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Sustainment and Sustainabilities – Exploring everyday clothing consumption practices in Ireland and insights for sustainability transitions.

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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February 2023
Sustainment and Sustainabilities\textsuperscript{1} – Exploring everyday clothing consumption practices in Ireland and insights for sustainability transitions.

\textsuperscript{1} Gill et al. (2016, 39) labelled pro-environmental everyday clothing care and maintenance practices as ‘sustainabilities’ proposing that ‘use time’ – the period in which clothes are worn and washed could hold the key to practicing sustainability.
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Abstract

Title: Sustainment and Sustainabilities – Exploring everyday clothing consumption practices in Ireland and insights for sustainability transitions.

Author: Helen Maguire

The dual challenges of insatiable overconsumption and vast underutilisation of clothing are causing a detrimental sustainability impact globally. From the perspective that ‘use matters’ and considering that the most sustainable piece of clothing is the one already owned, the clothing active use phase comes into focus here as a vital piece of the puzzle to support advancement towards clothing sustainability transitions. Drawing on current and emerging discourses in everyday geographies and sustainable consumption research, and engaging with literature on circularity, sufficiency, and maximum utilisation of clothing; the primary aim of this research was to determine how everyday practices in clothing wear, care, and repair are currently constituted in Ireland.

The study employed a tailored, qualitative, and multifaceted methodological framework to obtain an in-depth, holistic understanding of everyday consumption practices in clothing active use amongst an intergenerational sample of participants living in Ireland. An innovative, multi methodological design was devised in line with the research focus on everyday clothing use practices and applied a practice-theoretical lens. Purposive sampling was employed to recruit fifteen participants distributed evenly across three life-stage groups: Young Adults (18-24 years); Parents with Young Children (25-49 years); and Older Adults (50 years+). The interdisciplinary empirical study was conducted in the North West of Ireland, in counties Donegal and Sligo, with fieldwork undertaken between July 2018 and May 2019. Data collection occurred at the intimate household scale, as an important site of practice; in participants own homes and in, or near, their wardrobes. Each participant undertook an initial Problem-Centred Interview, followed by an in-depth wardrobe interview (including wardrobe audit, a household tour and clothing diary keeping, with still photographs captured to further augment the data) generating a rich and complex dataset of lived everyday intergenerational clothing use practices. Following transcription, a comprehensive, three-phase analysis of the qualitative dataset took place involving vertical and horizontal cross case exploration, as well as focused intergenerational analysis and interpretation.

The research offers an important contribution towards clearer understandings of current clothing consumption practices in Ireland. Key insights regarding everyday clothing use practices were unlocked as related to clothing wear, care and repair activities. Findings from the study are presented and explored in each of the three published articles which comprise the results sections of this thesis. A range of implications emerge for scaling-up impact and for supporting future sustainability transitions towards maximum clothing utilisation, lifespan extension and sufficiency. Furthermore, this research adds to theoretical and empirical geographical understandings by exploring how a customised and innovative application of wardrobe studies can provide a valuable addition to a geographer’s toolkit of methodological approaches. By illuminating everyday practices in clothing wear, care and repair over time, this research posits that it is possible to fully consider how to positively influence more sustainable consumption in the clothing use phase. Specifically, the outcomes of this study enable the identification of triggers, or turning points, for sustainable consumption policy development and clothing sustainability transitions and thus, for influencing improved everyday clothing sufficiency and longevity practices into the future.

Keywords: Sustainable Consumption, Clothing Use Phase, Everyday Geographies, Social Practice Theory, Wardrobe Studies, Sufficiency, Ireland
Author’s Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own and that I have acknowledged the writings, ideas, and work of others where necessary within. I also declare that this thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of another academic degree at this or any other university. Furthermore, I have not knowingly allowed another to copy my work.

Student Identification Number: 16234255

Name: Helen Maguire

Signed: Date: 24th February 2023
Statement of Contribution

The candidate was responsible as first author for the conception and design, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results and write-up of each of the three published articles conducted in this research, as well as for the creation and completion of the entire compilation thesis. The PhD supervisor co-authored the three published component articles and provided expertise, guidance, support and focus throughout the overall study. The Graduate Research Committee comprising, Dr Kathy Reilly, University of Galway and Dr Eileen Kelly Blakeney and Dr Amanda Mc Cloat, St. Angela’s College, Sligo, provided invaluable advice, encouragement, and support over the duration of the PhD process.
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This research led me to meet a wonderful group of participants who so very generously opened both their homes and their wardrobes to me. Sincere thanks to each participant for your interest in the study, your willingness to share both your time and your everyday clothing experiences; this thesis would not have been possible without you.

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Dissemination of Study Findings

Publications:


Supplementary Publication:


Conference Presentations:

International Conferences:


**International Seminars / Workshops:**


(GCED): the Role of Teachers, Ottawa, Canada, March 2017. *(International Workshop Design and Delivery)*.


**National Conferences:**


**National Seminars:**

Maguire, H. (2022) Clothing repair skills and practices as significant instigators for increased sustainability in clothing consumption. Repair Acts Ireland Caring for Repairing Exhibition and Repair Féilte, Kilbeggan, Westmeath, 4 November 2022. *(Oral Presentation)*.

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Appendix P: Home Economics Practice in Everyday Life Module
1.1 Overview

‘Clothes are inherently geographical objects, yet few of us consider the social and economic significance of their journey from design to production to consumption’ (Crewe, 2017, *The Geographies of Fashion*). Each stage of a garment journey, or clothing lifecycle, exerts multitudinous negative impacts on the planet. Combined with the ever increasing and insatiable consumer demand for new garments, as well as the predominantly fast-fashion lifespan of their use, this presents a growing and wicked global problem.

Encompassing a core aim to examine the everyday clothing active use phase in Ireland from a sustainable consumption perspective and set within a practice-theoretical framework, this research critically explores the potential for maximum clothing utilisation, circularity, and everyday sufficiency practices as vital pieces of the clothing sustainability puzzle, with potential for the outcomes to support future sustainability transitions. This interdisciplinary study empirically investigates clothing consumption, drawing on a complex intergenerational dataset as generated in Ireland using in-depth Problem-Centered Interviews and wardrobe studies, specifically analysing clothing wear, care, and repair practices. The study is framed by geographical (and non-geographical) sustainable consumption discourses regarding product lifespans, consumption corridors, sufficiency, and circularity, and by literature which investigates the everyday and household scale as a focus of attention for sustainability, care, and responsibility. It examines how users’ real-life everyday interactions with clothing already owned can facilitate a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of wearer garment interactions, competencies, socio-cultural values and use practices with implications for sustainability.

1.2 Context

This research explores the implications of everyday clothing use practices for sustainability; it operationalises this examination on an intimate level, from the perspective of the ordinary, everyday actions of Irish clothing users in the household setting, with investigation in and around their wardrobes, as they use, wear, care and
repair clothing post-purchase. The rationale and motivation for this study is however set within a much broader context; ‘the modern-day fashion industry is huge, a maze of disconnected supply chains encompassing many other industries…affecting 100 percent of the population and touching lives, natural resources, people and places in equal measure’ (de Castro, 2021, XIII). As is increasingly apparent, the underutilisation of clothing has a substantially detrimental sustainability impact (Gill et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2016; Fletcher and Tham, 2019; Vladimirova, 2021; Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022; Coscieme et al., 2022). Yet, the clothing use phase remains an under-explored component of the ‘make-buy-dispose’, often linear clothing lifecycle, both in literature and in empirical research (Rouch, 2021, 4). The existence of such an insatiable and linear clothing system expands the demand for virgin resources, causes excessive pollution for planetary ecosystems and generates negative impacts for societies globally (EMF, 2017). Hence, this research attempts to achieve an improved understanding of everyday clothing use practices, as a critical component of the overall fashion system with the contention that ‘use matters’ (Fletcher, 2008, 75) and that therefore, actions during the use phase and inherent potential for extension of clothing lifetimes can unlock important implications for whole-system sustainability transitions.

1.2.1 The Global and EU context

Alarmingly, in the last decade, the cost of new garments has decreased relative to inflation, yet each item purchased is worn less, perhaps as little as just ten times in total (EMF, 2017; EEA, 2019). The specific degree and breadth of environmental impact caused by the global clothing industry, although not possible to fully classify, is agreed on as enormous and wide-ranging (UNECE, 2018; Pucker, 2022). The adverse impact of such unsustainable clothing use is vast; clothing has the fourth-highest impact on the environment and climate change over its lifecycle (after only food, housing, and mobility) (EEA, 2022). Various sources of evidence exist in relation to the scope and ecological impact of the industry broadly, for example, pre-pandemic, in 2018 clothing and footwear production combined was responsible for 2.1 billion tonnes or 4% of total global carbon emissions an output equivalent to the combined emissions of the entire nations of France, Germany and the UK for the same year (GFA, 2019). However, those emissions figures are disputed with other reports estimating that emissions from clothing industries could be double that or higher, at 8-10% of global output, and in addition, the sector is also responsible for producing 20% of the world’s total plastics output.
Chapter 1: Introduction

(Cernasky, 2022b). Fast-fashion and mass production of clothing is undoubtedly excessive with textiles manufacture worldwide doubling between 2000 and 2015 and projections that clothing’s market share will further grow to 2.2 trillion US dollars by 2050 (GFA, 2019). In this context, detrimental ecological impacts from clothing look set to continue increasing steadily, at the same time as global agreements for reducing emissions are urgently being escalated (UN, 2015b). Despite this, it is also the case that if a company pledges to diminish its environmental impact or emissions there are commonly no overarching structures and legislative processes to ensure actual accountability to targets set (ibid.). Another aligned and systemic issue of mass global garment overproduction is the oftentimes inferior work practices, poor wages, and unethical conditions of the industry’s global workforce. Such circumstances enable the maintenance of artificially low fast-fashion clothing prices which only perpetuate excessive waste production and consequent environmental pollution (Crewe, 2017; Brooks, 2019; Cernasky, 2022b; Montero Bressán, 2023). As also highlighted by recent reports, largescale inequities and variances exist in clothing consumption practices globally as well as within and across nations with socio-cultural factors playing a significant role (UNECE, 2018; Coscieme et al., 2022). In this context, it is an incredibly complex and multi-level task to decarbonise the clothing industry and to tackle the aligned issues of waste generation, garment overproduction and superfluous chemical and water use and pollution. Furthermore, the EEA (2022, 5) recognises the complex dual challenge presently facing Europe i.e., tackling the climate change crisis and simultaneously recovering from the devastating impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, and warns that achieving progress will require ‘fundamental changes to the textiles system as a whole [n]ot only textile technologies and production processes…but also consumption patterns, social norms - on fashion for example - business models, waste collection and processing’. Added to the above is the impact of consumption during the use phase of a garment lifespan and the impact of an item’s final divestment and disposal.

As conceded by UNECE (2018, para 4) ‘[w]hile there is yet no comprehensive approach across the United Nations system to addressing the complex sustainability challenges in the fashion industry, there is growing momentum in the actions and initiatives being taken by different organisations’. Global governments have now collectively agreed on the urgency of the battle against climate change, which the clothing industry is a contributor towards, and have pledged firmer targets and time limits for action (UN,
2015a; UN, 2015b; IPCC, 2022a). The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report explicitly identified the need to urgently reduce global consumption levels (IPCC, 2022a). As the world’s first comprehensive Climate Change Agreement, the Paris Agreement (2015) aims to limit global average temperature increases to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels (preferably holding temperatures at maximum 1.5 degrees above) and to further initiate more radical measures to meet a net-zero or climate neutral emissions situations by the end of the century (UN, 2015b). In addition, the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides a further overarching global framework for balanced implementation of global action to end poverty and protect the planet, ensuring the betterment of life for all citizens (UN, 2015a). Of the seventeen goals, SDG 12 specifically encourages business and individuals to rethink production, consumption, and disposal of products and to adopt sustainable practices and lifestyles. Under these agreements individual countries set their own specific targets and report regularly on their progress. The localised setting of targets and self-reporting of nationally determined contributions is a policy aspect which many climate experts and sustainable consumption scholars have been critical of, alongside critiquing the ambition in scale and speed of present transformation (Boehm et al., 2022). Successful achievement of the 2030 targets will require further accelerated and more impactful transformations across all sectors, by all stakeholders and systems in the very immediate term. Nevertheless, recent reports indicate that emissions today are higher than they were at the point of adoption of the Paris Agreement in 2015 and that countries look set to breach targets set to devastating environmental consequence and societal hardship (ibid.). Additionally, looking beyond the current targets, maintaining the 1.5-degree pledge into the next century will require fundamental and transformative transitions for the clothing industry together with vastly different operational models which must move away from a ‘business-as-usual’ mass consumption and production paradigm (Mc Kinsey and Company and Global Fashion Agenda, 2020).

