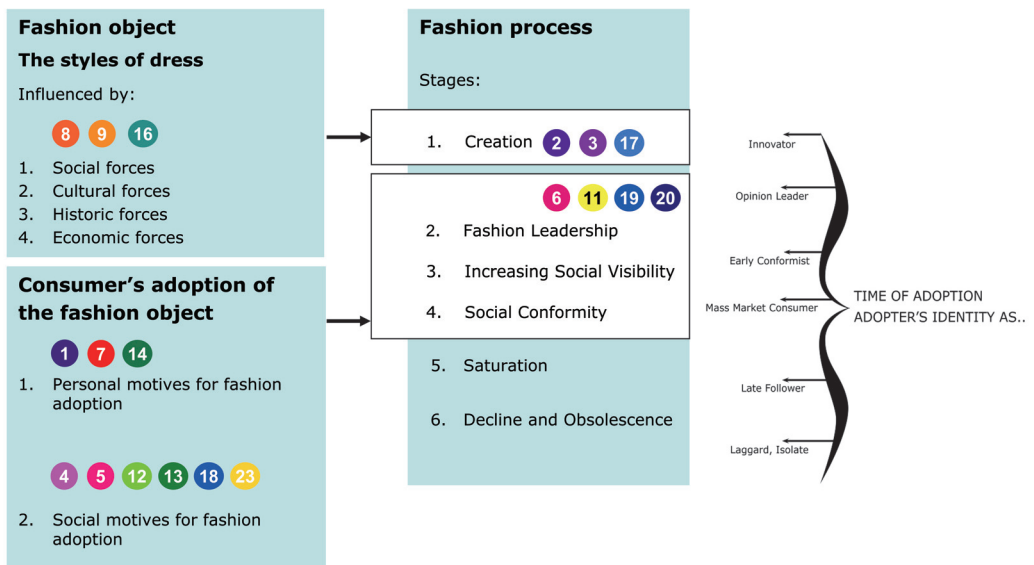
THE METAPHORICAL BLEND OF FASHION AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

BY STEFAN MONDELAERS

Framework for Understanding Fashion in Contemporary Society[1]

Fashion object

The styles of dress

Influenced by:

(8) (9) (16)

1. Social forces
2. Cultural forces
3. Historic forces
4. Economic forces

Consumer's adoption of the fashion object

(1) (7) (14)

1. Personal motives for fashion adoption

(4) (5) (12) (13) (18) (23)

2. Social motives for fashion adoption

Fashion process

Stages:

1. Creation (2) (3) (17)

(6) (11) (19) (20)

2. Fashion Leadership

3. Increasing Social Visibility

4. Social Conformity

5. Saturation

6. Decline and Obsolescence

Innovator

Opinion Leader

Early Conformist

Mass Market Consumer

TIME OF ADOPTION
ADOPTER'S IDENTITY AS..

Late Follower

Laggard, Isolate

[1] Sproles en Burns (1994)

Figure 8.1 Reflection of the Working Hypotheses on the component parts of the Framework for Understanding Fashion in Contemporary Society (Sproles & Burns 1994).

Fashioning Change

The Metaphorical Blend of
Fashion and Organizational Change

DISSERTATION

to obtain the degree of doctor at the Open University
on the authority of the
Rector Magnificus Prof A. Oskamp MA
before a commission appointed by the College for those obtaining a doctorate
and mounting a public defence

at Heerlen on Friday March 20th 2015 at 1:30 pm precisely

by

Stefan Felix Mondelaers
born at Diest, (Belgium), on March 12th 1965

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Focus of this research

This doctoral research paper ties up with a wider trend in management studies that has become prominent over the past decennia in particular in organizational studies and change studies. We can typify the classical discourse in these subject areas as one of manipulability. Here the central question is how organisations should be managed, directed strategically, structured, changed, managed and monitored. More and more publications have appeared of late in which the question is posed as to how things are in practice rather than how they ought to be.

Fashion development is characterized not by a top-down approach from a single centre of power but is the result of countless attempts to influence fashion e.g. in fashion shows, media coverage, celebrities wearing the latest fashion where, despite the many players, clearly discernible fashion trends occur. Even the choosing a particular fashion is not per se the result of any rational decision-making process. It appears first and foremost an emotional choice in which interacting with others plays a powerful role and where the person buying that one little coat or dress asks themselves the question: what will others think of this? This points to the deeply social side of fashion development.

Precisely these sorts of parallels form the basis of this doctoral thesis in which I use fashion as a metaphor for organizational change. The image of people being exposed to countless fashion impulses whilst working within organizations as managers or blue-collar workers forms a central theme of my thesis. For which read: change initiatives launched by the organization in a formal way and those launched by colleagues. A multiplicity of changes means workers are not capable of complying with changes at all times and in all places. This leads again and again to both managers and blue-collar workers in organizations having to make a choice: do I wish to comply with these changes? Should I comply just a little bit? Maybe I won't comply at all? Maybe I'll pretend to comply – using my on-stage and off-stage behaviour? These types of decision-making processes appear to resemble shopping around. The consumer of clothing asks himself the question: which clothes shops and websites do I actually visit? And when I'm in these shops am I searching in a focussed way or just having a look? Imagine a particular shop has caught his attention and there he is standing before a particular, virtual clothes stand where his eye has fallen on what is to me at least a particularly attractive item of clothing. What are all the things going through his mind at this point? Is he curious as to how much it costs? Does it fit in with what he thinks is fashionable? Or does he have a photo in a fashion magazine in his head of a celebrity who is wearing something similar? Maybe though he is also asking himself: how will they react if I wear this at work? You can come up with comparable questions where someone in an organization from time to time finds themselves confronted with

an overwhelmingly large number of changes. Then too questions would be asked such as: what in particular do I devote my attention to – what sorts of shops and what sorts of clothing? How much energy am I spending on this? Does it fit with the kind of work I do now? Does this change work in everyday practice? Does the new item of clothing feel nice? And if I do go along with this change, how will my colleagues react? How do they react to the change anyway? Am I not isolating myself a bit too much by being pro or anti such a change?

The central question this dissertation seeks to address in terms of organizational change is what role do meaningful dynamics play wherever they occur in general and particularly when they come in the form of IT change initiatives. The emphasis lies particularly on the analysis of what change involves when we do indeed looked at other things rather than just the change initiatives and interventions of management alone. Once I can understand the dynamics of change processes in individuals, groups and organizations from within, I can maybe say something about the form that intervenetions take whether desirable or no. In this dissertation the emphasis is on 'wishing to understand' in particular whilst making use of fashion as a metaphor to generate new and deeper insights. This makes my research more descriptive than prescriptive in character. The accent lies especially on trying to understand and describe the actuality of change for those who see change initiatives coming their way: the 'receivers'.

I am looking at things from a particular point of view towards the area of academic studies concerned with organizational change i.e. change management. My point of view means I study organizational change based on theories formed concerning the way in which fashion develops. The title of my dissertation is *Fashioning Change, The Metaphorical Blend of Fashion and Organizational Change*. I am therefore using *fashion* as a metaphor that I can use when studying organizational change. Besides this, I apply theories and concepts that are used within *fashion theory* for change initiatives. This means for example that I translate the concept of *celebrity endorsement* – famous and well-known personalities wearing the latest fashion and having an influence on whether a new fashion trend actually takes off – to concrete change interventions within a single change initiative. Subsequently I study the effects of said interventions.

Hence the central question this dissertation seeks to answer is whether complying with changes with which you are confronted displays any parallels with fashion taking off and developing. This is the basis therefore on which I carry out my research into organizational change using fashion as a metaphor. This means my research can be typified as a metaphorical study or as research that makes use of metaphors in which I look into the extent to which use of said fashion metaphor can lead to comparable or new insights into the actual dynamics that are associated with organizational change.

