

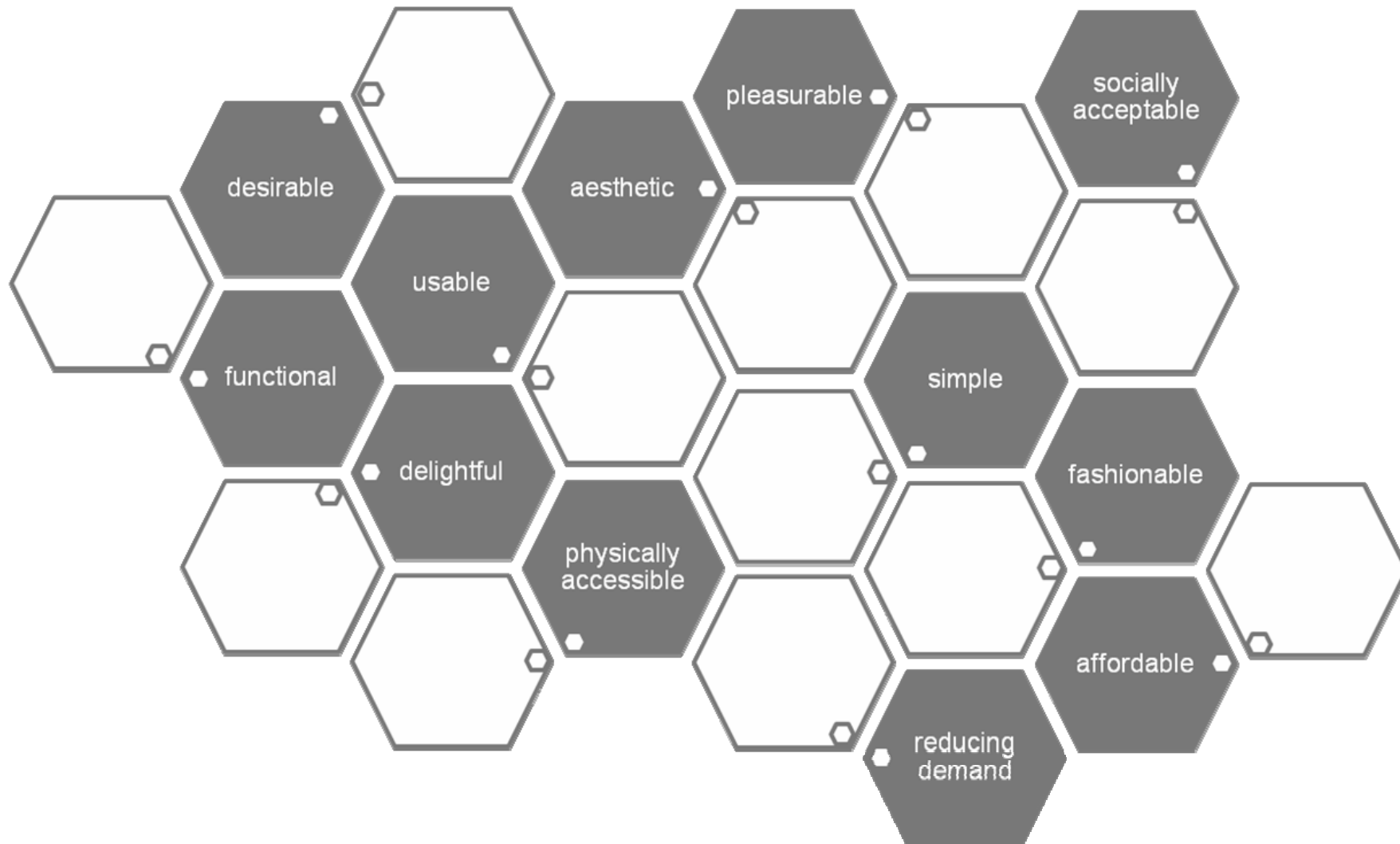
What is good design in the eyes of older users?