Mirroring wider global climate change agendas, latest policy level shifts by the European Union aim to accelerate transition from a linear towards a more sustainable, circular economy by 2030 to support the overall climate change mitigation agenda (European Commission, 2020; 2019a). In this regard, the European Commission has explicitly identified clothing and textiles as a priority product category and have presented a new systemic strategy to scale up sustainable and circular textiles to tackle the impacts of fast
fashion and to ensure clothing is increasingly durable, repairable, reusable, and recyclable (EEA, 2022) implementing the commitments towards clothing targeted under the European Green Deal (European Commission, 2019b). The Commission is also increasingly reviewing and pursuing consumer information avenues for appropriateness and accuracy of customer communication and is tackling, for example, the use of terms which may lead to green washing without satisfactory underpinning industry performances (Mc Kinsey and Company, 2022). Individual countries within Europe may initiate further specific and targeted clothing consumption policies, for example France has introduced garment labelling which grades garments with an energy style rating A to E in 2018 (ibid.). Most recently in pursuit of clothing sustainability, the European Commission (2022) has launched a new strategy, EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022) which is intended to provide both an agenda and a concrete transition path forward. Setting out the challenging scale of the problem of clothing sustainability, the Strategy identifies that ‘clothing comprises the largest share of EU textile consumption (81%)’ and that ‘the trend of using garments for ever shorter periods before throwing them away contribute the most to unsustainable patterns of overproduction and overconsumption’ (ibid., para, 3). It sets out a series of targets to effectively tackle the wicked problem although its impact has already been critiqued as not going far enough to confront the identified core issues of overproduction and overconsumption (Coscieme et al., 2022). Certainty, providing a comprehensively effective, socio-culturally sensitive, and diverse system-wide policy framework for balanced sustainable development and consumption or ecological economics has proven exceedingly challenging up to the present day (Jackson, 2009; Jackson and Victor, 2020; Morrissey and Heidkamp, 2022; Montero Bressán, 2023). One of the most persistent struggles at a policy level is perhaps attributable to a lack of will to shift strongly held neo-classical ideologies, valuing instead infinite economic growth and prosperity, while concurrently deferring focus from persistent social inequity and often decoupling policy from inherent links with planetary boundaries (Doran, 2021).

1.2.2 The Irish context

Sustainability policy efforts in Ireland are shaped largely through emulation, and adaptation of international and European Union policy developments and approaches, although often with some time lag in local adoption (Pape et al., 2010). Whilst Ireland has no legislative policy specifically tailored to address clothing consumption at present,
already approved European policy documents also relate to Ireland as a member state of Europe. At the moment, the Paris Climate accord governs Irish actions to mitigate climate change and sets international obligations to be met periodically (IPCC, 2022a). In a recent briefing document prepared for the European Parliament, Ireland is noted as having emission levels accounting for 1.7% of the total European Union, a reduction of 14% on 2005 levels (Jenson, 2021). In this context Wagner et al., (2020, 419) ascribed Ireland a ‘climate laggard’ with the ‘third highest per-capita emissions in the EU…and among the worst performers’. However, the latest programme for government in Ireland (as agreed in June 2020) did identify significantly more ambitious climate target measures up to 2030 (Jensen, 2021). The agreed programme document, Our Shared Future (2020), aligns closely with overarching European Green Deal policy to provide a roadmap for action; committing to ruthlessly reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% up to 2030 and pledging the initiation of supporting policy change across all sectors (Government of Ireland, 2020). Most recently, in December 2022, Irelands Climate Action Plan 2023 Changing Ireland for the Better, was launched as a second update to the original 2019 plan, and it indicates increased urgency towards emissions mitigation and system change. The plan sets out measures for a tremendous upscaling of concrete actions across six high impact sectors to meet ambitious targets of halving harmful emissions by 2030 and of reaching a net-zero scenario by 2050 (Government of Ireland, 2023). The above policies offer an overarching framework for change to promote sustainable clothing consumption in Ireland.

In terms of an indigenous Irish clothing industry, it is recognised that Ireland has a rich heritage of engagement with fashion, clothing, and textile craft industries (De Cléir, 2011). Despite this strong historical context, garment manufacturing in the State declined significantly throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s to an estimated 10,000 total employment positions in indigenous clothing industries at the present time; with a further 28,000 workers employed in the fashion retail sector (Fashion United, 2023). Ireland is currently headquarters for one large-scale fashion conglomerate, Primark, with annual revenue of 6.65 billion euro in 2017 (ibid.). Annual expenditure on fashion clothing in Ireland was identified at 2.5 billion euro in 2016, with an additional 536 million euro spend on footwear (ibid.). However, these figures are likely to be significantly conservative when online and in-person purchases outside the jurisdiction are also accounted for.
Zooming in, the precise place-based situational context for this research is in the North West of Ireland, in the counties of Donegal and Sligo. Presently, a noteworthy gap exists in empirical research in relation to clothing consumption in Ireland and no current baseline data is available. Public attitudes to clothing consumption are also largely unknown. Several preceding large-scale national consumption studies have taken place nationally in the recent past, however the concentration in those instances was on other facets of household consumption but not on clothing use (c.f. Davies et al., 2015; Fahy, 2022). Research outcomes will expectantly contribute new baseline understandings.

1.2.3 The everyday and household context

In this study, the household scale is employed as a valuable contextual site for examination of clothing consumption practices concentrated in the everyday which are explored specifically in and around participants’ wardrobes. It is considered here that such an intimate everyday household setting offers a fruitful window into the routine everyday geographies of clothing sustainability, providing invaluable insight and evidence on a range of relevant discourses such as consumption practices (both intentional and inconspicuous) and routine care and maintenance activities. Accordingly, this empirical research is not focused on individual households as users and consumers but rather ‘on how sustainable lifestyles are enabled, encouraged, engaged and exemplified in the everyday locations and contexts in which people live’ (Fischer, 2013, 150) leading to important insights and learnings with potential to facilitate more authentic future sustainability transitions. Furthermore, comparisons made possible due to the intergenerational sample group selected contribute a rich appreciation of the variances and resemblances in everyday clothing use across generations in their real-life contexts.

1.2.4 The practice-theoretical context

Setting out a theoretical position provides several main benefits for any research study; it provides a framework for the subsequent research; it proffers a rationale for the ideologies of the researcher, and it clarifies the epistemological basis for the study (Dulcie-Rigby, 2016). The present study, in striving for a holistic lens through which to examine the diversity, intricacies, and complexities of everyday clothing consumption amongst an intergenerational sample group, selected the overarching theoretical framing provided by Social Practice Theory as useful and valuable (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et
al., 2012; Nicolini, 2012; Gherardi, 2012). Amidst a range of alternatives in the broad ‘umbrella concept of practice-based studies’ (Gherardi, 2012, 5) it was decided to situate the analytical framing for this research specifically in the second wave of practice turn (re-turn) employing the triplicate model (Shove et al., 2012). This being the case, Shove et al. (2012, 119) offer a somewhat ‘slimline’ or uncomplicated version of practice theory with a tripartite model comprising the three elements of: material, competence, and meaning. Furthermore, they elect to follow the definition of Reckwitz (2002, 249) who explains practices as a routinised behaviour made up of several interconnecting elements: bodily actions, mental activity, emotional meaning, materials ‘things’ and background knowledge or ‘know-how’. Dulcie-Rigby (2016, 69) contends that, in this manner, ‘taking a practice theory approach [effectively] brings background elements to the foreground’. It is precisely from this outlook that a practice-theoretical perspective materialises here as an infinitely useful means to examine compound everyday activities, such as for instance dressing or laundry. The approach supports the researcher to fully ‘understand the intangible purposes and outputs’ of a given task and the resource consumption inherent in its everyday practice enabling a reconceptualisation of the activity between user and behaviour and thus providing an alternative lens by which to explore it (ibid). Fundamentally, it is therefore considered that employing practice-theoretical lens and deeply exploring consumer everyday interactions with clothing can facilitate a deeper understanding and a more nuanced and holistic view of wearer garment relationships, cultures, rituals, behaviours, and practices post-purchase and uncover implications for sustainability.

1.3 Research Rationale

Calls for a review of current approaches to clothing consumption and for example, for ‘more strongly coupling clothing production and consumption with environmental degradation and social injustice’ (Coscieme et al., 2022, 48), as only lately emerging in research literature and global reports, serve to further strengthen the initial impetus and motivation for this research, as commenced some time ago. The need for research and baseline data collection on sustainable clothing consumption practices in the active use phase has been recognised by scholars, European policy makers and governments (Laitala and Boks, 2012; EEA, 2019, 2022; European Commission, 2019a, 2020; Cooper et al., 2019; WRAP, 2014, 2017, 2019) however, this type of research has not taken place to date in an Irish context. Whilst the matter of clothing consumption and
overconsumption is being presented more urgently now on the global sustainability agenda, the research focus is still in an embryonic research phase internationally and nationally a dearth of empirical research exists regarding the topic at the current time.

1.4 Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of this interdisciplinary PhD research study is to examine the active use phase of clothing in Ireland from a sustainable consumption perspective, specifically exploring everyday practices in clothing wear, care, and repair across an intergenerational sample group. The outcomes are presented in the form of a compilation thesis comprising three published, peer-reviewed journal articles.

Drawing on current and emerging discourses in clothing geographies and sustainable consumption research, employing a practice-theoretical lens and focusing on sufficiency, circularity and maximum utilisation of clothing already owned, the primary research question in this study is:

▪ How are everyday practices regarding clothing active use (wear, care, and repair) currently constituted in Ireland?

With this primary research question in mind, a further series of four interrelated, focused sub-questions were developed and are delineated as follows:

▪ What is the efficacy of a practice-oriented wardrobe studies approach in exploring everyday practices inherent in clothing use?
▪ What are the barriers and opportunities in a transition towards more sustainable clothing consumption practices during the clothing active use phase in Ireland?
▪ What key competencies and everyday actions lead to sustainable maximum clothing active use and sufficiency, is there an awareness of carrying out such sustainable clothing consumption practices or are they performed inadvertently?
▪ What attitudes exist among intergenerational clothing users in relation to extending clothing active life via repair and what levels of willingness and ability to engage in clothing extension practices are evident?

The summary below (see Table 1) demonstrates how each of the research questions (primary and sub) are addressed in the overall PhD study and maps the published article/s which explicitly focus on addressing each specific sub-question.
Table 1. The research questions (primary and sub) addressed in this article-based PhD, related research objectives, and mapping of the published article/s which address each question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question / Sub-Research question:</th>
<th>Related Research Objective:</th>
<th>Relevant Published Article:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How are everyday practices regarding clothing active use (wear, care, and repair) currently constituted in Ireland?</td>
<td>1. To analyse everyday clothing active use (wear, care and repair) practices amongst an intergenerational Irish sample group</td>
<td>Article 1, Article 2, and Article 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is the efficacy of a practice-oriented wardrobe studies approach in exploring everyday practices inherent in clothing use?</td>
<td>2. To design, apply and analyse a practice-oriented wardrobe studies approach to explore everyday practices in clothing use</td>
<td>Article 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the barriers and opportunities in a transition towards more sustainable clothing consumption practices during the clothing active use phase in Ireland?</td>
<td>3. To delineate the barriers and opportunities to more sustainable clothing consumption</td>
<td>Article 2 and Article 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What key competencies and everyday actions lead to sustainable maximum clothing active use and sufficiency, is there an awareness of carrying out such sustainable clothing consumption practices or are they performed inadvertently?</td>
<td>4. To determine the key competencies and everyday actions that exist to maximise clothing active use establishing if sustainable behaviour is influenced by awareness or performed inadvertently</td>
<td>Article 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What attitudes exist among intergenerational Irish clothing users in relation to extending clothing active life via repair and what levels of willingness and ability to engage in clothing lifespan extension practices are evident?</td>
<td>5. To ascertain attitudes of Irish clothing users to extending clothing active life</td>
<td>Article 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>To assess if intergenerational Irish users have the willingness and ability to engage in clothing extension practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.5 Published Articles – Specific Research Questions, Aims and Objectives

This compilation thesis consists of three interrelated journal articles, all of which have been published in peer-reviewed journals, one in the Journal *Area*, one in the journal *Irish Geography*, and one in the journal *Cleaner and Responsible Consumption*. Each published article, involving the principal researcher as first author, explores the complex sustainability impacts of everyday practices in clothing active use amongst Irish intergenerational participants from a different perspective. Further to the brief publication details of each article delineated in Table 2 below, the summary account that follows will serve to further elucidate the focus of each published article setting out the aims and specific research questions targeted in each case along with detailing significant contributions to knowledge made. It is important to appreciate at this juncture how each of the papers fit comfortably within the overarching wider study. A separate empirical sub-study was not undertaken to provide specific data for each paper, instead, a specific facet of the overall complex and rich dataset generated through Problem-Centred Interviews and wardrobe studies was reviewed and analysed to address the sub-research questions investigated in each of the three articles.