Posing the problem and assessing its relevance to society

I see this happening all around me both within the organization where I work and in what I often read: for most organizations organizational change is the rule rather than the exception but realizing change within organizations is anything but easy to do. Not for nothing are there bookshelves full of management books and articles about this very subject.

There are few organizations that currently have no change initiatives on the agenda or that they are about to introduce. The question is: why do so many change initiatives have to take place that are mostly started up at the same time? One explanation often given for this is that everything is speeding up in our turbulent society (Kotter, 2014). It appears that what is meant here are the technological developments of the last decennia that play a major role. Current technological possibilities and innovations have led for example to market globalization. This in turn leads to an ever quicker and tumultuous succession of changes coupled with a growing number of uncertainties. In this way we are living in a world where everything has to get quicker, better, nicer, more efficient and more attractive.

Some market changes, for instance the change from internet banking to mobile banking, have tsunami-like characteristics and demand a great deal of flexibility from organizations. Management can plan this top down but often such strategic procedural changes take too long. No sooner has the organization completed its reorganization aimed at bringing about a so-called *organizational fit* than the market finds itself once again in the next phase. The abovementioned developments are characteristic of organizations nowadays that exercise considerable influence over the way in which we try to bring about organisational change (Swieringa and Wierdsma, 1990): doesn't the way in which we change organizations have itself to change?

What does this mean for the average organization? Clearly not all organisations have the required flexible and adaptive assets. Some organizations do succeed in reinventing themselves again and again such as Apple (Isaacson, 2011, p. 99). For other organizations it's a long drawn out *struggle for life* think of Nokia (Fontein, 2013). This then leads to a global divide with on the one hand businesses that are unable or only able with difficulty to adapt to all these trends and on the other hand organizations that appear on the contrary to find it much less difficult (Barr, Stimpert & Huff, 1992). This however does not mean that the organizations going through a less successful period just sit on their hands. As with successful, competitive organizations, frequent strategic and structural changes take place aimed at placing

them in a position whereby they are capable of adapting to changes in market environment. In one way or another however they appear unable to succeed in developing sufficient adaptive skills (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

Studies carried out within the academic area of change management confirm the sometimes-poor success of change initiatives. In this context a much cited saying is that on average more than 70% of planned change initiatives fail (Balogun & Jenkins, 2003; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Boonstra, 2000; Higgs & Rowland, 2000). Another assessment study involving a great many change initiatives lead to the conclusion that the average success was no greater than forty per cent (Smith, 2002; Sorge & Witteloostuijn, 2004). Hard changes such as reorganizations, cost reductions, technological implementations and strategic changes, score higher than soft change initiatives such as innovation, client orientation and cultural changes; respectively fifty per cent successful as opposed to twenty to twenty-five per cent. These figures show that for sure not all well-meant change aims and ambitions will be achieved, despite all of the time, money and energy invested.

Weighing all this up therefore what emerges is a field of tension. On the one hand many publications suggest that organizations have to change effectively and quickly as a vital condition needed for survival in a highly changed market environment. On the other hand it appears that change initiatives are deployed within organizations to get them moving but are only effective in dribs and drabs. It is precisely this field of tension that determines how relevant this research is to society as a whole. On the one hand organizational change is exceptionally important to the ability to survive. On the other hand many change initiatives appear to be ineffectual, despite the enormous amounts of time, money and energy that are poured into them.

Apparently, we could draw the conclusion that we have reached the boundaries of the existing and most deployed approaches to change. This is an argument for making explicit the assumptions underlying the existing *planned-change* approach and to investigate whether there are any additional assumptions and so also other possible points of view on organizational change. A variety of authoritative publications make explicit reference to how important it is for the investigation to take another line of approach and make the so-called receiver's point of view central. The *variance-* approach appears however predominant in this study with its accent on variables and measurable causality. The ability to actually understand the dynamics and occurrences that happen in the context of change initiatives demands more than a process approach where the question is central as to what in fact happened. Using concepts and models from the world of fashion theory in a metaphorical way can help us understand more clearly the processes that occur during organizational change.

Fashion theory

In fashion theory fashion as a 'collective behavioural phenomenon' is a fundamental premise ("*fashion is highly social*" – Sproles & Burns, 1994). This makes us consider the process of the development, stabilization and change of fashion as a social process and it is precisely this social process that forms the underlying mechanism for the development of fashion. In addition, as a metaphor, it could provide us with a new explanatory point of view from which to better understand organizational change as a social process.

In this study I consider fashion to be a *'generalized behavioural phenomenon'* (Sproles & Burnes, 1994), I then conceptualize this into two dimensions: (1) the fashion object to be defined as the subject of fashion, and (2) the fashion process within which a new fashion trend is born and is accepted by certain *fashion leaders* through various processes and diffuses further and spreads to a wider target group and finally leads to saturation and the demise of this particular fashion trend thus creating space for a new fashion trend. The behavioural aspects of fashion are what in particular gave me the initial impulse to use fashion as a metaphor and to look at the academic terrain concerning organizational change. Surely change and changing must above all be about how both transmitters and receivers and both material and immaterial objects of change behave. In this dissertation I focus my attention on those aspects of fashion to do with essential changes of the current fashion in response to wider social and societal movements.

In fashion theory a distinction can be made between the 'WHAT' and the 'HOW' of fashion. The WHAT of fashion places the accent on the substance of the fashion trend i.e. type of material used, style, colour, modelling etc. that is continually subject to change. Sproles and Burns (1994) made a synthesis of different studies where researchers had given meaning to items of fashion. Together the meaning they give constitutes the heart of what *fashion* really is. Sproles (1974, p. 465) for example arrives at the following definition of *fashion*: "*A fashion is a culturally endorsed form of expression, in a particular material or non-material phenomenon, which is discernible at any given time and changes over time within a social system or group of associated individuals.*" You could say that fashion is change. In this current study my interest focuses in particular on the HOW of fashion as a developing process. What does the formulation of theories about fashion tell us about the dynamics that operate whenever a potential fashion develops into a fashion and then at last bursts forth as a fashion trend? Here by selecting concepts and models taken from fashion theory and using them to study initiatives aimed at changing organizations, we seek to add new and/or other insights into how to formulate theories in the science of change.

Fashion as metaphor

In the current study on the receiver's side as far organizational change is concerned *fashion* theory can play a role in further clarifying and helping us to understand the concrete processes and dynamics involved. As I mentioned earlier therefore, in this study the *fashion* metaphor is applied to the scientific area of change management i.e. organizational change to study in greater depth the dynamics that are at play on the receiver's side. Having now studied and used the reflection or projection of the *fashion* metaphor within change initiatives and in doing so applied them to the receiver's side of organizational change, there are some notes I would like to make in the margin concerning the current theories. In addition I would like to make some proposals aimed at contributing towards further developing new research questions and conceptual frameworks for the dynamics that are playing out on the receiver's side of change initiatives. This combination of *fashion* metaphor and organizational change that has never before been applied leads to a form of explorative research enabling the researcher to look at organizational change from a new perspective. In doing so we will have to identify the most relevant and eye-catching phenomena, processes and dynamics and make proposals recommending areas for further research.

Metaphors have *"a heuristic quality in opening up new and multiple ways of seeing, conceptualizing, and understanding organizational phenomena"* (Cornelissen, 2005, p. 753). The contribution they make to the formation of theory lies especially in their *"generative impact"*, meaning that applying metaphors during research can lead to new insights (Cornelissen & Kafouros, 2008, p. 367 and Weick, 1989). Metaphors possess as it were creative potential and as such have the ability to cast organizations in a new light (Cornelissen, 2005). The images metaphors conjure up place researchers in a position whereby they can generate new propositions about the internal dynamics of organizations (Bacharach, 1989). In short using and applying metaphors for the formation of theory can work like a sort of *surprise machine* (Gouldner, 1970).