Nicki Goddard and Colette Nicolle

c.a.nicolle@lboro.ac.uk



“Inclusive design is better design”



Study aims

Understanding the point of view of the users through cooperation between designers and end-users

- Take a user-centred approach to investigate what makes good product design in the eyes of older people
- Compare their criteria for good design with those considered by designers and researchers

Methods

- Pre-interview questionnaire
 - Personal background to provide context for interview and analysis
 - Think about a product of good design and one of bad design
- Semi-structured interviews and observation in people's homes
 - Understanding older users' opinions and use of everyday products in their natural environment
- On-line questionnaire
 - Based on the literature and interviewees' terms / themes
- Analysis with NVivo according to key themes, their source and frequency of occurrence

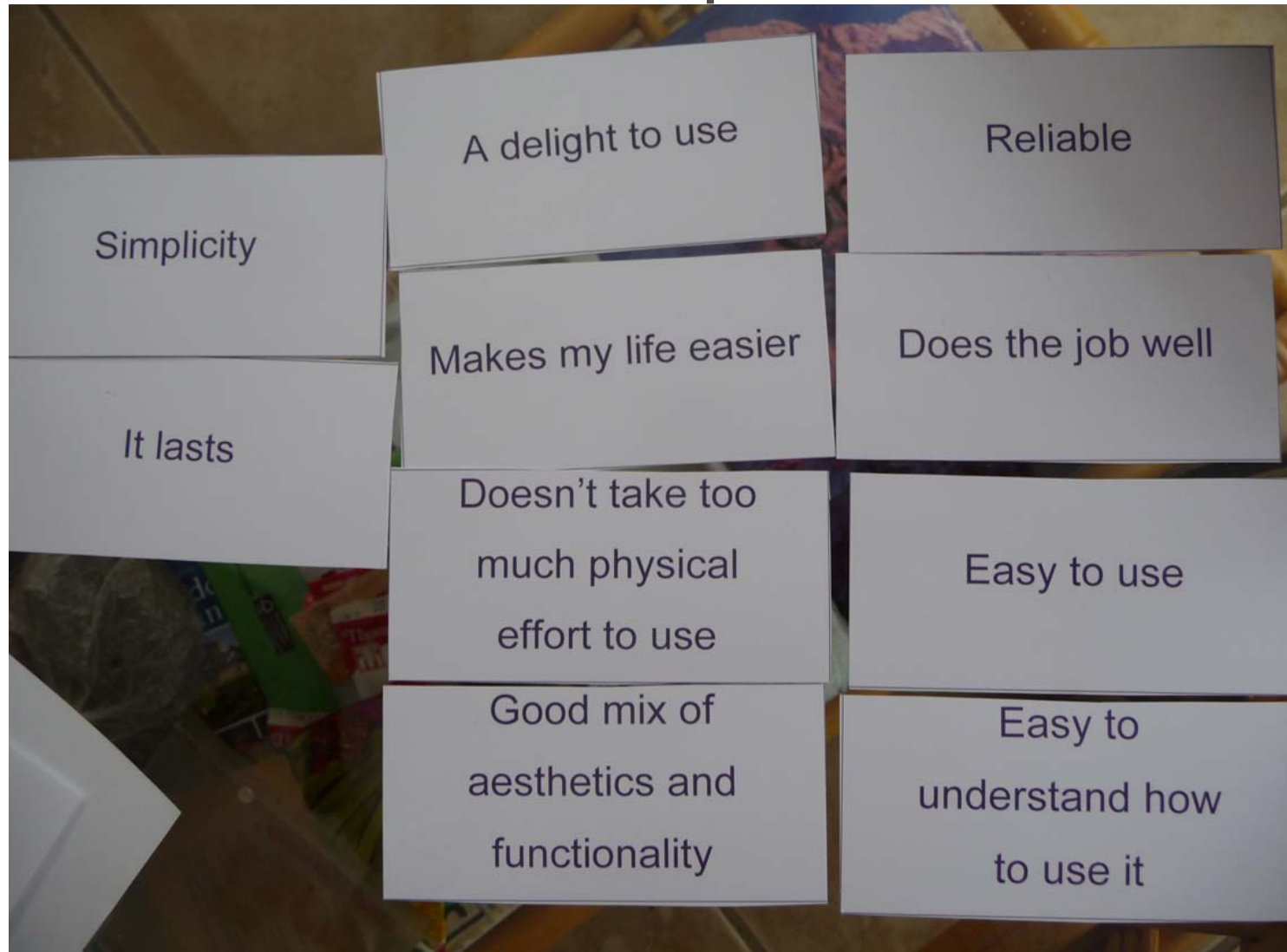
Interview Participants

	Total	Male	Female
Age			
65-74	7	1	6
75-84	13	7	6
85+	2	1	1
Living arrangements			
Live alone	7	2	5
Live with partner	15	7	8
Impairments (moderate or severe)			
Vision	10	4	6
Dexterity (arthritis)	5	2	3
Mobility	4	2	2
Multiple impairments	8	4	4