**Table 2. Overview of Published Journal Articles, in Order Presented in Thesis**

|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
1.5.1 Article 1 Overview: Practising fashion and wardrobe studies: A geographical re-framing?

Article 1, published in Journal Area, is essentially a methodology focused paper which aims to add theoretical and empirical understandings by exploring how a customised and innovative application of wardrobe studies can provide a valuable addition to a geographer’s toolkit of methodological approaches. Accordingly, a core contribution of the article is the detailed unpacking of wardrobe studies methodologies as an effective geographical research approach; useful to reframe, analyse and appreciate a range of sustainability issues, employing the unique design undertaken in this study as a noteworthy example. Foregrounding clothes as geographical objects (Crewe, 2017) and the geographical dimension of consumption research at the household scale, the paper outlines how geographers can custom and apply wardrobe studies methodologies to investigate everyday clothing use practices, and wider inquiry, advocating for the potentiality of such approaches in future geographical research. Congruently, the fundamental purpose and value of the wider research study to advance an improved understanding of the complexities of everyday action in the clothing use phase in Ireland is suggested, identifying current gaps in research to date.

Reflecting on the efficacy of wardrobe studies approaches and the rich dataset generated in this research, it is proposed in Article 1 that utilising innovative, materiality focused wardrobe studies methods, facilitated the narration of intimate conversations about many aspects of everyday clothing consumption practices which may have been challenging to access through traditional oral and text-based approaches such as standalone interviews. Moreover, and aligned to research objective 2 in the wider research, it is argued that the wardrobe studies approach as employed enabled effective and rewarding access to everyday geographies of clothing and facilitated exploration of mundane consumption practices at the household scale, an important contemporary focal point for sustainability motivated research. The inherent value for consumption research of a practice-theoretical perspective together with an everyday geographies framework is also reviewed in Article 1.

The term re-framing is employed in the title and body of this article as an analogy to represent geographers ‘seeing anew’ the potentialities of wardrobe studies in the examination of everyday sustainability dilemmas. Reflecting on the principal ways in which wardrobe studies can broaden future geographical investigations into everyday
clothing practices, three key themes for consideration are presented to further advance geographical future approaches. It is argued that exploration of the physical place and space dedicated to clothing use in the home; active selection and sorting, revealing deep meanings and emotions; and uncovering participant competencies across the clothing use phase were all facilitated, three elements which interestingly mirror the three elements of Social Practice Theory (Shove et al., 2012).

1.5.2 Article 2 Overview: Unlocking Insights in the Everyday: Exploring Practices to Foster Sustainable Maximum Use of Clothing.

Article 2, published in Sustainable and Responsible Consumption, focuses on investigating and analysing clothing consumption and care amongst the Irish sample group providing a snapshot into real-life everyday practices with garments post-purchase. The benefits of prolonging the active use phase of clothing lifecycle and the concept of the everyday as a useful focus for sustainability research are explored through associated pertinent literature. Alongside this, the household scale as an important site of practice, is examined. Literature on contemporary wardrobe size and the average active use period of typical garments are also considered. The detailed analysis of the complex and innovative research design for this study, already published in Article 1 is augmented here with further details of approach, sample selection and data analysis strategy.

Garment wear and care clothing consumption practices in the active use phase are analysed in Article 2. Four facets of wear consumption are selected for discussion (wear frequency; practices to extend/end clothing lifespan; second-hand wear; repeat wear practices) along with four aspects of clothing care (care label competency; laundry practices; wash frequency; laundry drying practices) in order to examine user competencies and everyday actions towards maximum utilisation. The leading insights unlocked regarding wear practices include the significance of materiality influencing garment comfort in wear; insights into user’s divestment practices and decisions to end garment use lifespan; wide acceptance of second-hand clothing use (although this is sometimes linked to overconsumption); and factors impacting repeat garment wear, particularly the negative influence of social media. Significant aspects uncovered in this study in relation to users clothing care practices include: a pervasive disregard of care labels; lack of awareness regarding the impact of wash frequency and temperature on clothing sustainability; strong variations in practices of wash frequency; and extensive
attachment to line drying. Notable in the discussion are the multiple examples, as revealed in data analysis, of everyday care being comprised of inadvertent, habitual actions and decision making with even some of the positive lifecycle extension practices emerging as inadvertently performed mirroring (Hitchings et al., 2015; Woodward, 2015a). Additionally, the complex impact of various socio-cultural factors which exert influence on clothing users’ everyday practices surfaced in the examination of data for Article 2 with the implications of this for scaling-up and supporting future sustainability transitions unpacked in the paper discussion.

1.5.3 Article 3 Overview: Sew what for sustainability? Exploring intergenerational attitudes and practices to clothing repair in Ireland.

Article 3, published in Irish Geography, adopts an intergenerational lens to consider the attitudes and practices of Irish clothing users with regard to clothing lifespan extension and repair to specifically determine if the cultural and economic value attributed to clothing items has altered in today’s mass-produced, fast-fashion society. Recognising repair as a societal phenomenon, and an under-researched aspect of the clothing consumption spectrum, Article 3 aims to examine clothing repair practices taking place in Ireland, providing a shot of approaches to, and intentions, towards clothing repair across the three life-stage groups involved in this research. In the context of wider debates surrounding sustainable clothing consumption, repair cultures and the circular economy, the focus in this article is on unpacking intergenerational competencies and confidences in undertaking everyday clothing repair, user-repair cultures, and sewing skills with cognisance to current barriers and enablers which can potentially support progress in future sustainable consumption policy development. The new understandings of repair practices amongst intergenerational groups of Irish clothing users provided by this paper are important as there was heretofore a dearth of information on individual clothing repair activities. Pertinent literature included explores the policy level context supporting repair cultures and the complex multidimensional impact that attachment, memories, and materiality play in user decisions to repair, or not to repair, a garment, and associated decisions related to clothing discard.

Findings presented in Article 3 relate specifically to data on clothing repair practices and reveal three significant emerging themes (repair know-how; procurement of professional repair services; and repair decision making) with a detailed discussion
following on repair practices as viewed through an intergenerational lens. Clothing attachment emerges as a point of convergence providing a driver for clothing active life extension and a motivating rationale prompting users to personally undertake repair or to access paid professional repair services for lifecycle extension, in some instances. More complex matters regarding the preferred outcome of repair measures are considered (hidden/visible repair, repair as a creative practice, right to repair) which ultimately point to the socio-cultural acceptability of engaging in repair practices and wearing repaired garments in contemporary society. Noteworthy as a barrier to repair were the deterrents cited amongst some study participants, such as disinclination/laziness towards repair even when users possessed the skills to do so and the necessity to balance initial garment cost, product quality and material condition with the benefits of lifecycle extension which are also explored in the paper.

1.6 Research Approach and Scope of the Study

1.6.1. Theoretical and conceptual approach and scope

This research is interdisciplinary in nature, synthesising several diverse disciplines, positions, and understandings. The researcher, an academic and professional home economist, brings the native perspective of the discipline home economics (also known as family and consumer sciences, human ecology, human sciences internationally). Situated in the discipline of geography, the research is undertaken firmly from a human geography perspective, positioned in the everyday context within domestic households and with sustainable consumption, specifically sustainable clothing consumption as a key nexus point. Everyday household sustainability challenges and dilemmas particularly related to consumption of domestic resources energy, water and food are already an important focus in contemporary geographical inquiry, this thesis concentrates on a less explored aspect, everyday clothing consumption practices which , has only come under scrutiny as a sustainability dilemma in more recent consumption research. The novel methodological approach employed, wardrobe studies methodologies along with in-depth Problem-Centred Interviews. Whilst still a relatively new empirical approach, wardrobe studies have already been employed across the varied fields of fashion, textile studies, sociology, anthropology, history, ethnology and broader to examine the lifeworld of clothing ‘gathering information about people and their clothing beyond the point of purchase, with the express intention of generating new knowledge and uncovering deeper insights into the interactions between people,
clothing and the world’ (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, 2). Wardrobe studies are reframed here as a valuable, productive, and useful tool for spatial and ecological geographical inquiry. Drawing on, and stitching together, these varied multifaceted influences and perspectives brings a level of heterogeneity to this research. Ultimately the study is resolutely set within the social sciences connecting human geography and home economics viewpoints, blurring the disciplinary boundaries, and producing new findings which inform both geographical knowledge and theory.

1.6.2. Parameters of key terms and concepts

This research study engages with a myriad of concepts, some of which have shifting or contested definition or which are ambiguous in their boundary. Therefore, it is important at this initial juncture to establish the scope of the thesis and to set out, for clarity, some of the core terms used throughout. Moreover, as this PhD research was undertaken over time, on-going knowledge evolution by the researcher resulting from pervasive engagement with developing literature, as well as specific recommendations arising from the peer-review process for each component article, has resulted in some requirements for clarification, particularly where understanding evolved, or terms were initially used interchangeably. These concepts are further expanded on within the thesis and are developed throughout the following chapters.

Consumption: Consumption is a broad and challenging concept to define (Evans, 2020, Warde, 2022). For the purpose of this study, and in acknowledgement of the heterogeneity of consumption practices over the lifetime of clothing, the perspective of Evans (2019, 2020) is adopted for this study. Evans argues for a broader classification of consumption and identifies six points, or moments, of consumption during the lifecycle of a consumer product: front end acquisition, appropriation, and appreciation and latter-end devaluation, divestment, and disposal (as he termed the 3A’s and the 3D’s) (ibid.).

Sustainable Consumption: Exemplifying a wide-ranging perspective, inclusive of both sustainable consumption and production (SCP), the definition of the Oslo Declaration (1994, np) is adopted to define sustainable consumption as: ‘the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise
the needs of future generations’.

*Sustainable Clothing Consumption:* The overarching concept of sustainable clothing consumption is broadly conceptualised, following Rausch and Kopplin (2021, 1), as implying ‘pro-environmental actions at every stage of the garment's life cycle’.

*Fast fashion:* Fast Fashion is characterised by rapid obsolescence and disposability in its footprint (McLaren *et al*., 2016; WRAP, 2017; Bravo, 2020; Goworek *et al*., 2020).

*Clothing Active Use:* In this research, the clothing active use phase is under specific scrutiny and is understood here to comprise three key activities: wear; care; and repair of clothing. Simply put, ‘[d]uring clothing [active] use we typically wear, wash, dry and store our clothes, while some people also repair, alter and adapt their garments’ (Gwilt, 2021, 870). This phase is denoted interchangeably in this study as the *use phase or active use phase* but is also represented elsewhere in literature as the usage phase (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022). This segment of a garments lifecycle is understood to comprise the wear period, spanning from initial purchase to final divestment or disposal of the clothing item.

*Clothing Wear:* This research investigates clothing use in a broad sense comprising all activities involved in wearing clothes: storage and organisation; selection and co-ordination; wear, repeat wear and non-wear.

*Clothing Care:* In the context of this study clothing care is understood to include laundering habits; care label and fabric identification; washing; drying; stain removal; and other care practices as may be employed to extend clothing wear between washes.

*Clothing Repair:* Clothing repair is broadly defined in this research as ‘tasks undertaken to extend the use period of clothing that is damaged and/or does not fit (e.g., fix rips, sew buttons, altering the fit of the garment)’ following Diddi and Yan (2019, 3). Furthermore, in this thesis, acts of clothing repair, mending, and alteration are largely described interchangeably to identify practices undertaken to enable extension of a garment lifespan for everyday active use and the research focus is on repair at clothing user level, rather than as a fashion industry sustainability tactic (Cernansky, 2022). Strictly speaking, repair could be considered an element of clothing care, however, in this study repair was of specific interest and therefore, merited examination separately.
Social Practice Theory: As a well-established but highly diverse field, Social Practice Theories conceptualisation is well summarised by Giddens (1984, 2) who explains ‘[t]he basic domain of study of the social sciences, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time’. The additional insight of Nicolini (2012, 1) is also useful whereby social ‘practice theories constitute, in fact, a rather broad family of theoretical approaches connected by a web of historical and conceptual similarities’. In this study, it was decided to situate the analytical framing for this research specifically in the second wave of practice turn (re-turn) employing the triplicate model (Shove et al., 2012). This being the case, Shove et al. (2012, 119) offer a somewhat ‘slimline’ or uncomplicated version of practice theory utilising a tripartite model comprising the three elements of: *material, competence, and meaning* which was adopted to deeply explore practices in this research.