When assessing use of explorative research as a metaphor i.e. here the *fashion* metaphor should be subject to criteria such as whether said metaphor has *'aptness' or 'goodness of fit'* (Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1981, 1982). According to Tourangeau and Sternberg (1981, 1982) *aptness or goodness of fit* is determined by a combination of *'between-domains distance'* and *'within-domains similarity'*. With the help of a variety of different experiments these authors have established that metaphors displayed a better *'fit'*, formed a better connection with the *target domain* and were able to generate images that were more meaningful than the related concepts of both the

target domain as the *source domain.* In addition they displayed a more diverse character or '*high level between-domains distance*'. Greater interaction and surprising insights are generated when the distance between the *target domain* and the *source domain* is greater (Blasko & Connine, 1993). Metaphors that are more "*familiar"* and thus "*close to home"* contribute relatively little towards theoretical development as compared with metaphors that are not (Cornelissen, 2006a, p. 486). At the same time within the various different domains matches are required that are as precise as possible '*high level within-domains similarity*' between the '*features* of the *target domain* and source *domain'* (Cornelissen, 2005, 2006a).

Research questions

To facilitate the study of the receiver's side of change initiatives in the research questions posed by this dissertation, the metaphorical application of concepts and theories surrounding *fashion theory* plays a central role as follows:

1.   What are the independent dynamics underlying the development of fashion? How do fashion trends come about and how do they develop?
2.   Which of these dynamics expressed in terms of concepts and models borrowed from fashion sciences can be applied to the understanding or explanation of the social dynamics that occur when organizations change?
3.   How useful are metaphorically applied concepts and models taken from fashion theory in explaining the appearance of concrete change initiatives, accompanying processes and dynamics and casting a new light on them?
4.   Which aspects and facets of the subject area of change management are able to produce new and/or other insights based on the selected and metaphorically used models and concepts from fashion theory? What are these insights?

The empirical section of this study encompasses the following three dimensions: firstly, the scope of this study focuses on the receivers of change initiatives; secondly, I go on to carry out observations and studies looking through a metaphorical pair of fashion spectacles the various different dynamics that occur when organizations change; and, thirdly, I myself go on to apply active fashion concepts and theories to change initiatives.

Research methodology

General outline of the research project

The accent in this study has been placed on two major component parts: firstly, a study of *fashion theory* that I do not deal with in any greater detail below and, secondly, the empirical research that has been carried out using *case study research* during implementation of change initiatives at a financial services provider. Basing

our work on researching the literature and studies carried out into *fashion theory* we were able to put together an overview of theories formulated about fashion. The next step is to translate these *fashion theories* into *triggers* that can be used in change management. In the original dissertation the reader will be able to find a description of these triggers. My dissertation shows that I opted for a qualitative research methodology known as '*case study research*' and supplemented it using a research process characterized by 'bricolage' basing my choices on the work done by van Creswell (2007), Huberman & Miles (2002), Coghlan & Brannick (2005), Yin (2003, 2009, 2012, 2014), Hancock & Algozzine (2006), and Denscombe (2007) and Eisenhardt (1989).

Case study research

One of the most important sections of this dissertation is research into the receiver's side of change initiatives seen through the metaphor of *fashion theory*. The type of information that appears necessary in order to do this concerns the actual course of concrete change initiatives: what is the purpose of such initiatives, how are they being tackled and what processes and dynamics play out on the 'receiver's side' i.e. with the receivers of change initiatives? This type of research data is only available when we study concrete change initiatives in their natural setting i.e. everyday practice of van. Only then does it become clear what 'really' is going on when change initiatives are launched. Then we can try to compare the research data obtained with concepts and models taken from *fashion* literature. According to Yin (2003, 2009, 2012, 2014) *case study research* is preferred: "*When 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over behavioural events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.*" Case study research makes it possible for us to learn better how to understand the concrete dynamics of change in all its richness and in its natural setting whilst at the same time taking into account the complexity and the historical and local context within which 'everything' takes place (Punch, 1998).

Theory-guided 'bricolage'

The term *theory-guided 'bricolage'* (see figure 1) is borrowed from an insightful and much quoted article *Developmental research as a research method* by Gravemeijer (1998). 'Bricolage' refers to the cumulative process of processing, adapting, improving and expanding. Such a cumulative process relates both to the product e.g. an intervention, and to the development of a conceptual model. According to Gravemeijer this type of research resembles that of the work of a 'bricoleur' or handyman/odd-jobman who makes or repairs things by making nifty use of the materials available at that point. Often a tailor-made solution is what is needed. He has to be inventive and think up new solutions. During this process he is constantly developing new know-how and skills. Dissertations like mine are a form of 'theory-led odd-jobbery'. It would appear therefore that it fits into those forms of qualitative

research in which the researcher acts as a 'bricoleur'. For pragmatic reasons 'bricolage' involves applying a mix of research methods this why it is referred to as *'pragmatic bricolage'* or *'multiple method bricolage'* (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).
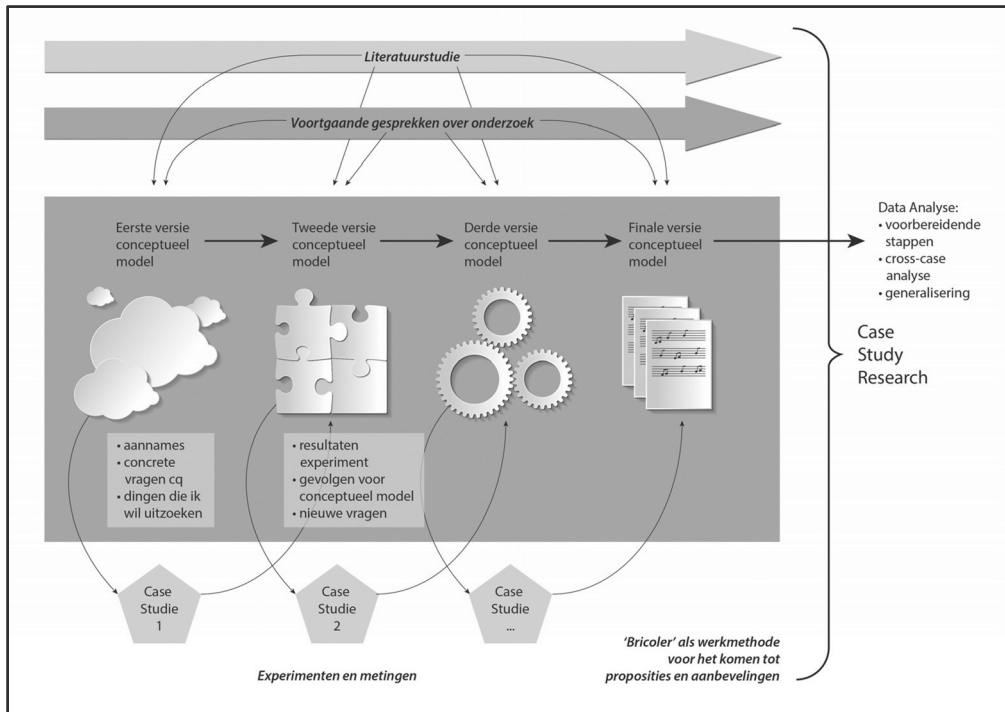
Figure 1 Conceptual representation of 'bricolage'.

