



**HOME RENAISSANCE FOUNDATION
WORKING PAPERS
Number 83**

**Working from home: Clothing choice and happiness
Rose Marroncelli**

Paper delivered at Home Renaissance Foundation V International Conference: "Happy Homes, Happy Society? The contribution of domestic life in a time of social changes",
Online due to Covid19 measures, 12-13 November 2020

Working from home: Clothing choice and happiness

Rose Marroncelli

Abstract

Our homes become an extension of who we are, and components inside the home can affect our mood and productivity (Young, 2018). Approximately 1.5 million people in the UK work from home, and this figure is constantly increasing (Lawrie and Parry, 2020). As a result of the Corona Virus outbreak, thousands more people are likely to be working from home for the immediate and foreseeable future. The UK government introduced strict new measures on 23rd March 2020, in an attempt to stop the spread of the virus. These measures outlined that 'shops selling "non-essential goods" including clothes will be closed immediately' (BBC News, 2020). In response to these recent unprecedented developments, this paper will investigate what drives the decision to wear particular clothes when working from home, and how this links to productivity and overall happiness.

Textiles have a physical proximity to the skin, and the power to convey memory and emotion (Dolan and Holloway, 2016). Moreover, clothing 'shapes and frames our bodies' (Stanes, 2019, p. 226). This has become increasingly pertinent following the UK government's closing of all clothes stores – consumers are forced to utilise clothing in their existing wardrobes. I am interested in exploring how consumers develop emotional attachments to existing items of clothing (Clark, 2008), by investigating the different factors which contribute to an attachment being formed, through in-depth interviews. Niinimaki and Armstrong (2013) hypothesise that fostering deep attachments to clothing offers opportunities to extend the use time of garments, and postpone disposal. The interviews will compare both male and female attitudes towards clothing worn when working at home, which will facilitate a gendered analysis.

This paper examines the relationship between happiness, clothing and productivity. The study will contribute to the fields of consumer behaviour and material culture, by investigating the links between consumer happiness and the wardrobe. Clothing as a form of material culture emerges from everyday life, relationships and wider consumption patterns (Woodward, 2014). Woodward (2014) notes that undertaking an ethnographic approach to investigating clothing practices also offers important insights into sustainable clothing practices.

In addition to several in-depth interviews, an online survey has also taken place, exploring interdisciplinary research into wellbeing, happiness and clothing. Eco (2007) notes how throughout history, dress has influenced behaviour. I am particularly interested in exploring how dress may influence motivation and productivity when working from home, and the effect that this has on individual happiness.

Undertaking work that provides 'opportunities to feel a sense of achievement on a regular basis, is a key factor in psychological well-being' (Johnson et al, 2018, p. 3). Indeed, much has been written about the links between productivity and happiness, (Oswald et al, 2015) (Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) but this study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by investigating productivity, happiness and clothing. My proposed study will address a further knowledge gap by comparing gendered attitudes. The insights from this study will be important for advancing knowledge about how users interact with items of clothing, in a domestic space.