

# ‘If I could turn back time?’ Footwear, Identity and the Life Course

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# If the shoe fits? Footwear, Identification and Transition

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# Methods

- 12 Focus Groups

- 15 case studies

(3 interviews, shoe log, scrapbook,  
accompanied shopping trip, filmed activity)

# A footwear landscape?

A longer trajectory can reveal the scope of shoes for *interrupting* life course temporalities by allowing:

- earlier identities to be revisited *or* released
- the advent of future age-based identities to be accelerated *or* deferred.

Shoes might seem to lead people down a uni-linear path from cradle to grave. Yet they can acquire the capacity to weave additional temporal and spatial journeys.

‘You are placed in landscape,  
you are placed in time. But  
within that, there’s a bit of room  
for manoeuvre. To some extent  
you can be author of your own  
fate’

(Kathleen Jamie 2012:71)

- linearity of the life course disrupted when an **earlier identity is retrieved**
- **future time deferred** - comfortable shoes that might symbolically re-position someone as 'old' resisted.
- **the past released** and freedom from a felt need to wear impractical or painful shoes embraced.
- **the past *appropriated*** as contemporary resource in the wearing of vintage/hand-me-down shoes.





# Zoe's (42) comfortable sports sandals



# Catherine's (61) drawing of her new slippers from her scrapbook



## New Fluffy Slippers 18.10.11

Yesterday my feet were so cold at home that I had to wear woolley socks. These skidded on the kitchen floor so I realised the time had come for more drastic action.

I went to Tann & John Lewis and bought FLUFFY SLIPPERS. These are raspberry pink, lined with white fur & have a proper heavy sole. The uppers are cable knit wool & I can't believe I have gone for warmth before glamour. I normally wear/chose indoor shoes with sparkle, glitter embroidery or some sort of girliness. These are sensible - the slippers of a middle-aged woman with cold feet!

Catherine's  
scrapbook  
entry about  
her new  
slippers

# Zoe's (42) boots





# Eve's (32) two-tone brogues





# Eve's (32) brothel creepers



# Rob's (63) father's shoes



# Shoes:

- integral to embodied experience, a 'prosthetic' of the self

- manipulable objects with potential symbolic efficacy



The appraisal, purchase, ownership, wear and divestment of shoes can enable tactical temporal strategies which – if only fleetingly – secure the ‘bit of room for manoeuvre’ that renders someone author of their own fate (Jamie, 2012)