Methods of data collection

Research data and its analysis for various case studies collected as of September 2009 up to and including June 2011 form the most important basis for this research. The case studies took place in a variety of organizational sections enabling me to put a number of various different contexts under the microscope. The case studies dealt with different types of change both cultural and technological (Smith, 2002).

Analysis of the data

The analytical process is gone through using the steps contained in the '*The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction*' (Carney, 1990). I chose this model because it is based on an approach that is both structured and provides an overview as well as the possibility of integrating into it Cornelissen's '*Domains Interaction Model of Metaphor'* (2005). The metaphorical application of *fashion theory* has gained its place on the ladder of abstraction. Here I base my work on that of Cornelissen (2005, 2006a, 2006b) and

his *Domains Interaction Model of Metaphor* that describes how metaphors can be used and adapted to facilitate the formulation of theories about organizations and appears will be able to be applied within the context of this research. Hence why this model fits in with the ladder of abstraction. In this way and in the spirit of Cornelissen's *Domains Interaction Model of Metaphor* (2005) I attempt to climb *The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction* (Carney, 1990) step by step (see Figure 2).

The domains- Interaction model of metaphore

The ladder of Analytical Abstraction

FASE III
Emergent Meaning

LEVEL 3
Developing and testing propositions to construct an explanatory framework

Delineating the deep structure

Synthesis: integrating the data into one explanatory framework

Testing hypothesses and reducing the bulk of data for ananlysis of trend in it

Cross-checking tentative findings
Matrix analysis of major themes in data

FASE II b
Elaboration of the blend

LEVEL 2
Repackaging and aggregating the data

Identifying themes and trends in the data overal

• Searching for relationships in the data: writing analytical memos
• Finding out where the emphases and gaps in the data are

FASE II a
Development of the blend

LEVEL 1
Summarizing and packaging the data

Trying out coding categories to find a set that fits

• Coding of data
• Writing of analytical notes on linkages to various frameworks of interpretation

Creating a text to work on

• Reconstruction of interview tapes as written
• Synopses of individual interviews

FASE I
Development of a generic structure

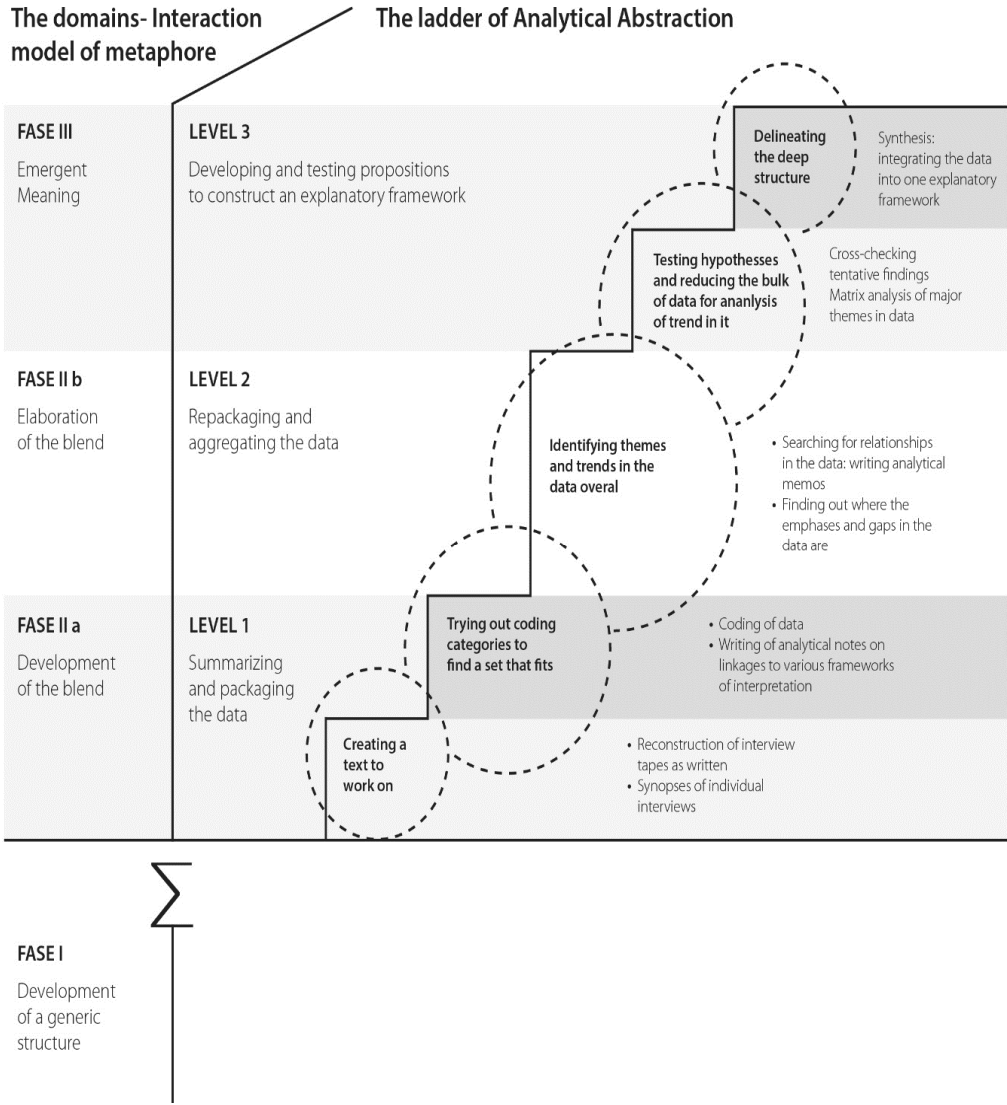**Figure 2 The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney, 1990) &
The Domains-Interaction Model of Metaphor (Cornelissen, 2005, p. 758).**

Management Summary

Metaphorical coding

An important condition for the success of the information *blending process* is that the researcher has at his disposal a sound knowledge of both the *source domain* taken from *fashion theory* as the *target domain* taken from organisational change. I am familiar with the domain of organizational change having worked for several years as an implementation manager in a variety of different sectors in and out of the financial sector combining this with the training courses I attended and the literature I studied. As concerns the *fashion* metaphor, I was more preoccupied with "*playing on foreign ground*" (Røvik, 2011, p. 636). Røvik (2011, p. 636) sounds a critical note when it comes to the import of "*enlightening metaphors*" by researchers who have at their disposal "*... only second hand and superficial knowledge of the chosen metaphors and their respective domains. ... most metaphor imports to the organization science field suffer from a chronic knowledge imbalance in disfavour of source domains*". Such a situation can lead to researchers generating simplistic and even mistaken metaphors in the *source domain*. Although I am no specialist in fashion management I have sought to study extensively the available literature and to have the important component parts of *fashion theory* validated in wide-ranging interviews with fashion specialists. I have done this in order to put right as much as possible the *knowledge imbalance problem* described above.

Setting up and developing a list with codes

Where possible I have subdivided the four component parts of the generic structure of the *fashion theory* based on the more specific content description of *fashion theory*, into 'code categories', 'code areas requiring attention, 'code phenomenon' of 'code concepts'.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) "*Coding is analysis. Codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to 'chunks' of – varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs, connected or unconnected to a specific setting. They can take the form of a straightforward category label or a more complex one like a metaphor.*" This is about lending meaning to words, paragraphs etc. based on their significance within a specific context.