Practice: Identifying practices as the individual unit of analysis in a Social Practice Theoretical approach, practices are hereby defined following Reckwitz (2002, 249) as a ‘routini[s]ed type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge’.

Participant/User: The terms *participant/s* and [clothings] *user/s* are employed interchangeably to refer to those involved in everyday use of clothing and those people recruited in the empirical research aspect of this research. It is manifest that in peer-reviewed article 1, as published at an early stage of this research, the term householder is also used to indicate the participants in some instances. However, as understanding evolved this terms was not adopted in later articles or in this thesis, as it is recognised that all of the participants may not, in fact, be householders or homeowners and therefore, the term was no longer applied.

1.6.3. Methodological approach

This research applies a broad range of innovative, multifaceted visual, verbal, and aural qualitative methodological approaches or wardrobe studies to uncover knowledge about everyday clothing wear care and repair practices. Following an initial Problem-Centred Interview with each participant, the wardrobe methodologies employed here involved
in-depth wardrobe interviews comprising a partial wardrobe audit undertaken in participants' homes; self-reported, text-based clothing diaries of a selected garment; and participant narrated household tours documented by still photographs, all of which took place in the participants own home. The intimate nature of the data collection within households, bedrooms and wardrobes required careful consideration, tactful implementation, and detailed ethical approval, however, it consequently yielded extensive and richly layered data regarding everyday clothing practices normally hidden and taken for granted. The research population for this study included adults living in the Republic of Ireland and the sample frame was residents of Sligo and Donegal in the North West of Ireland who were at least eighteen years old and comprised one of the three life-stage cohorts under review. Non-probability, purposive sampling was employed to recruit a sample group, of fifteen participants in total, comprised of five participants from each of the three intergenerational life-stage groups Young Adults (18-24 years); Parents with young children (25-49 years); and older Adults (50 years+). The data for this research was collected in North West Ireland between July 2018 and May 2019. It is acknowledged that the study must be considered in the light of several limitations including the small sample size which is not representative of the wider population, the gender imbalance of participants and the potential for researcher bias. As such the findings of this research can be seen to represent a complex and nuanced snapshot of the knowledge, understandings, competencies, and practices of the participants who self-selected by volunteering for involvement and their prevailing socio-cultural influences at a specific point in time.

1.7 Key Strengths of the Study

This study offers several important and new contributions to knowledge in this field. Firstly, there is a dearth of research on sustainable clothing consumption in the Irish context and no previous empirical research exists in relation to users post purchase clothing consumption practices in this region. The current study fills this research gap and employs an empirical, qualitative approach to add to current understandings of everyday practices in garment wear, care, and repair in Ireland with implications for sustainable clothing consumption. Focused on gathering actual users’ real-life experiences, this thesis sheds light on the various ways in which sustainable maximum clothing use can be supported and garners insights and suggestions for more targeted future policy development and clothing sustainability transitions.
Secondly, the participant cohort recruited for this research comprises three intergenerational lifecycle groups: Young Adults, Parents with Young Children and Older Adults. Detailed data analysis undertaken amongst the diverse intergenerational sample enables comparison of clothing wear, care, and repair practices, both within and across groups, facilitating a review of clothing practices over time as well as an examination of the resemblances and variances significant to each group. Furthermore, the intergenerational composition of the sample facilitates an evaluation of inherent sewing skills and repair competencies amongst each lifecycle group with implications for future educational interventions and curricula.

Thirdly, the research that underpins this thesis offers a novel wardrobe studies methodological approach to examine everyday clothing consumption practices expanding and reframing previous geographical inquiry. This empirical qualitative wardrobe studies research, while unique, is theoretically set within a social practice framing which has lately become a widely accepted approach for research in sustainable consumption, particularly within households. The wardrobe studies approach proved useful in unlocking insights in the everyday, bringing unconscious routines and practices to the fore and revealing barriers and enablers to sustainable maximum use of clothing which may not have emerged in a traditional interview only method. Further this research approach, while small scale and limited, was successful in exposing some already existing good practice amongst the sample group with scope for future reinforcement, sharing, publicising and promotion to support sustainability transitions.

A fourth, and perhaps the most significant strength of this research, is the theoretical and conceptual contribution which it makes to knowledge and debates on clothing consumption practices in Ireland.

Overall, the main contributions of the work may be outlined as follows:

- This research has provided a substantial contribution towards a clearer understanding of current clothing consumption practices in Ireland. The study has explored clothing wear and care routines and practices and has added to current knowledge regarding everyday clothing active use amongst the intergenerational participants involved. Furthermore, the research generated a greater insight into how, when, and why participants personally undertake garment repairs or are prompted to employ professional repair services to
prolong and maximise the life of a garment.

- This thesis offers a novel critique of the multifaceted wardrobe studies approach specifically designed and adopted in this study to examine everyday clothing consumption practices amongst an intergenerational sample in their real-life context. Although wardrobe studies approaches are being increasingly employed in recent years across a variety of social science related disciplines, such investigations are still novel and innovative in geographical inquiry. Consequently, this research adds to theoretical and empirical geographical understandings by exploring how a customised and innovative application of wardrobe studies can provide a valuable addition to a geographer’s toolkit of methodological approaches.

- By illuminating everyday practices regarding the sustainability impact of clothing active use and care over time, in the manner of this research, it is possible to fully consider how to positively influence more sustainable consumption in this phase of clothing lifecycle. The outcomes of this study enable the identification of triggers or turning points for sustainable consumption policy development and clothing sustainability transitions and thus for influencing improved everyday clothing sufficiency and longevity practices into the future.

- The distinctive positionality of the researcher undertaking this study and the consequent interdisciplinary strands brought together in this work offer a novel contribution and perspective on everyday sustainable clothing consumption. This is the first time a study on everyday clothing practice has been carried out in Ireland and the outcomes provide a level of qualitative empirical baseline data on clothing consumption in the use phase not available heretofore.

1.8 Thesis Structure

This introductory chapter offers a framework and context for this thesis and the research which underpins it, as well as providing a brief overview of pertinent literature. The overarching aims of the study are set out and justified in this section in relation to the considerable gaps in knowledge identified. Following this Introduction (Chapter 1), the remainder of the thesis is divided into six further chapters. Chapter 2 critically examines the central concepts that underpin the research with a comprehensive review and critique of pertinent literature. In addition, this review is supported by a more specifically
focused literature section within each of the three published articles which provides
discussion of existing research and debates relevant to the distinct sub-research
questions in focus in each case. Chapter 3 illuminates the philosophical underpinnings
of the research and fully details the novel and innovative methodological approaches
employed in this PhD study. Particulars of the methodological approach are further
augmented in the constituent method section of each published paper, most principally
in Article 1.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are each dedicated towards presenting the three interrelated journal
articles which make up this thesis. Significantly, the articles are presented, not in
published chronological order, but rather in an order which most appropriately supports
alignment with the key research questions delineated and presentation of the findings of
the overall study. Notably, each paper is presented following the particular publication
specifications of the requisite journal with content unaltered and conventions such as
referencing maintained exactly as originally published. Article, 1, the Area publication,
as presented in Chapter 4, is an explicitly method focused paper which enhances
particulars of the study’s methodological approach and fully teases out the
interdisciplinary benefits and potentiality of a wardrobe studies approach for future
geographical research. This first paper chiefly arose from work undertaken in planning
and application of the novel methodological design of the overall study in the early
stages of the PhD process. The Cleaner and Responsible Consumption paper presented
in Chapter 5, provides a broad overview of the complete research findings as related
collectively to everyday clothing wear and care practices, while the Irish Geography
publication included in Chapter 6 concentrates particularly on presenting
intergenerational attitudes and practices to clothing repair as emergent from this study
and on exploring wider repair cultures and contexts which currently exist in Ireland.
Chapter 7, as the final section of this culmination thesis, considers, from an
interdisciplinary perspective, the most significant themes emergent from this empirical,
qualitative study, with reflection on the consequent implications for sustainability
transitions, policy making and stakeholders. Some suggested directions for future
research are also discussed in the section and the final chapter also highlights the overall
contribution of this work to wider academic, policy and societal knowledge.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Providing a theoretical and conceptual background for the sections that follow, this chapter begins with a review of consumption; unpacking its potential forms, both sustainable and unsustainable. The following section offers a synthesis of literature pertaining to core clothing sustainability discourses and everyday geographies. Chapter 2 closes with a review of Social Practice Theory as a key theoretical perspective employed as an overarching lens in this study.

2.2 Contextualising (Un)Sustainable Consumption

Acknowledging consumption as a universal act carried out everyday by everyone (Ubert and Bell, 2013), it is now apparent that such collective everyday consumption is perpetuating devastatingly harmful consequences for the planet’s ecosystem, as well as initiating climate related emergencies for societies globally (Rockström et al., 2009). Convincing evidence for the extensive impact of consumption has been corroborated by many high-level scientific assessments up to the present. The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report explicitly identified the need to urgently reduce global consumption levels (IPCC, 2022a). While there are some signs of mitigation actions beginning to impart a slight move in the right direction (ibid.), global policy responses spanning from the seminal 1992 Earth Summit (UNFCCC, 1992) to the significant Paris Agreement (UN, 2018) have, not yet provided substantive respite. Hence, it may be considered that consumption has become ‘problematised’ (Welch et al., 2022, 3).

As a contested term ‘definitions and understanding of consumption vary across disciplines, times and places’ with some scholars labelling it ‘disturbed by issues of definition (Warde, 2022, 11). Moreover, ‘the study of consumption is characterised by fussy boundaries and shifting agendas’ (Evans, 2020, 300). In attempting to conceptualise and define consumption as a basis for this study, it is appropriate to adopt the thinking of Evans (2019, 2020) who argues for a broader classification of
consumption and identifies six points or moments of consumption during the lifecycle of a consumer product: front end acquisition, appropriation, and appreciation and latter-end devaluation, divestment, and disposal (as he termed the 3A’s and the 3D’s). This comprehensive definition reflects the range of consumption opportunities or moments on-going throughout the entire product lifecycle use phase and hence also facilitates more leverage points for sustainability transitions during ownership. Lane and Mansvelt (2020, 209) approve of Evans broad interpretation musing that it provides wide scope for linkages and reverberations in geographical research by ‘accommodating both the temporality and the spatiality of these moments’ of on-going consumption. In proposing a comprehensive understanding of consumption Evans (2020) also critiques the proliferation of turn to practice theory approaches in consumption research and calls for wider appreciation and application of other established and alternative consumption scholarship and theories. It is however, beyond the scope of this confined thesis to fully debate the ontological understandings, nature and functions of consumption itself (Schor, 2000; 2011); to examine the ever-shifting consumption ideologies (Schmitt et al., 2022); to unpack the myriad of (un)sustainable versions (Reisch and Thøgersen, 2015; Robertson, 2021); or indeed to thoroughly trace the initiation and development of the multifaceted field of consumption scholarship (Evans, 2020). Fischer et al. (2021), in a systematic review, which claimed to provide a novel cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary viewpoint of the evolving field of sustainable consumption, likewise concluded that a wider recognition and communication of the breath of phases in consumption is needed to support understanding and research. Suffice to say, much of that extensive body of literature has emerged in an attempt to understand and ameliorate pressing and wicked sustainability problems, which have to date remained illusively beyond straightforward solutions (ibid.). Still, given the conclusive linking of consumption to sustainable development (WCED, 1987), the subsequently pervasive nomenclature of sustainable consumption (which according to Jackson (2007, 255) can be ‘dated more or less to Agenda 21’) and the immeasurable strides undertaken to fully comprehend consumption behaviour and hence to move it in a more sustainable direction (Bruyninckx, 2015), several perspectives do merit further consideration in the sections below to adequately establish the conceptual backdrop for this research study.