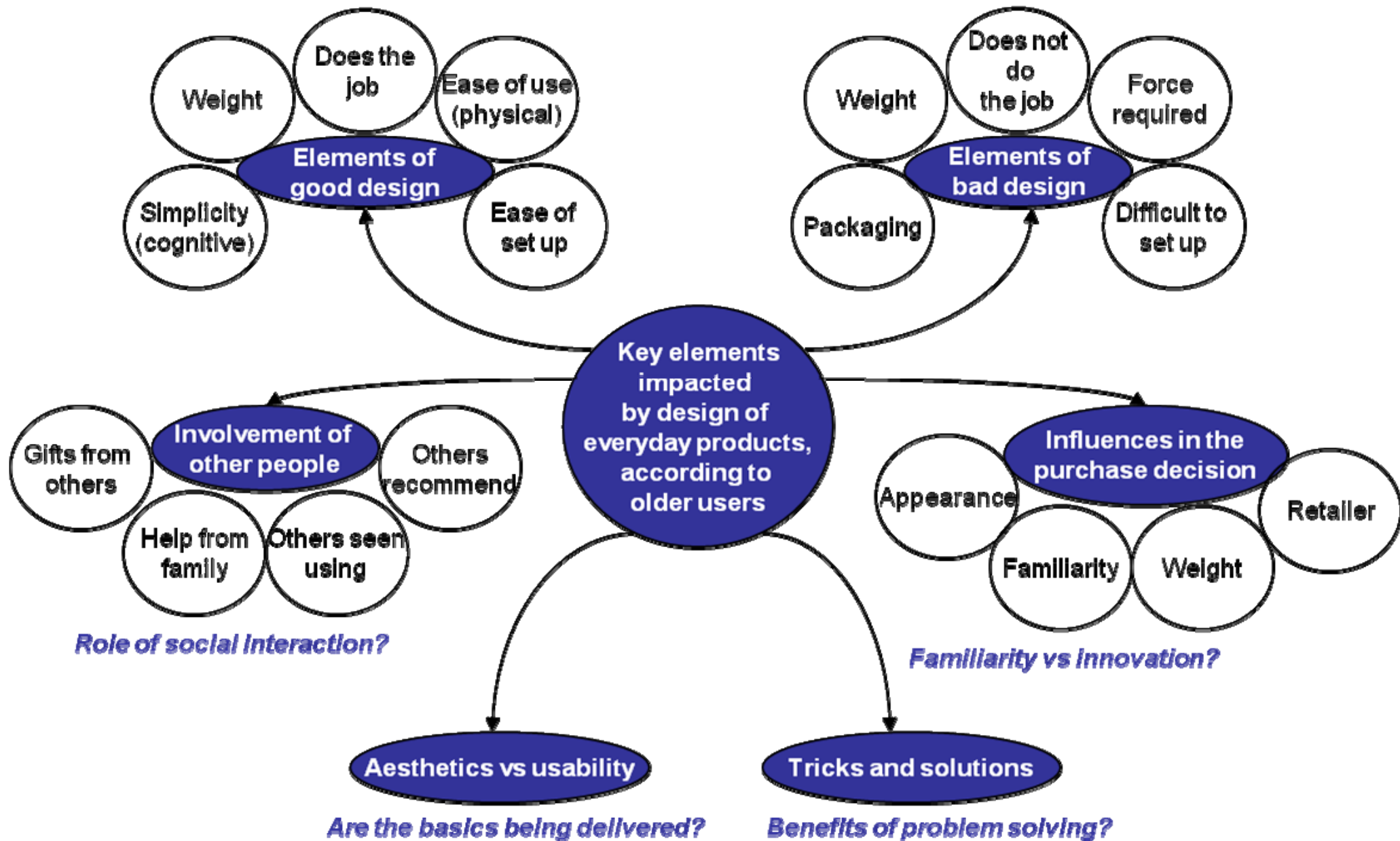
Online respondents (n = 54 out of 72)

Total	54
Male	14
Female	40
Age	
55-64	19
65-74	25
75-84	9
85+	1

Shuffle card exercise to prioritise 30 criteria



The 'most important' pile



Aesthetics vs usability

Ease of use as an aspect of good design mentioned in 10/13 interviews.