Concrete description of the coding process

How are the codes assigned (= *assigning units of meaning)* to the raw research data (= *pieces of data)*? In the visual image depicting metaphorical coding in Figure 3 I have again tried to reproduce the way in which I went about my work. Three interactive component parts as follows assume a central role in metaphorical coding:

(1)   raw research data stored in logbooks

(2)   *fashion theory* metaphor through a lens or pair of spectacles and

(3)   the researcher in the role of an analyst and code maker.
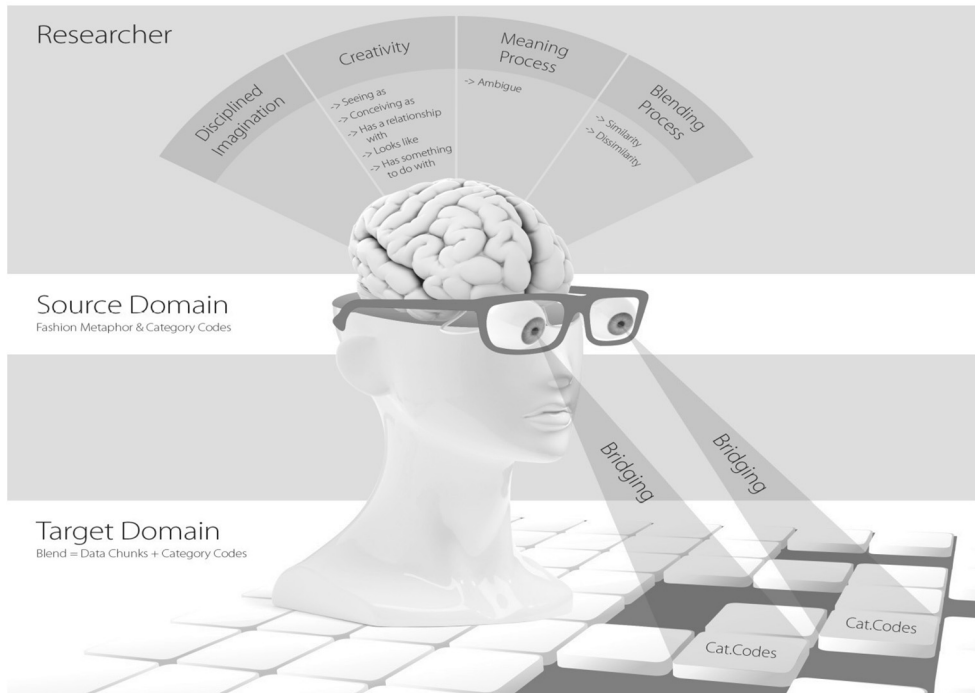
METAPHORICAL CODING

Figure 3 Metaphorical coding

As an analyst I look at the research data as reproduced in the various logbooks through a pair of metaphorical *fashion theory* spectacles. The *fashion-theory* related code categories form a pair of metaphorical spectacles through which I as the analyst can peer into and study the texts contained in the logbooks. Cornelissen (2006a, p. 687) describes this as follows: "... *meaning is created through the creative juxtaposition of concepts that are not normally interrelated"*. You need a certain amount of creativity and imagination to be able to put together the matches between the research data (*target*) and the code categories (*source = fashion theory metaphor*, Cornelissen, 2005, 2006b; Røvik, 2011). A continual and interactive *mapping process* or reflective process operates whilst I am reading, studying and analysing the research data whereby *the creative correspondence* between the research data and the code categories is put together based on *"seeing-as"* or *"conceiving-as" mappings* (Cornelissen, 2006b, p. 686) *has a relationship with, looks like, has something to do with* etc. We use these types of

reflective processes to form a bridge between the research data and the code categories. I call this process therefore '*bridging*'. Besides this I take into account the relationships that display both the character of "*similarity*" and that of "*dissimilarity*" (Cornelissen, 2005, p. 756). During the case studies based on *fashion theory* some change initiatives are set up taking as their starting point concepts and models taken from *fashion*. Such *fashion* interventions generated research data that could be related directly to the component part concerned within *fashion theory*. In such cases the *mappings* process was characterized by *has something to do with*.

Forensic traceability

The criteria for assessing the quality of research must be congruent with the sort of research being done (Patton, 2002). Imitation forms part of case study research (Checkland, 2000) and is the crucial measure of quality i.e. the ability to imitate results, arguments, line of reasoning and the research process itself. Or you might want to call it the 'forensic traceability' of the results and conclusions of the research, something I have attempted to describe and facilitate.

In terms of research however, due to the fact of having to guarantee anonymity to those taking part in various case studies, traceability does have its limits. During this research process I have tried to avoid a situation such as that defined by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 262) of "*a vertical monopoly*". This means that quality researchers are at times working on their own as a "*one-person research machine*" in the research domain and have thus a 'data monopoly' at their disposal. Often the 'what' of the research plays a central role and is written about copiously. The 'how' of the research i.e. how do I get to the 'what'? remains relatively underexposed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This is why the research and process of data analysis are so extensively described in the original dissertation. In addition up to and including the collection of the raw research data the research activities have a group character meaning therefore that several people have looked at it and worked on how to give shape to the data, conclusions, analyses etc. Besides this the follow-up activities were carried out in small committees together with the participants of the various different subject teams so that I was always able to attune my findings to theirs. In this way I have tried to avoid the situation I sketched earlier of a *vertical monopoly*. In addition to avoiding a *vertical monopoly* I applied a variety of techniques in order to guarantee the robustness of the quality of the data. In doing so I base myself on "*tactics for testing or confirming findings*" by Miles and Huberman (1994): "*triangulation, getting feedback from informants, checking for researchers effects, intercode reliability, using extreme cases and saturation*".

Other and new insights

A central part of the discussion is assumed by the conclusions I have drawn as to what extent it is legitimate to make use of or to apply *fashion* concepts in order to understand the dynamics of change and the extent to which applying such concepts can lead to a deeper understanding of or other insights into change processes. In short, I reflect upon the question whether *fashion theory* can help us to understand organizational change better and/or in some other way. What follows below is based on the findings of empirical research and forms a description of various concepts of *fashion theory* that appear to generate sufficient 'tension' with the domain of organizational change in order to arrive at new and/or other insights. I begin with *fashion-theory* models and go on to look more closely at the various different *fashion-theory* related hypotheses.

Fashion-theory models

Two models mentioned in the research take on a prominent role. This concerns the following: (1) *Framework for Understanding Fashion in Contemporary Society* (Sproles & Burns, 1994) and (2) *Consumer's Fashion Adoption Process – A General Model of Sproles* (1979). The *Framework* (Sproles & Burns, 1994) and the *General Model* (Sproles, 1979) are directly related to one another and create coordinating insights into *fashion theory* from two completely different points of view. The *Framework* sees the *fashion process* i.e. the diffusion process, as the heart of the matter and the *General Model* directs our attention towards data collection and the decision-making process i.e. the adoption process. Both models provide insight into the internal dynamics that the adopter appears to display during the development process involving a new mode (see Figures 4 and 5). As a supplement to the subject area of organizational change The fact that on the one hand attention is paid to internal interaction and the relation between the dynamics of the adoption processes i.e. the adopters and on the other hand the progression of the development process in the interests of the 'senders'. Both models appear to offer the option of binding together diffusion and adoption and whilst giving insights into them give insights also into their internal processes to do with meaning.

Using both models in combination can work as a 'change-diagnosis instrument' whenever *change agents* come across domains in which organizational change processes are going on. Both models form as it were a '*Gestalt*' and in that sense cannot truly be separated from each other and we can accentuate things depending on the specific change management questions asked.

Sproles' *General Model* (1979) makes it clear that the data collection and decision-

making process is not a sequential, linear and purely individual adoption process. We need to take into account the degree to which internal relationships affect one another in order to be able to understand the dynamic and varied process that is the decision to adopt. This model appears to give us insight to the effect that adoption processes and thus change processes as well cannot be managed directly or directed in any meaningful way.