2.2.1 Striving for strong sustainable consumption approaches

Akin to the term consumption, the designation sustainable consumption is also contested
and although commonplace is much misconceived. For instance, as explained by Hobson (2004, 3) the:

> differences of emphasis present not only variations in linguistic interpretations of the term but also different value systems and highlight how opting for one type of sustainable consumption over another is an active choice. The variations in both how sustainable consumption is defined, along with subsequent policy actions taken under its banner, can be categorised crudely in terms of which facet of sustainability—that is, environment, economy, or society—is considered utmost.

Evidently, the three components of sustainability are present in this approach (environmental, economic, and social). However, if the latter two are over-selected or prioritised unequally then sustainable consumption is hindered. A balanced linkage between the three aspects was initially considered fitting with wide adoption of an interlinking concentric circle model to represent sustainable development; a model also depicted as the triple bottom line approach (Elkington, 1994), or the three pillars model (UN, 2002). Perhaps closer to the mark, pyramid models are recently seen to more accurately portray a complete dependence on the environment and the necessity to work within ecological limits. In such cases the economy is designated as only ‘the tip of the iceberg’ with society placed as centrally positioned (Bastianoni et al., 2022, 406).

Moreover, a further progression of the model, where the pyramid is rotated sideways, portrays a more dynamic and systems-based reality with throughputs and feedback possible between the elements, where appropriate, and the pathway forward clearly indicated (ibid.). In the unpacking various alternative models and their implications, the potential types of sustainable consumption offered in Hobson’s definition (2004) become more apparent.

Following the sentiment of Agenda 21, and as debated by Lorek and Fuchs (2019, 19), sustainable consumption can be understood to encompass ‘resource consumption, labour conditions and impacts on the social and ecological environment that originate from the production processes of the good and services we consume’. It is cautioned however, that sustainable consumption is often misinterpreted instead as merely the consumption of ‘more sustainable products, services and behaviours’ (ibid., emphasis original). Whilst a potentially useful part of the picture, eco or technological developments and production efficiencies are, in fact, representative of only weak sustainable consumption measures which ignore (or even enable) an on-going insatiable and materialistic, consumer mindset. An additional concern with such efficiency
pathways is that productivity or efficiency gains are oftentimes quickly counterbalanced by unforeseen rebound effects, expanded user demand or wider societal change, thus proving ineffectual in any real terms (ibid.). In accordance, Daly (2022) advocates that true sustainable consumption does not mean unceasing acquisition of more and more sustainable products, nor a disproportionate focus on more efficient products, production mechanisms or infrastructures. Rather it requires a reassessment of consumption values and wholly considerate ecological and future focused approaches to consumption, which are complemented, but not lead by technological advances. Moreover, exemplifying a nobly wide-ranging perspective, of both sustainable consumption and production (SCP), the Oslo Declaration (1994) advises:

the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimising the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardise the needs of future generations.

In that holistic classification the priority focus is on minimising need, consuming less, systemic change integration, lifecycle assessment, decoupling the ecological health of the planet from economic expansion and futures thinking. Such a consumption disposition positively aligns with a much stronger sustainability perspective where the existential threats to the natural ecosystem provide strict boundaries which must not be breached (Morrissey et al., 2022). Driving effective transition to net-zero emissions levels will undoubtedly require transformational change (UN, 2015b). In this effort governments, as well as businesses, often ascribe great hope and potential to innovative technological advancements to secure promised mitigation targets (Omri, 2020). However, such single-minded, weak sustainable consumption pathways neglect a multi-sectorial response and fail to recognise or to position lifestyle changes as strongly and critically significant to the sustainability effort (Akenji et al., 2021; Bonnedahl et al., 2022). As such, a weak sustainable consumption approach ‘will not suffice for a sustainability transformation’ (Kanerva, 2022, 619) and consequently statutory policy must drive from this perspective for increased impact and effect. Deeply critical of current policy approaches Bonnedahl et al., (2022) advocate for strongly sustainable alternatives, which hold ecological integrity as foundational, and they venture to present an alternative list of Sustainable Development Goals which they propose are more strongly sustainable as exemplars and instigators for more effective future policymaking.
In terms of encouraging more sustainable consumption actions amongst households and end users, Southerton and Welch (2018, 1) theorise that policy solutions to date have focused predominantly on ‘behaviour-change initiatives’ targeted to encourage, to facilitate, to incentivise or to intervene against individual user behaviours, or perhaps to nudge towards more sustainable ones. While such efforts can produce some success such measures will not be sufficient to affect the large-scale improvements required to meet Paris Agreement mitigation targets (UN, 2015b). Acknowledging that consumption goes beyond the individual and ‘is embedded in wider systems’ it is recommended instead that, a preferable approach, would be to target systemic connections and to attempt to ‘leverage’, ‘disrupt’ or ‘reconfigure’ them (Southerton and Welch, 2018, 7).

Bringing accessible information and clarity to users in a suitable manner to effect more sustainable behaviours remains both challenging and complex. Additionally, the exact impetus or variables most influential in motivating individuals to take responsible ecological action are still unknown. Awareness, it appears, may often be subordinated by challenges of access, or perhaps gets overridden or confounded by a multitude of alternative predominant or more customary options (Seto et al., 2016). As one of ten pivotal learnings presented by Akenji et al., (2021, 30) to support living a more sustainable lifestyle, overcoming the sticky conundrum of the ‘knowledge-action or attitude-behaviour gap’ is a prominent and much debated aspect. The gap refers to the notion that even individuals imbued with requisite levels of information and knowledge, who may publicly embrace and advocate strong ecological values, do not inevitably act in positive accordance, in terms of follow-up sustainable lifestyle choices or everyday adjustment (Barth, 2012; Burford et al., 2015). Recognised broadly in the literature, the issue is particularly dissected in sustainability educational research centered on enabling empowerment and transformational change (ibid.). Therefore, for policy efforts to be effective it is argued that ideally the most accessible, convenient, and prevalent options and choices should also be the sustainable ones (Akenji et al., 2021; Markard, 2022). This is also particularly critical in avoiding undue demonisation of individual users and instead moving towards an appropriately supportive, system-wide ecology for sustainability transitions (Sahakian et al., 2021).

2.2.2 A fair consumption space - sustainable consumption corridors

Di Giulio and Fuchs (2014, 184) were early exponents of the concept of ‘consumption
corridors’ which is an approach gaining momentum as ‘a good starting point to define criteria of sustainable consumption’ and as a mechanism which may act as a basis to support strong sustainability governance (Lorek and Fuchs, 2019). Presented from the hopeful and promising perspective that defining and enforcing ecological limits can enhance rather than constrain wellbeing, the consumption corridor arises in the gap between firmly demarcated of upper (ceiling) and lower (floor) limits of consumption (Lorek and Fuchs, 2013; Di Giulio and Fuchs, 2014; Defila and Di Giulio, 2020; Di Giulio and Defila; 2021; Fuchs et al., 2021). Sahakian et al., (2021, 305) recently interpreted the approach consumption corridors as ‘a representation of everyday life whereby people live within limits, so that all people – now and in the future – can access what is needed to live a good life’. Many scholars have grappled with substantively characterising a good life referencing various theorists and wellbeing beliefs. Di Giulio and Fuchs (2014, 185, 186) settled to agree that ‘to be able to pursue a good life means on the individual level to be able to develop and use one’s capabilities…[as] negotiated in each society at each point in time’ and further explain that this may require access to certain ecological or social resources. Consequently, when such resources are limited, they may need to be ethically apportioned (ibid.). A central component of the concept, as evident in this description, is the notion of prioritising respect (rather than disregard) for the needs of others now and in future, along with a satisfactory fulfilment of present needs ahead of striving for more. Hence consumption corridors are appreciated as a ‘salutogenic concept’ in balance with core values of justice and equity (Sahakian et al., 2021). As reinforced by Gough (2017) a given core understanding is the relational nature of the corridors defined maxima and minima criteria to adequate satisfaction of human needs or ‘sustainable wellbeing’. It could legitimately be argued that several echoes emerge with this classification and the seminal Brundtland Report definition of sustainable development i.e., a type of development which ‘meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (WCED, 1987, 34). Both cases accept the satisfaction of current needs yet caution that needs fulfilment cannot be without due regard to wider social justice and futures perspectives. Some literature presents the approach as an enticing opportunity for co-balancing the wellbeing of humans and the planet (Kanerva, 2022) while others posit its potential as an effectual framework to oversee strong governance of sustainable consumption without ridicule for consumption itself (Defila and Di Giulio, 2020). Still under broad, conceptual level consideration at present (Akenji et al., 2019; Di Giulio and Defila, 2021; Fuchs et al., 2021; Brand-Correa, 2020), researchers have also
explored the corridors concept for application in complex system level sustainability change and for multisectoral applicability to for example, food sustainability (Kanerva, 2022); mobility/transport systems (Dillman et al., 2021); as well as clothing (Coscieme et al., 2021; Vladimirova, 2021) and laundry (Godin et al., 2020). Despite some critique (Di Giulio and Fuchs, 2014), it is considered that the concept of consumption corridors is appropriate for use at various scales and in different cultural contexts (Lavelle and Fahy, 2021) and is effective in challenging deeply embedded problematic practices (Sahakian et al., 2021), thus hinting at links to sufficiency theories, degrowth perspectives and the potential for setting parameters about when enough is enough (Fahy, 2022).

Advancing this line of thinking even further and moving into a more quantitative domain, Akenji et al., (2021, 25), considered the realistic achievability of the 1.5-degree requirements of the 2018 Paris Agreement defining ‘a fair consumption space…predicated on three principles: limits, equity, and wellbeing’. Utilising projections based on actual consumption patterns; it is posited that a fair space would provide an ecologically sound boundary. The approach takes cognisance of current scientific evidence and holds central the principles of fairness and equity in a balanced global distribution of carbon allowances and limits (ibid.). Within a defined and boundaried fair space, limited global resources can then be distributed in an equitable manner focused on meeting needs and achieving well-being (not economic growth), with flexibility possible for varying lifestyle options and the potential for adjustment and refinement on an on-going basis, as necessary (ibid.). Effectively, a fair consumption space provides an integrated and holistic stance that considers the full range of economic, social, and ecological impacts of consumption choices while also presenting the requirement for reductions in overall acquisition. Such work support development of future lifestyle scenarios and can inform overarching policy debates. More recently, and specifically relevant to this research, a further advancement of this work has concentrated on considering a fair consumption space for fashion and clothing (Coscieme et al., 2022), as discussed in Section 2.3 and sub parts below.

In setting out the urgent need for transformation to more sustainable lifestyles Akenji et al., (2021), reason that the origins of all current sustainability challenges can be attributed to two underlying causes i.e., existing societal structures and the insidious drive (both individually and collectively) to satisfy daily needs and wants. Earlier,
Akenji (2019) discerned three core sustainability challenges ultimately arising from these insidious underlying causations which now require largescale action; to balance current depletion of the earth’s natural resources, which are finite, with incessant demand; to harmonise an iniquitous global socio-economic system; and to stabilise excessive waste and pollution produced within the planets capacity to renew. From this perspective the term sustainable consumption is an oxymoron and transformational approaches are crucially required, approaches which account for and enforce urgent, radical, and collective lifestyle adjustments within a critical window (ibid.; IPCC, 2022a).

2.2.3 Balancing consumption – from degrowth to overconsumption

Once considered an activist or radical concept, the principles of degrowth have been recently evolving into an important sustainability assessment and paradigm perspective (Demaria et al., 2013; Weiss and Cattaneo, 2017). Masterson (2022) explains the concept broadly as confronting the issues of global overshoot by diminishing not expanding economies, not in an extreme or disproportionate manner but by merely living a more scaled back lifestyle with emphasis on wellbeing rather than incessant consumption. Originally attributed to a socialist intellectual perspective, and arising from the work of French philosopher Gorz, the initial degrowth calls were quite drastically for zero growth (Duverger, 2020). However, Cosme et al. (2017, 321) argue that in reality degrowth is not ‘a synonym for negative growth (economic recession)’ but rather such a symptom may result, only for a short time, as a consequent of the justified transition in degrowth to ‘an economic system that does not collapse with economic contraction’. While the more recent application of the degrowth concept in empirical research and policy development still requires further advancement and discourse the sustainable consumption potential of the approach may be considered somewhat enhanced by the recent Covid-19 global pandemic which provided unprecedent economic flux and a ‘real-time experiment in downsizing the consumer economy’ (Cohen, 2020, 1).

2.2.4 Sustainability transitions

With harsh warnings emerging from scientific assessment reports that the world is now nearing an irreversible tipping point (IPCC, 2022a), confronting excessive consumption is now exceedingly urgent and multi-scalar, integrative and complex actions are
necessary to effect transformational and systemic level improvement. In accordance with this objective a large and concentrated body of innovative, interdisciplinary research exploring sustainability transitions has grown exponentially in the last decade (Köhler et al., 2019).