Comments related to the *physical* ease of use, in terms of operation, handling or cleaning:

For getting rid of the dust...that's it...just open the back, empty it, just put it there, click it and that's the end of it' (male, 75-84).



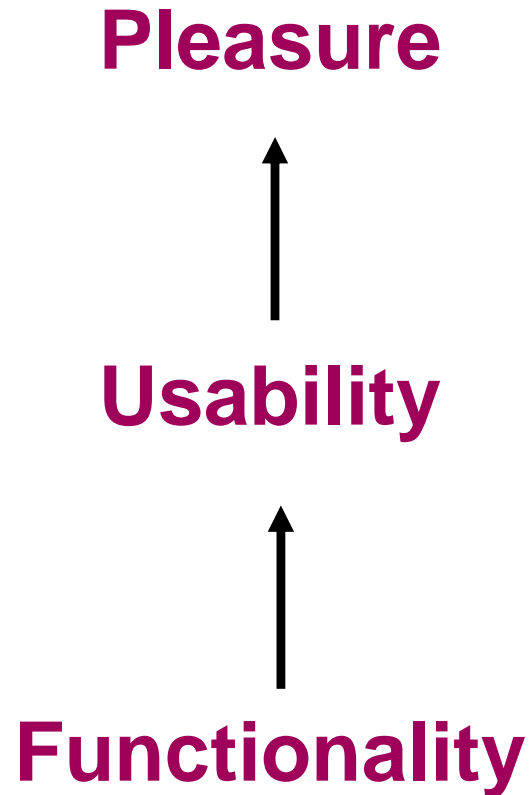
Aesthetics vs usability

“The saucepans, casseroles. Beautiful, beautiful colours, but as you get older the weight of them before you put the food in is too much” (female, 75-84).

Features of good or poor design:
Does the job vs. Too heavy.

Functionality: tradeoff between cooking the food really well or lifting it easily





Pat Jordan (adapted from Maslow's hierarchy of needs), 2000,
Designing Pleasurable Products, An Introduction to the New Human
Factors, Taylor & Francis.

Tricks and solutions for packaging problems

For 13/22 participants bad design related to **difficulty getting into products or packaging**

Language used indicated high levels of frustration (for most but not all):

“You can be struggling with those damn things for ages”
(male, 75-84).



Tricks and solutions for packaging problems



Opening the lid of a pill bottle by using a can opener to break the seal.

- Using nutcrackers to turn plastic caps on drink cartons and barbeque tongs for bleach bottle tops



Involvement of other people

What makes good design for older users if the purchasers are not older users themselves?

Given the choice, older people often want to involve other people when interacting with products and technologies (Burrows et al, 2011).

Strong need for the social interaction that difficulties bring with them, perceived or otherwise.



Effect of familiarity on purchase



VS



Effect of familiarity on purchase

Desire for familiarity =
avoiding innovative (or just different)
designs.

*“I still use my old fashioned peeler.
I’m just used to it...Because I’m used
to mine I’d choose that over these
[Good Grips]” (male, 75-84).*

How to encourage users to ‘battle on’
with the new product long enough to
recognise the benefits?



Expectations

Low expectations for products to work perfectly, and accepting that they wouldn't be able to understand how to use the products.

“Why should we get our knickers in a twist because we can't understand everything that's modern” (female, 75-84).

“[laughs] We can't use the mobile. It's us really. We have no idea” (male, 75-84).

Useful or 'bling'?



Conclusions and more questions

- Basic functional needs not being met, so moving towards emotional aspects of product design not the priority
- Designers should focus on accessibility and usability first, but aim to excel in both function and desirability

- Things to think about:
 - Problem-solving and the implications for product design?
 - Friends and relatives purchasing for older users?
 - Role of social interactions with purchasing and using new products?
 - Minimising the conflict between wanting familiar products and innovation?
 - Finding ways to innovatively allow older users to make the transition in a “friendly” way towards newer products and interfaces?
 - The needs and demands of the baby boomer generation?