Another important insight with which we can credit Sproles' *General Model* (1979) is that receivers of change initiatives are continually and from a variety of different environments being confronted by differing types of change. Receivers of change initiatives have therefore to face a veritable stream of never-ending change stimuli. Most models dealing with change lay more emphasis on a single change and not so much on the continual offer of change initiatives. Receivers must however take change decisions almost continually. The model provides us with an insight into the phenomenon that *On-stage & Off-stage behaviour* for the potential adopter is a type of defence and/or survival mechanism to be able to process and to manage this veritable tsunami of change initiatives. The sender does not manage the receivers rather the receiver prioritizes the change initiatives and thus manages them.

The *Framework for Understanding Fashion in Contemporary Society* van Sproles and Burns (1994) can bring insight, clarity and peace to the change process associated with any change initiatives on offer. That holds just as much for the senders as the providers of change initiatives. This is the next new insight into the area of organisational change. The *Framework* (Sproles & Burns, 1994) makes clear that the *fashion process* i.e. the process of change is a process that is continual being influenced by factors that influence the creation and development of the *change object*. As with the further dissemination of the *change object*, both social and personal adoption motives exercise influence. In the *Framework* a direct relationship is laid with Sproles' *General Model* (1979) through the adoption categories. In other words, the *fashion process* i.e. process of change cannot progress unless and until the receivers switch their position and proceed to adopt the changes. Here too however it appears that the adoption process is difficult to manage. In addition this *Framework* (Sproles & Burns, 1994) provides us with a further insight namely that the *fashion process* is a gradual one and this can be monitored and/or followed up and can be measured in some cases both in a quantitative and in a qualitative sense.

Hypotheses

A picture appears to have emerged from the above answers to the questions posed by the research whereby the application of the *fashion* metaphor to the scientific area of organizational change making it possible to conceptualize points for improvement or new points of interest within the scientific field of change management. Not every

hypothesis offers the same level of renewal or improvement. We can however select a hypothesis that can speak to our imagination and that can deliver input by adopting some other point of view and by using namely the spectacles of *fashion* theory to look at the scientific field of change management. I take as my point of departure the *working hypotheses* clustered (see Table 1) according to the *Framework* of Sproles and Burns (1994).

Working Hypotheses, geclusterd volgens Framework Sproles & Burns (1994)	
Fashion Process: Stage Creation	
WH02. New Fashions, georganiseerd spontaan	
WH03. New Fashions, georganiseerd gepland en formeel	
WH17. Innovator (Venturesomeness)	
1 **Influences: Fashion Object**	
WH08. Die Zeitgeist	
WH09. Fashionability	
WH16. Historical Continuity	
Fashion Process: Stage Fashion Leadership & Increasing Social Visibility & Social Conformity	
WH06. Use & Trial Dynamics	
WH11. Decision Making Process & Information Seeking Process	
WH19. Initial Reactions To (New) Change Initiatives (Behaviour, Attitude)	
WH20. Personal Translation & Personal Impact	
Influences: Fashion Adoption & Personal Motives	
WH01. Celebrity Endorsement & People in the Public Eye	
WH07. User-Fit Level	
WH14. Emotions (Positive – Negative)	
2 **Influences: Fashion Adoption & Social Motives**	
WH04. Taste Process, Collective Taste	
WH05. Fashion Leaders	
WH12. (Increasing) Social Visibility	
WH13. Social Appropriateness & Social Acceptability	
WH18. Social Influences & Social Conformity	
WH23. On Stage & Off Stage Behaviour	

Tabel 1 Working Hypotheses, gathered into two clusters according to the Sproles and Burns Framework (1994).

The hypotheses have been clustered into two large blocks of areas of interest: (1) the process of *fashion creation* that influenced by *fashion object* related aspects of *Die Zeitgeist, historical continuity & fashionability* and (2) the process of *fashion diffusion* that is split up into the successive phases of *fashion leadership, increasing social visibility and social conformity*, that are in turn influenced by both personal and social motives for adoption.

Fashion Process: Stage Creation & Influences: Fashion Object
The *working hypotheses* (WH) *WH02. New Fashions: Organized and spontaneous, WH03. New Fashions: Organized Planned and Formal* and *WH17. Innovator (Venturesomeness)* are clustered under the *Fashion Process: Stage Creation*. The *working hypotheses WH08. Die Zeitgeist, WH09. Fashionability* and *WH16. Historical Continuity* are component parts that influence the *fashion object* i.e. the change initiative.

In *fashion theory* the above hypotheses are related to '*the birth and evolution of new fashions'*. One clear point for improvement for the domain of organizational change is that indicated by *fashion theory* namely that there are three influential forces both planned and spontaneous that initiate any *fashion change* (Sproles & Burns, 1994, pp. 44-45): "*planned changes which are initiated and propagated by the fashion industry, unplanned changes where new fashions become an outgrowth of major or extraordinary events in society, and changes inspired by creative consumers ranging from public celebrities to overage consumers*". Supplemented by both *fashion designers* and creative individuals emanating from the *fashion industry* as creative consumers designing and initiating *fashions*. That is all I wish to say about the birth of *new fashions*. What however we have not dealt with is the further spread of such *new fashions*. Within *fashion theory* the '*fashion industry'* is held to work as a lever for the spread of *fashion designers,* creative individuals emanating from the *fashion industry* and *fashions* created by creative consumers "*… for a particular fashion look to be accepted by the mass public, the look must be legitimized by the fashion industry...*" (Sproles & Burns, 1994, p. 65). The '*fashion marketing system'* as a component part of the *fashion industry* facilitates the emergence and spread of '*changing fashions'*.

A subsequent point of interest for the domain of organizational change is that within *fashion theory* the principle of *historical continuity* suggests that *fashion change* is rather more evolutionary than revolutionary. Moreover the change process fulfils itself only in small steps, year after year (Sproles & Burns, 1994, p. 66). "*Thus historical continuity is like a guiding and organizing force that sets limits on the direction of change and amount of change taking place at a given time. Consumers will accept small amounts of change year-to-year, but major changes are rare.*"

A point of interest within the domain of organizational change is the realization that the *fashion* concept *Die Zeitgeist* refers to the principle that only *fashions* designed according to *Die Zeitgeist* of a particular moment will be accepted (Solomon & Rabolt, 2009). The phenomenon of *Die Zeitgeist* works as a sort of 'discriminator' when the receivers are all simultaneously swamped with change initiatives. Linking up well with *Die Zeitgeist* is a precondition of adoption. Linking up with *Die Zeitgeist* ensures that the receivers are alerted to and display an interest in the change initiative offered. Sproles and Burns (1994, p. 163) linked up with this and formulated the following conclusion: *"But all styles receiving this high social visibility do not become collective Fashions. Theorists argue that only those styles most consistent with the current sociocultural environment (Die Zeitgeist) win in the test of collective selection."*

Fashion Process: Stages of Fashion Leadership, Increasing Social Visibility and Social Conformity

The following *working hypotheses WH19. Initial Reactions To (New) Change Initiatives (behaviour and attitude), WH20. Personal Translation & Personal Impact, WH06. Use & Trial Dynamics,* and *WH11. Decision Making Process & Information Seeking Process,* are all related to the three phases of the *fashion process,* namely *Fashion Leadership, Increasing Social Visibility* and *Social Conformity.*

One important supplementary perspective that *fashion theory* adds is that the *fashion industry* succeeds in drawing towards itself the attention of potential adopters during vast i.e. cyclical periods. Strongly season-related but at fixed times the consumer is flooded with the latest fashion trends where the receivers look forwards to this in a positive or at least a neutral way. There is no question of resistance only of becoming *awareness* interest or temporary lack of interest. Sproles' *Consumer's Fashion Adoption Process – A General Model* (1979) describes in reasonable detail what happens before the consumer buys for the first time a new *fashion item* in the so-called *Use & Trial stage* that is preceded by a subtle data-processing and decision-making process subject to several social and environmental influences. Such environmental influences, emanating from a variety of different sources lead to attitudes and behaviour that are both positive and negative and that determine whether consumers are going to adopt a particular fashion (Sproles & Burns, 1994). In addition the new fashion must provide the buyer with a certain advantage over that of the already existing fashion. This relative advantage is often based on functional properties the fashion has such as for example better materials and new finishing techniques so that it is in other words *user-fit.*

Besides the relative advantage meaning is given to the new fashion trend as being "*more fashionable*", "*more consistent with my self-concept*", "*more prestigious*" and "*individualistic*" (Sproles & Burns, 1994 p. 17). Other characteristics of the latest fashion such as whether it meets the consumer's personal life style requirements in relation to activities, occupation and roles and is therefore *user-fit* determine whether the consumer is a first adopter.