Fundamentally interdisciplinary, sustainability transitions attempt to target deeply entrenched and wicked sustainability problems by applying systems-thinking and carefully considered integrative, multiple and holistic advancements over a phased or the longer-term (Makard et al., 2020; Makard, 2022). In complete recognition of the intractable challenge of global overconsumption, such efforts are not only targeted towards public policy but also directed at improving the effectiveness of overarching consumption governance positioned from a strongly sustainable standpoint (ibid.). In an assessment by Friis and Backer (2020) of the cross-fertilisation existing and possible between human geography and sustainability transition research the connection between the paradigms is found in exploring spatial linkages at specific sites of change and in connections at different spatial scales related to resource flows and methods of spatial connection (although focused on food and energy transitions specifically the point is still relevant in this context). Focusing on various individual products researchers have attempted to apply these concepts with real actors at meso/macro-levels to effect transition to sustainable consumption in the everyday and to mainstream change in consumption mindsets, for instance, clothing items (Heinze, 2020) or mobile phones (Hobson et al., 2018). Lately, Buchel et al. (2022, 231) specifically explored the fashion/clothing industry as a complex global system and concluded that multi-level transition analysis demonstrates the industry is ‘locked in a state of disconnection, uncontrollability, extraction, growth-focus, and disposability’ with little evidence of true transition.

Elementally practice-theoretical and sustainability transitions approaches are each distinct entities as fields of research and theory, with varying terminology and priorities, although:

both are bound by a common recognition of the need to move beyond product innovation, eco-efficiency, or redesign strategies, to consider integrated, sociocultural, technological, and organisational changes to achieve transitions towards [more] sustainable ways of life (Davies and Doyle, 2015, 427).
2.3 Clothing Sustainability Discourses

The dual challenges of insatiable overconsumption and vast underutilisation of clothing are exerting a detrimental sustainability impact globally. From the perspective that ‘use matters’ (Fletcher, 2008, 75) and, considering that the most sustainable piece of clothing is the one already owned; the clothing active use phase comes into focus as a vital piece of the puzzle in supporting advancement towards clothing sustainability transitions. Truly transitioning towards more durable and sustainable clothing consumption practices will involve radically alternate clothing use pathways. One potential pathway, which is just beginning to receive more attention in clothing consumption literature, involves mindfully fostering more sustainable maximum use of clothing items. The concept is presented as for example, moving to ‘a use-oriented clothing economy’ (Armstrong, et al., 2016, 248); accepting ‘earthlogic’ (Fletcher and Tham, 20190; ‘decentring durability’ (Fletcher and Fitzpatrick, 2021, 1); ‘sustainable anti-consumption of clothing’ (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022, 1) and ‘resizing fashion for a fair consumption space’ (Coseime et al., 2022). Consistently, these new perspectives and measures focus on fostering increased clothing longevity or longer-lasting clothes. Comprehensive lifecycle assessment has previously identified that prolonging the active life of clothing through effective design, use and re-use is the single most effective intervention possible to combat the overall sustainability impact of the clothing industry (Cooper et al., 2016; WRAP, 2017; McLaren et al., 2017; Laitala et al., 2020). The European Commission (2022) also signalled the imperative of increasing clothing use recently as a core strategy in the plan for effective sustainability transition of the clothing and textile sector. Further exploring the value and potential of this standpoint has positioned the theoretical and empirical examination of the clothing use phase as the critical nexus points for this research study. This research responds to the call by McLaren et al. (2015, 229) that ‘up-to-date qualitative research is required to discover how consumer attitudes, expectations and behaviours in relation to clothing lifetimes affects garment care and clothing use’.

2.3.1 Sustainable clothing consumption

As reviewed in earlier sections of this chapter defining consumption is a challenging task; adding the two prefixes ‘sustainable’ and ‘clothing’ only ensure this challenge is further intensified. Comparable to the notion of consumption having become ‘problematised’ (Welch et al., 2022, 3), equally now, clothing may be denoted as such in terms of its ecological impact (EMF, 2017; UNECE, 2018; EEA, 2019, 2022;
European Commission, 2020a; Rouch, 2021; Cocieme et al., 2022). In this vein, a large body of contemporary literature has developed which explores and grapples with the sustainability impact of clothing. At a basic level, Besevic, (2019) considers that any notion of sustainable clothing consumption is, innately and inherently contradictory because clothing, as a fashion item, is intended to create newness, novelty and change whereas sustainability seeks to engender longevity, sufficiency, circularity, maintenance and durability; notwithstanding basic clothing needs (Maslow, 1943). Other scholars reflect on the root cause of the problematisation, exploring the evolution of clothing and textiles historical as a commodity of great value (Brown, 2012; Whitson-Smith, 2018b; McCorkhill, 2021) to its present day environmentally impactful character as associated with fast fashion and more commonly consumed rapidly and frivolously in a ‘make-buy-dispose’ consumption lifecycle (Rouch, 2021, 4). In the context of this study the overarching concept of sustainable clothing consumption is broadly conceptualised, following Rausch and Kopplin (2021, 1), as implying ‘pro-environmental actions at every stage of the garment’s life cycle’ with the specific focus in this research on everyday sustainable maximum use of garments already owned.

A recent and novel theorisation of sustainable clothing consumption (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022) merits further consideration as the perspective advances the importance of extending conceptualisations of consumption to include a greater breadth, while still recognising on-going moments of consumption during the entire product lifespan subsequent to initial acquisition or purchase (Evans, 2020; Fischer et. al., 2021). Relating specifically to clothing consumption Vesterinen and SyrJälä (2022, 7) draw together the dual discourses of an urgency for increasingly sustainable clothing consumption and recent recognition of the value of extending clothing use, asking ‘what exactly is opposed when one opposes consumption from the sustainability viewpoint?’ They recommend a move away from the terminology ‘sustainable clothing consumption’ which they suggest is vague and confusing (ibid.). They proffer that instead of opposing all aspects of clothing consumption it is instead useful to separate out and review the sustainability potential of each consumption moment, and therefore, suggest that for improved sustainable transitions one should resolutely remain ‘anti-disposal’ and ‘anti-acquisition’ but firmly ‘pro-usage’ (ibid.).

While a range of pertinent literature on sustainable clothing consumption is further explored in the relevant sections of each published peer-reviewed article included in this
thesis, it is considered important to foreground several significant concepts from the combined literature in this review chapter. These particular concepts; clothing circularity; clothing sufficiency and clothing active use phase, as briefly explored below, are central to the later analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in this research on participants’ everyday clothing consumption practices.

2.3.2 Clothing circularity

Gaining increasing impetus of late, circular economy policy approaches are perhaps now overtaking a previously more consumption focused policy narrative (Sahakian et al., 2021). The overarching ecological requirement for and developing policy context and policy of a focus on clothing circularity was presented in Chapter 1, Introduction to this thesis. To summarise briefly; high-level global reports have documented the sustainability and circularity of the clothing industry as weak and requiring renewed effort (Global Fashion Agenda, 2019). Alongside this, recent policy level shifts at European Union level now appear to favour accelerated transition from a linear towards a more sustainable, circular economy and have stipulated a focus on clothing as a priory product for attention (European Commission, 2019a; 2020; 2022; EEA, 2022).

Notwithstanding this, fashion garment production volumes continue to grow and less than 1% of products are recycled into new garments (Balchandani et al., 2020) so action on circularity is an urgent sustainability imperative.

Currently it is the case that the clothing system is ‘operated in an almost completely linear way: large amounts of non-renewable resources are extracted to produce clothes that are often used for only a short time, after which the materials are mostly sent to landfill or incinerated’ (EMF, 2017, 3). However, renewed interest in an appetite for alternative approaches to clothing acquisition, use and disposal are beginning to emerge which are more in keeping with a circular economy model. Literature demonstrating broadening user satisfaction to engage with such elements include, for example, second-hand clothing acquisition models (Gwilt, 2021); broadening socio-cultural acceptability of clothing repair engagement and of willingness to wear repaired items (Durrani, 2018; Diddi and Yan, 2019; McCorkhill, 2021) consideration of non-economy driven clothing acquisition methods such as swapping, renting and leasing, amongst other alternatives (Armstrong et al., 2016; Vladimirova, 2021; Coscieme at al., 2022; Vladimirova et al., 2022). However, some deterrents to clothing reuse and circularity have become apparent, such as social media (Hasbullah et al., 2020) and its uptake may be also
influenced by emotional attachment to or detachment from individual items (Fletcher, 2016; Hobson et al., 2018; Hobson, 2019).

In an alternative and circular clothing economy, as envisioned and promoted by The MacArthur Foundation (EMF, 2017, 22) ‘clothes, fabric, and fibres are kept at their highest value during use, and re-enter the economy after use, never ending up as waste’. It is proposed that such a scenario relies on four crucial actions: ‘phase out substances of concern and microfibre release; increase clothing utilisation; radically improve recycling; make effective use of resources and move to renewable inputs (ibid., 23). Circular economy approaches are still quite new thinking having first emerged in the literature in the early 1990’s (Weetman, 2017; Okorie et al., 2018) and the concept is closely aligned with other approaches to materials preservation and conservation e.g., Pauli’s Blue Economy (2010) and McDonough and Braungart’s Cradle-to-Cradle (2002).

Repair as a distinct and critical phase of the circular economy is specifically considered in peer-reviewed Article 3. The capacity of repair to extend product lifespans ensuring longer continuous active use, reducing the need for virgin resources, and avoiding product obsolescence and disposal as waste is identified and explored with regard to clothing consumption (Gwilt, 2021, Diddi and Yan, 2019; Van der Velden, 2021).

2.3.3 Clothing sufficiency and sufficient wardrobes

A burgeoning body of literature suggests sufficiency as a societal principle which it is posited could serve to provide a valuable and positive alternative to the ever present and incessantly prevailing growth and overconsumption mindset of contemporary society (Lorek and Spangenberg, 2014, Spengler, 2016; Lavelle and Fahy, 2021). Kleinhückelkotten and Neitzke (2019, 2) proffer a definition of the concept explaining that in a sufficient consumption practice, consumers ‘restrict consumption to a level that is enough for a healthy and satisfactory life but [which] avoids excess’. The ultimate goal of the sufficiency wardrobe as suggested by Binotto and Payne (2016) is to revise a disposability approach to clothing and to retain garments in active use for as long as is possible. Some scholars identify that a sufficiency approach to consumption can actually provide positive wellbeing and psychological benefits, while others dispute that this is the case (Segall, 2016).
The concept of sufficiency links to the notion of consumption corridors as outlined earlier in this chapter; the space or corridor between the minima and maxima provides clothing users scope to live sufficiently well and meet both their fashion aesthetic and basic clothing needs (Maslow, 1943) without sacrificing the needs of others. Vladimirova (2021, 114) recently applied a corridors notion to clothing consumption concluding that ‘living with less is a path to happiness’ and that fashion needs can be met ‘with a relatively small number of matching, good-quality garments that can serve the owner for a long time’. It also aligns with the concepts of slow fashion (Milburn, 2017), ethical fashion (Stringer et al., 2020) and desire for a radically reimagined, more localised, biodiverse, and ecologically conscious or earth logic clothing sector (Fletcher and Tham, 2019) with values of justice and equity as paramount. Efforts to meaningfully maintain clothing can also be appreciated as acts of sufficiency and can serve to limit further consumption measures, while also providing potential for personal or ‘mendfulness’ benefits (Rodabaugh 2018, 79). Others even suggest rewearing and repairing clothes as a consciously radical act (de Castro, 2021). Additionally, valuing use and longevity of garments has the capacity to provide a level of satisfaction and familiarity and may be influenced by socio-cultural variances depending on place (Fletcher, 2008, 2016; Fletcher and Fitzpatrick, 2021).

A comprehensive report produced for the European Environmental Bureau Wellbeing Wardrobes (Sharpe et al., 2022) draws together many of these aspects under the focus of the umbrella of the wellbeing economy, which is presented as an alternative economic paradigm to counter the prevalent and predominant economic growth-mindset. The notion of a ‘wellbeing wardrobe’ is proposed as a real potential under the new EU Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles (2022) and is based around the ‘four key principles of limits; fairness; just governance; and new systems’ (Sharpe et al., 2022, 4).