There follows the all-determining and precarious *Use & Trial Stage* that leads finally to the various different forms of adoption or even rejection. "*New fashions are adopted only after the consumer is aware of and interested in the fashion and has had a chance to evaluate and try out the fashion*" (Sproles & Burns, 1994, p. 17). The birth of a *fashion* due to repeat purchases can only come about once both phases have been completed successfully (*Awareness, Use & Trial Stage*).

What the fashion metaphor makes clear therefore is that organizational change does not require every change to be studied per se but to be seen more precisely as a phenomenon with which the receivers are confronted who are already being confronted with several changes all happening at once. Adopting a change is thus not a question of a 'YES' or 'NO' decision in the light of that one change but more especially a choice, a selection process from a large choice of different changes. In that selection process there appear in the course of time to be very diverse dynamics at play. Here we can distinguish between the phase of *brand awareness*, the phase of encountering-for-the-first-time any potential change and the phase of the final adoption of the one change. In all of these phases there appears to be another dynamic operating whereby other influencing factors and processes appear to affect one another.

Influences: Fashion Adoption and Personal Motives
The *working hypotheses WH01.Celebrity Endorsement & People in the Public Eye, WH07. User-Fit Level* and *WH14. Emotions (Positive – Negative)* are related to the personal motives that influence the *fashion process.*

Within organizational changes the deployment of *celebrity endorsement & people in the public eye* contributes towards the change becoming visible and thus giving us a new insight to current and future receivers of change initiatives. Within the *fashion industry* deployment of *celebrities* is quite common when launching *new fashions.* Such deployment is well thought through, properly prepared and deployed in an orchestrated way (McCracken, 1989).

As described earlier, *WH07. User-Fit Level is t89 =* the most dominant theme within this dissertation that has the greatest impact on the receivers of change and the

greatest consequences for senders of change initiatives. Within *fashion theory* a lot of time is spent on the *Use & Trial Stage*, as this phase is the most important and the most essential for the further spread of *fashion*. This *Stage* in the adoptor's decision-making process is given an important place in *Sproles' Consumer's Fashion Adoption Process – A General Model* (1979). The resulting experiences thereby influence the current i.e. temporary adopters as the potential adopters. The interest and the insights that *fashion theory* offers in the aspect of *user-fit* within the *Use & Trial Stage* form an essential improvement for the domain of organizational change. Here *fashion theory* adds something to the domain of organizational change by giving special attention to functional properties such as wearer comfort and improvements to the newest mode.

Influences: Fashion Adoption & Social Motives
Working hypotheses WH04. Taste Process, Collective Taste, WH05. Fashion Leaders, WH12. Increasing Social Visibility, WH13. Social Appropriateness & Social Acceptability, WH18. Social Influences & Social Conformity and *WH23. On Stage & Off Stage Behaviour are* all related to the most influential social motives that influence the *fashion process.*

An important insight that *fashion theory* adds in this area is that *fashion adoption* is no purely individual occurrence but is strictly subject to a number of both broad and local social influences. Potential adopters decide to go ahead and adopt whenever the *fashion object* becomes meaningful within the *reference group* where the potential adopter is active. *"The acceptance of a fashion is based on consumers' perception of its social appropriateness"* (Sproles & Burns, 1994). Specifically when difficult and complicated organizational changes occur *fashion leaders*, in combination with the development of *collective taste*, can bring forward essential points for improvement. This touches on Blumer's 1969 work '*Fashion: from class differentiation to collective selection'* in which he gives a detailed description of both the process and the specific role of said *fashion leaders* who Blumer terms *innovators*. One further point of interest for the domain of organizational change is the realization that the aspect of '*social conformity'* is an important phase within the *fashion process.* The *fashion process* has a number of specific characteristics that together ensure that *fashion* is a relatively unique phenomenon of diffusion: *"Most importantly, the motivational force behind fashion may be thought of as social conformity or social 'contagion', whereas traditional diffusion processes may be thought to be motivated by innovation characteristics such as technical superiority or perceived functional utility"* (Sproles, 1974, p. 469). We have therefore to think of *fashion* as *a 'social' mechanism* of collective behaviour within a population where the collective people's taste is changed for reasons that cannot generally be associated with economics or technical use (Blumer, 1969). *Fashion diffusion* represents a unique application of the general theory of diffusion with the

emphasis on *the collective social mechanisms of fashion object acceptance* (Forsythe, Butler & Kim, 1991).

Within WH23. On Stage & Off Stage Behaviour deals with the local dynamics of power visible within the domain of organizational change. *Fashion theory* deals with this theme in a subtle manner. It could be viewed as a new insight for the domain of organizational change by linking together the opposing forces of individuality and conformity through which adoption is stimulated. As was indicated in the *working hypothesis* the phenomenon of *On stage & Off stage behaviour* is a protective measure taken by receivers when confronted by more than enough change initiatives. Sproles and Burns (1994, pp. 18-19) have defined a number of fundamental principles of *fashion* and I am now able to provide the reader with an important quotation that describes *On stage & Off stage behaviour* from the point of view of *fashion theory* as follows:

"Individuality and conformity are opposing forces that join together to influence fashion creation and adoption. While fashion adoption results in similarity in appearance among many people, there is much individuality possible in each fashion as well. The adoption of a fashion by a consumer can satisfy the consumer's need for expressing individuality and the consumer's 'need for security obtained' by being similar to others. This is made possible by the large number of styles and combinations of styles that are considered fashionable at any given time. Thus an individual can wear a fashion that is not only unique to him or herself, but which is also similar to what others are wearing".

This quotation offers other insights for the domain of organizational change. When looking at the design of change initiatives there is no '*one best change*' but a variety of different change initiatives are on offer from which the receivers can make a choice. In short the receivers follow the change of course that has been set i.e. they display conformity, but at the same time they fill it in in their own way thereby displaying their individuality. *Fashion theory* sees this as stimulating adoption.

Initial conclusions

A picture appears to have emerged whereby application of the *fashion* metaphor to the academic discipline of organizational change makes it possible to conceptualize points for improvement or new points of interest within the subject area of change management. Not every hypothesis offers the same level of renewal or improvement. We can however select a number of hypotheses that can appeal to our imagination and that deliver input enabling us to use a different perspective and peer through the spectacles of *fashion* theory at the scientific area of change management.

Whenever I establish a relationship between the various different *working hypotheses* and the already existing literature on change – basing my actions on a Quick Scan of the literature since my research questions did not require any more detailed study – I have come to the conclusion that the *working hypotheses* do indeed form a link to a great deal of known areas in the literature of change but at the same time the *working hypotheses* deliver many nuances, deeper and/or broader insights and even some critical comments.

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Major component of the fashion process

Pre-existing conditions

Directing influences on the fashion process

Central channel of consumer decision making

17
2 3

8 9 16

A Fashion OBJECT

Current level of acceptance of style by
fashion leaders and other consumers

12
19

New style   Established fashion,
Low acceptance   to   High acceptance

2 3

A Potential ADOPTER

Adopter's identity: age, sex, socioeconomic characteristics, physical profile (body size/shape, appearance, etc)

Start of consumer's information seeking and decision making

Adopter's psycho-social MOTIVATIONS

Influences from adopter's ENVIRONMENT

LIFESTYLES

8
9

SOCIOCULTURAL CHANGE

THE FASHION MARKETING SYSTEM

1
12
9

COMMUNICATIONS
Information Receiving, Monitoring Fashion Trend

AWERENESS OF OBJECT

14 11

INTEREST

EVALUATION

7

20

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FASHION OBJECT

FUNCTIONAL PURPOSE OF THE OBJECT

7

ADOPTER'S COGNITIVE ORIENTATIONS TOWARD DRESS: awereness, interest, knowledge, innovativeness, perceived risk, expectations, attitudes, values

8
19
9 20
16

ADOPTER'S PSYCHOLOGICAL IDENTITY: self-concept, peronality, individuality-conformity

1
20

SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON ADOPTER: collective behavior, socialization, reference groups, social communications and opinion leadership

4 18
7 23
12
13

1 5

-Select stores to shop
-Currently available styles
-Purposeful information seeking
-Evaluation at the store
-Narrowing the choice

IDENTIFICATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Critical characteristics) considered style, fit, price, brand, physical characteristics climate of use, maintanence

7

DECISION

23

Reject (Begin again or save information for later decision)

Acquisition (purchase, sew, gift)

TIME OF ADOPTION
ADOPTER'S IDENTITY AS..

Innovator   Early Conformist   Late Follower

Opinion Leader   Mass Market Consumer   Laggard, Isolate

Identify Clothing and fashion, needs

INVENTORY OF CLOTHING

Repeat acquisitions of same/similar style

Specific roles and activities

USE

4 6 7 11
14

Influence on other POTENTIAL ADOPTERS

7

DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE:

New fashion object emerges, changing lifestyles, changing level of acceptance, social termination of trend, physical obsolescence

8
9
16

OBSOLESCENCE

NEW FASHION PROCESS BEGINS
(Return to start)

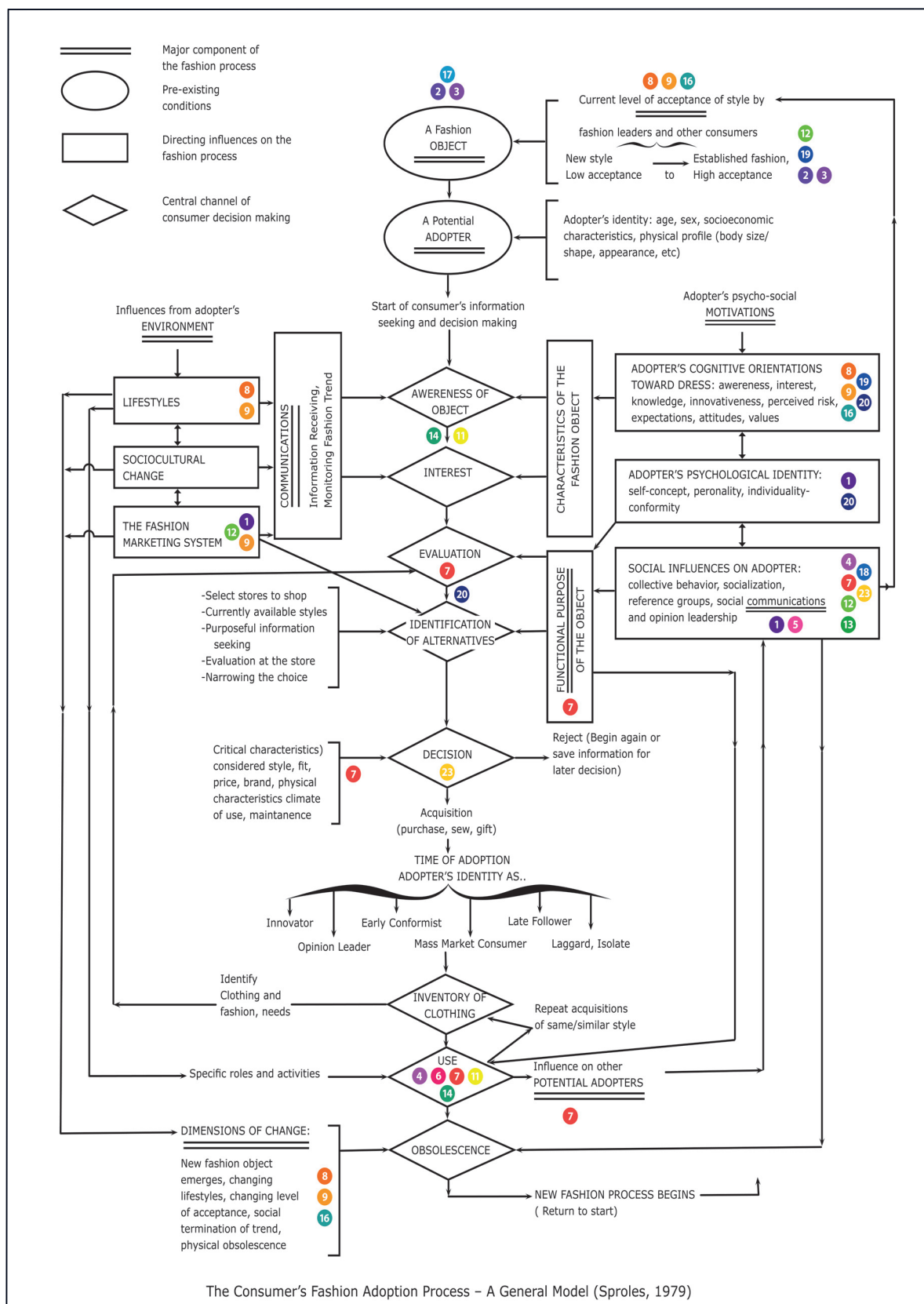The Consumer's Fashion Adoption Process – A General Model (Sproles, 1979)

Figure 8.2 Result of reflection on The Consumer's Fashion Adoption Process
- A General Model derived from Sproles (1979) using the Working Hypotheses.

2050

"A courageous study that looks at organizational change in an original and creative way. Using the fashion metaphor yields numerous new insights into the question what is organizational change?"

Prof Dr T.H. Homan, Open University & The University of Maastricht

"I am impressed by your work and particularly the way in which you have applied fashion theory to change management."

Prof Dr A. Nauta, Amsterdam University

"As a person who is in favour of change, you have surprised me with an outing into thinking about the world of fashion of which I know relatively little. I have learnt a lot and my understanding of the complexity of change has, to say the least, increased."

Prof Dr L.I.A. de Caluwé, Free University of Amsterdam

"I compliment you on this impressive work especially the way in which you have linked together these two worlds."

Prof Dr A. Kil, Nyenrode University

2014

"I very much enjoyed reading your dissertation that shows daring and guts. I'm allowed to do so, as I think it's very good. It makes a positive contribution to what we know about knowledge communities. Great insights are to be had concerning emergent changes."

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"In Fashioning Change, The Metaphorical Blend of Fashion and Organizational Change, Stefan Mondelaers shifts gear effortlessly between the academic world of change management and the world of fashion and I find it quite exceptional that he does so as if it were the most natural thing in the world."

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