Coscieme et al. (2022, 42) boldly ventured to quantitatively define an appropriate number of garments to make up a ‘sufficiency wardrobe’ considering ‘74 garments (including shoes) in active use as the sufficiency level in a two-season country and a total of 85 garments in a four-season country’. Other earlier literature suggests an appropriate ceiling of 80 items following a review of wardrobes ranging from 70 pieces to 429 garments (Maldini and Stappers, 2019). This report also advocates for a more conscious clothing consumption approach recognising that: ‘although trends and
newness are at its core, fashion consumption needs to be re-framed as a function service rather than as an emotional experience’ in order to support authentically ‘resizing fashion for a fair consumption space’ (ibid., 42).

This clothing sufficiency theme is further reviewed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, in Article 2 which explores clothing wear and care and considers average garment wear times and appropriate wardrobe scales.

2.3.4 Clothing active use phase

Simply put, ‘[d]uring clothing use we typically wear, wash, dry and store our clothes, while some people also repair, alter, and adapt their garments’ (Gwilt, 2021, 870). Known as the use, active use, or usage phase, this segment of a garment’s lifecycle is understood to comprise the wear period, spanning from initial purchase to final divestment or disposal of the clothing item. Muthu (2015, 93), amongst others (c.f. Fletcher, 2008), contends that ‘for most of the categories of clothing products, use phase is found to be the critical one (hotspot) and it is responsible for the maximum impacts arising from the life cycle assessment of a clothing product from its cradle-to-grave stages’.

Contrastingly however, a large number of other literature sources suggest that lengthening the use phase and favouring maximum garment use and longevity holds the answer to reducing clothing’s overall environmental impact (Cooper et al., 2016; McLaren et al., 2015, 2017; Kleep et al., 2020; Weidman et al., 2020). This growing body of research literature suggests that understanding consumers’ social and experiential relationship with clothing during the use phase, as well as their capacity for adequate care, maintenance, and repair, is crucial to ensuring garments are kept in continued active use, with consequent ecological benefits (Laitala and Boks, 2012; Niinimaki and Armstrong, 2013; Norum, 2013; Armstrong et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2016).

For example, Fletcher (2008, 75), concluded that to increase the sustainability of clothing consumption, ‘use matters’ and that, over the lifetime, use can present even greater environmental impacts than a garment’s initial production. In further research Fletcher (2016, 2) continues to explore the ‘craft of use’ or the ‘cultivated, ordinary and ingenious ideas and practices that promote satisfying and resourceful use of garments; presenting them as an alternative, dynamic, experiential frame with which to articulate
and foster sustainability in the clothing sector’ (see also Fletcher and Tham, 2019; Fletcher and Fitzpatrick, 2021). Additionally, in the UK, Langley et al., (2013) funded by Defra, examined clothing longevity perspectives, consumption patterns and use behaviours concluding that there is potential for lengthening clothing lifetimes at each lifecycle phase. This study offered insight into existing expectations of active life length by younger, older professional and parental consumers and explored their attitudes and behaviours related to clothing care. McLaren et al. (2015) meanwhile concluded that consumers’ capacity for prolonging active life is largely affected by the initial purchase quality of the garment, together with an owner’s ability to assess fabric durability and their capacity for adequate care and maintenance in the home. While Gill et al., (2016, 39), researching in Australia, proposed that ‘use time’ could hold the key to practicing sustainability.

Nevertheless, it is emerging that extending the clothing use phase must also be carefully balanced with the overall lifecycle energy profile of garments in use and with the disparities possible in individual wear and care practices (Kleep et al., 2020; Weidmann et al., 2020). Regarding the frequency of laundry during the care phase of clothing lifecycle, findings presented by Langley et al. (2013) concluded that many consumers would seriously consider wearing more clothes a second time before laundering. Furthermore, earlier studies of the socio-technical systems of laundering infer that understanding the interrelated social and technical dimensions of clothing wear and care patterns, such as personal standards of cleanliness, style, social norms and judgments on appearance, as well as the physical ‘systems of provisions’ can identify opportunities for influencing change towards more sustainable practices (Shove, 2003; Shove and Walker, 2010). Yates and Evans (2016) re-evaluating the sustainability of domestic laundry concluded that the low-temperature washing of laundry has gained popularity in the last decade (see also WRAP, 2017, 2019). That study also found that much heterogeneity now exists in how households organise wider tasks involved in doing laundry, particularly in separating, sorting, and drying, with important implications for responsible energy use (ibid.). In recent years, a largescale project across 10 countries, led from Ireland (see Fahy et al., 2019; Fahy and Goggins, 2019; Goggins et al., 2019; Goggins, 2022; Sahakian et al., 2019) explored laundry practices in-depth, as one of a number of selected household practices. While the focus was on household energy consumption some of the findings on laundry practices are relevant to this study.
Lately, the European Commission (2002, para 12), in communication regarding its new *Strategy for Sustainable and Circular Textiles*, again emphasises that ‘[e]xtending the life of textile products is the most effective way of significantly reducing their impact on the climate and the environment’. Existence of two conflicting viewpoints i.e., whether to value or critique practices during the clothing use phase, provides a puzzling outlook for the general public and for micro-scale management of everyday clothing consumption practices within households post-purchase. Gwilt (2021, 870) acknowledges that ‘[w]hile there is much discussion on the reasons why clothing users no longer wear or keep clothes, the data on clothing that is kept, maintained and regularly worn is limited’ indicating a gap in the literature at the everyday household level.

In terms of consumer awareness regarding the detrimental ecological impact of clothing overconsumption during its ownership; a range of literature has determined inadequate levels of understanding and awareness amongst the general public which is frequently linked to confusion and overwhelm (Norum, 2013; Gwozdz et al., 2017; Laitala et al., 2021; Coscieme et al., 2022). An in-depth study by Whitson-Smith (2018) utilising innovative quantitative wardrobe study methodologies explored strategies for consumer behaviour change towards sustainability concluding that approaches have fallen into two categories: the provision of information, such as social media campaigns, and the focus on ‘design for durability’ of new items. However, it is contended that both strategies are ultimately based on assumptions about consumers, rather than on empirical understanding of what actually drives everyday garment use, or sustainable behaviour change. This research points towards further gaps in knowledge regarding typical clothing consumption practices day-to-day. Considering user life stage, rather than clothing lifecycle momentarily (as contemplated by Wilson, 2022), although valuable perspectives for supporting climate change may exist, within and across generations, to date intergenerational empirical research has been limited (for some examples see McLaren *et al.*, 2016; Laitala *et al.*, 2015).

Given the scope of urgent mitigation measures now required and pledged (UN, 2015a; 2015b; IPCC, 2022a) transformation, will at this point require more than merely improved consume awareness. Noting the scale of the challenge, Coscieme *et al.* (2022, 48) advocates for a transformative and targeted three-pronged approach for improved sustainability of the sector comprising a system-wide focus on changing consumer
attitudes; altering industry power balances; and an overarching policy agenda which supports remaining within ecological limits.

2.4 Geographies of Everyday Practices - Uncovering Insights in the Ordinary

The connection between everyday geography and everyday clothing practices is taken up as a central tenant in this research. Conceptualising the places and spaces in which we live has long been an important lens for geographic inquiry (Pred; 1981; Lefebvre, 1991). Geographies of everyday life concentrate explicitly on investigating the everyday spaces where humans live out their lives. Skelton (2017) illuminates that an everyday geographies perspective works to understand and to be aware of the commonplace in order to enhance a geography that is human-centered. Moreover, an everyday geographies approach is recommended as a powerful conceptual framework for seeing the everyday anew and for pushing back against its ordinariness or ‘givenness’ (Sullivan, 2017). With regard to clothing geographies both Crewe (2017) and Patchett and Williams (2021) have respectively explored broader place, space, cultural and globally orientated, consumption, environmental and decentred aspects of clothing and fashion as explicitly linked to geography. As expressed by Patchett and Williams (2021, 198) ‘practices that inscribe certain cultural, bodily, historic, speculative, global, or singular patterns in the world through dress, fashion and style are inherently geographical’.

2.4.1. Researching the everyday

A focus on everyday settings may be considered a particularly useful starting point for empirical sustainable consumption research, as consumption remains inextricable from the everyday. Yates (2022, 144) recognises the rise of everyday research in the social sciences from the mid-1980’s and especially since the 1990’s explaining its various compositional forms: ‘‘everyday’ is most commonly used as an adjective: everyday life, experience, language, practice, politics, deployed to identify and defamiliarise previously unappreciated social phenomena, but it is sometimes also a noun that this is roughly synonymous to ‘everyday life and ‘the everyday’. Other scholars agree that exploring the everyday anew can provide a useful and distinct research avenue (Scott, 2009; Saarilahti, 2010; Pink, 2012; Yates, 2022).

The body of literature examining everyday life, often connected to sustainable
consumption, has gained increasing interest of late, not only in geographical research, but across an array of disciplinary areas (Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008; Scott, 2009; Hall, 2011, 2014; Pink, 2012; Evans, 2012; McGregor, 2012; Fischer, 2013; Gibson et al., 2013; Pink et al., 2015; Turkki, 2012b, 2015; Wahlen and Laamanen, 2015; Strengers et al., 2016; Fletcher and Kleep, 2017; Collins and Stanes, 2021). Such research foregrounds the ordinary and routine, yet complex experiences of the everyday. More specifically, in this manner, the household, as a conventional, everyday setting, has become an increasingly important locus of focus emerging ‘as the crucial scale of social organisation for pro-environmental behaviour’ (Head et al., 2013; 351). Within the household, a wealth of geographical research connecting the dilemmas and challenges of household sustainability already exists, underlining the importance played by integration of microlevel practices (Evans, 2017; Reid et al., 2010). Hall (2011, 635), for instance, examined everyday family practices of consumption developing a greater understanding of what she termed ‘ethical everyday’ or how ethics are played out in everyday family consumption. While Felski (2000) bemoaning that everyday life is the essential taken for granted continuum of mundane activities that form the basis for all human endeavours, conceptualised a model of everyday life comprising three aspects; time (repetition/routine); space (home); and modality (habit) to effect further worthwhile investigation. Meanwhile, Pink (2012) comprehensively explored a range of methodological approaches to adequately capture the illusive everyday. She identified value in ‘the theoretical tools of practice and place [to] enable us to understand everyday how innovation, change and activism develop’ and thus to reveal how improved sustainability practices may be leveraged (ibid., 11). More recently, in a comprehensive examination of everyday studies (Yates, 2022, 165) concentrates on its commonly associated links with consumption concluding that ‘everyday life ‘matters’ through its potential to shed light on particular facets’ and its capacity to ‘attune researchers to how the social world is directly experiences’.

2.4.2. Nexus at home – sustainability research at the household scale

Emerging from multi-disciplinary funded projects in the UK, Foden et al., (2018) extend the application of practice-theoretical concepts and coin the term ‘Nexus at Home’ to describe research which combines social practice approaches and everyday geographies of household sustainability with nexus thinking to re-imagine and re-frame the resource intensity of everyday life at the household scale with implications for future policy
development and interventions. This transdisciplinary household research develops interventions aimed to unlock unsustainable practices so the alternative less intense patterns of consumption can emerge. Foden et al. (2018, 2) contend that ‘focusing on the nexus of resources in this manner provides a new way to explore the sustainability of home practices’ and represents an opportunity for cross-disciplinary research into the resource intensity of everyday life and the sustainability of domestic practices. The Change Points Toolkit which was developed arising from this research (Hoolohan et al., 2018) is designed to encourage users to find new and effective ways of transforming consumption to less intensive patterns that engage with the social and material fabric of everyday life. Admittedly, ‘nexus thinking’ is not a new concept, as for instance, Davis (2014) and Leck et al. (2015) both identify the emergence of nexus thinking in the late 2000s as a possible new lexicon or framing of water, energy and food interdependencies and research at various scales. Krafl et al. (2018, 300) concurs recognising a lengthy interest by geographers, and others, in theorising and investigating various different kinds of ‘connectedness’, including nexus thinking which they contend is useful for ‘understanding complex, mutual and interdependent systems, and inter-connections between much researched resource sectors, such as water, energy and food (commonly labelled WEF) which had previously been investigated separately’ and further clarifying that such approaches are useful as they underscore the ‘importance of identifying, making, supporting and (at times) critically interrogating connections often at different registers, scales and politics’. Indeed Giddens (1984, 2) explained nexus as forming the ‘basic domain of study of the social sciences’, that is, a linked collection or constellation of practices with practices themselves consisting of an organised set of actions (Hui et al., 2017). Middleton and Allen (2014, cited Leck et al., 2015) proffer to offer that the nexus could even be interpreted as a sub-set of sustainable development. In any case, what is novel in more recent research is the way nexus thinking is now being applied within the domestic household oftentimes combined with a practice-theoretical lens to scope, map, reframe, and unlock less sustainable domestic consumption practices so that the alternative less intensive approaches may potentially emerge at the micro-scale (Evans, 2017; Hoolohan et al., 2018b; Foden et al., 2018; Reid & Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019). The nexus perspective and associated empirical research approach has considerable potential for application here to sustainable clothing practices research and the end application of the research outcomes towards more effective policy initiatives shows effective promise.
2.5 Social Practice Theory

Against the background of a global urgency to engender improved sustainability of consumption, and in contrast to alternative conceptualisations which examine the symbolic and positional role of consumption, this study adopts the perspective that a focus on changes in (everyday) practices is essential when advancing towards sustainability transformations (Davies and Doyle, 2015). Social Practice Theory, with its focus on the performative character of everyday social life within households, provides an overarching paradigm for this research and a conceptual basis from which to explore the classic agency-structure dilemma (Giddens, 1984).

2.5.1. A practice-theoretical lens - defining practices

The well-established, highly diverse, although oftentimes nebulous, field of Social Practice Theory is well summarised by Giddens (1984, 2) who professed that ‘[t]he basic domain of study of the social sciences, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time’. As explained by Nicolini (2012, 1) social ‘practice theories constitute, in fact, a rather broad family of theoretical approaches connected by a web of historical and conceptual similarities’. This description of Social Practice Theories as metaphorically comprising a family resemblance while essentially being heterogeneously varying concepts is a notion also agreed upon by Welch (2017). Originally rooted in philosophy, sociology, and anthropology, modern practice-theoretical approaches can be traced back to prominent social theorists Giddens (1984, 1991), Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) and De Certeau (1984) and to philosophers Wittgenstein and Heidegger (Shove et al., 2012). More recently, a wave of renewed interest in practice-based research (known as the practice turn or re-turn) can be attributed largely to the works of Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2002), Reckwitz (2002a, 2002b), and Shove (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2009; Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012) with an ever-more increasing application of the paradigm in contemporary sustainable consumption research and for the positive reinforcement of pro-environmental behaviour (Welch and Warde, 2015). Following the thinking of Nicolini (2012, 9) the ‘great promise of the practice lens is that of explaining social phenomena in a processual way without losing touch with the mundane nature of everyday life and the concrete and material nature of the activates with which we are all involved’. While exceedingly attractive to the current project in this regard, its actual application in any empirical endeavour is somewhat complicated by the reality that how
a practice or specific ‘unit of analysis’ is actually defined is on occasion perplexing owing to the broad family of approaches and the vast range of scholarly traditions (ibid.) and because ultimately ‘there is no unified practice approach’ (Schatzki, 2001, 2). Conversely, perhaps such breadth in practice approaches can be also considered a strength?

In attempting meaning and sense-making, as an early-stage Social Practice Theory scholar, the researcher diligently unpacked several dominant theoretical assessments of practice-theoretical approaches (c.f. particularly, Shove at al., 2012; Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012) electing consequently to position this research primary in the practice-theoretical perspective of Shove et al. (2012). From the baseline consideration of ‘What then is a practice?’ to the presentation of an accessible model to approach practices as elements; and the pertinent wider links established to consumption policy development, this literature was invaluable in supporting and underpinning this research process (ibid., 6). Rather than generating an alternative definition Shove et al. (2012) concur with the example of Reckwitz (2002, 249-50) in dissecting the distinct entity of any established practice as comprising several unique elements which are denoted as belong to the practice, thus establishing:

A ‘practice’ ... is a routini[s]ed type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, ‘things’ and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge’.

Emanating firmly from a sustainable consumption-based research standpoint, Shove et al. (2012) present a model depicting what they contend are the three critical elements of a practice: material, competence and meaning. Each element is represented in their model by three distinct but connected circles, as it is asserted that when a practice is performed each element must be present and must combine to enact the practice (Spurling et al, 2013). Helpfully, the compositional make-up of each element is further elaborated to support examination; material as tools, objects and equipment; competence as procedures, skills and know-how and meaning as socio-cultural understandings and expectations and critically each element is imbued as having a life of their own independent of a given practice (Shove et al., 2012). Given this perspective, individual everyday behaviour can be appreciated, as an expression of social phenomenon i.e., socially shared meanings, preferences and understanding, rather than as an expression of an individual person's values and attitudes (Spurling et al., 2013). In
this lens, individuals are viewed as carriers of practices, of skills, of understanding and of know-how (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). Even acknowledging other broad and diverse representations of practices which evaluate and appreciate and consider additional aspects (for example, Warde, 2005) the practice-theoretical model of Shove et al. (2012, 23) although perhaps ‘radically simplified’ still remains nonetheless pertinent in the identification of components of practices within this study. As applied to the context of clothing practices research it has potential to support exploration of how each of the three given elements are enacted as part of routine everyday clothing wear, care and repair practices and to allow representation of relations between and across everyday practices.

2.5.2. Exploring consumption practices

Undoubtedly, consumption practices are embedded in particular material infrastructures and encompass more than just the behaviour of individual consumers; they govern consumption through cultural norms, discourses, and morality (Warde, 2017). Consequently, Social Practice Theory has been widely applied in research to analyse facets of consumption, including forms of environmentally significant yet everyday consumption that emerge from routine and mundane social practices (Evans, 2020), along with everyday resource consumption which emerges from the conditions surrounding everyday life and human actions (Dulcie-Rigby, 2016). Following the contention of Spurling et al. (2013, 1), that a better understanding of the dynamics of everyday practices and ‘placing practices, not individuals or infrastructures, at the centre stage of analysis’ can offer a window into transitions towards sustainability a large body of research literature exists in this field. Studies applying a practice-theoretical lens as particularly pertinent for this research can be accessed as connected to domestic household management (Davies and Doyle, 2015; Maller and Strengers, 2017; Hoolohan et al., 2018); clothing consumption (Gill et al., 2016; Hitchings et al., 2015); laundry (Pink et al., 2015; Yates and Evans, 2016); and clothing repair and longevity (Gregson et al., 2009; McLaren and Mc Lauchlan, 2015; Cooper et al., 2016; McLaren et al., 2016).

Nicolini (2012, 34) attributes Heidegger’s conceptualisation of ‘everydayness’ or the base oncological dimension of actually being in the world as ‘meaningfully structured by a texture of social and material practices that remain unthought of as such’. Gram-Hanssen (2008, 1182) denotes this as a benefit; that in the day-to-day the reproduced
nature of practices has the crucial role of establishing ‘a secure and liveable everyday life, where we are not compelled to do the overwhelming task of reflecting on every single act’. However, for sustainable consumption the impact of the on-going performativity of routinely undertaking practices linked to resource depletion and environmental degradation demands further consideration and examination. Despite this Schatzki (2002) strongly asserts that a practice-theoretical lens, when coherently perused, has capacity to extend a renewed and sensitive viewpoint and to open avenues of novel inquiry presenting Social Practice Theory as in fact a radical and novel departure from other traditional ways of exploring and understanding social organisation. It is additionally contended that everyday routine actions are mostly governed by partially automatic or semi-conscious decision making based on social norms, values and goals, rather than conscious deliberation and rational thinking (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove and Warde 2002; Warde 2005).

Notwithstanding the ever-expanding body of theoretical and empirical literature involving Social Practice Theory which exists, Maller and Strengers, (2017), among others, call for greater questioning and broader reflection about associated and aligned methods and approaches with a view to presenting greater evidence for how practices can, should, have or may change in the future towards improved sustainability. Welch (2017) echoes this concern specifically seeking greater questioning and broader reflection about methods and approaches in the field of social practice research. Welch and Yates (2018) corroborate that Social Practice Theory can be critiqued for ‘struggling to accommodate the roles of collective actors, strategic action and purposive collective projects in social change’ while concomitantly proposing to advance the worth of the lens providing an exemplar of its dispersed collective usefulness for sustainability transitions. Overall, the pervasive appetite for application of a Social Practice Theory approach in examining consumption (c.f. Evans, 2020) demonstrates growing acceptance that an entirely efficiency, innovation or technology-led effort will not meet the vast scale and speed of climate mitigation and transformation now urgently required (Anderson and Bows, 2011) and the desire to foster more fitting alternatives.

2.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, the examination of literature in this chapter highlights the principal theoretical and conceptual understandings and discourse relevant to the overall study and to the consequent empirical research. The early chapter sections explored the conceptual
scope of consumption, sustainable consumption, and sustainable clothing consumption, while the latter passages reviewed two central theoretical perspectives which serve to frame this study; everyday geographies and Social Practice Theory. Several key gaps in current literature have been identified, most crucially regarding the dearth of research and baseline data on everyday clothing consumption practices in Ireland across the clothing use phase, with limited international research available on the topic. The following chapter explores the design and application of the innovative, multi-method, practice-based methodological design employed in this research.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This research employed a tailored, practice-based, and multifaceted methodological framework, drawing on pertinent literature and remaining true to its geographical foundations, to obtain an in-depth, holistic understanding of everyday consumption practices in clothing active use amongst an intergenerational sample of Irish participants.

A complex, multimethod research design was initiated to investigate practices in clothing wear, care and repair amongst an intergenerational sample. Each of the fifteen participants involved, across three generational groups, undertook an initial Problem-Centred Interview, followed by an in-depth wardrobe interview (including wardrobe audit, household tour and clothing diary keeping, with still photographs employed to further augment the data). The innovative methodological design was devised in line with the research focus on everyday clothing use practices and applied a practical-theoretical lens. The methods employed in this research are novel within geographical inquiry, make a significant contribution to the literature and are the subject of a recent publication in Area (see Article 1).

This chapter aims to outline the intricacies of the methodological approach employed in the research, to detail the rationale for its selection, the ethical decisions taken, and the opportunities and limitations involved in conducting this empirical study. The latter section of the chapter provides reflexivity on the unique positionality of the researcher undertaking this study, documented with awareness of how this background has informed the choice of framing, tools and interpretations in order to, wholly and openly, reflect on the approaches and interpretations of the overall study.

3.1.1 Purpose of the study

The core aim of this interdisciplinary, research is to examine the clothing active use phase in Ireland from a sustainable consumption perspective, specifically exploring everyday practices in clothing wear, care, and repair amongst an intergenerational sample group of Irish clothing users. Consequent to a detailed and extensive review of
pertinent literature in Chapter 2, it is apparent that, although the focus on everyday clothing consumption has recently been amplified from a sustainability perspective and is now increasingly more widely publicised, the issue continues to expand exponentially. Evidently, each phase of clothing lifecycle exerts on-going significant impacts on the planet, impacts which have yet to be decelerated or ameliorated to any substantial degree. Review of literature also demonstrated an obvious dearth of empirical research on this matter in Ireland, across disciplinary boundaries. Therefore, drawing on current and emerging discourses in clothing geographies and sustainable consumption research, employing a practice-theoretical lens and focusing on sufficiency, circularity and maximum utilisation of clothing already owned, the researcher in this study sought to determine:

How are everyday practices regarding clothing active use (wear, care and repair) currently constituted in Ireland?

Guided by this primary research question, a further series of four interrelated, specifically focused sub-questions are delineated as follows:

- What is the efficacy of a practice-oriented wardrobe studies approach in exploring everyday practices inherent in clothing use?
- What are the barriers and opportunities in a transition towards more sustainable clothing consumption practices during the clothing active use phase in Ireland?
- What attitudes exist among intergenerational participants in relation to extending clothing active life via repair and what levels of willingness and ability to engage in clothing extension practices are evident?
- What key competencies and everyday actions lead to sustainable maximum clothing use and sufficiency, is there an awareness of carrying out such sustainable clothing consumption practices or are they performed inadvertently?

3.1.2 Ontological and epistemological considerations and philosophical perspectives of the research

Various ontological, epistemological, and theoretical perspectives influence research in human geography. Conscious that researchers bring their own worldviews, paradigms,
and beliefs to projects and that these underpinning assumptions inform the research conduct, writing and outcomes, it was important to spend some time at the outset of this research interrogating and clarifying the researcher’s personal ontology and epistemology. It was apparent from the beginning of this research that reflection and clarity in relation to these aspects would inform the choice of research approach, methodology and framing, as well as the later interpretation of data (Thomas, 2013). ‘As a discipline that straddles the social sciences and humanities, the aims of research in human geography are often focused on understanding people's experiences, views, values, and actions’ (Couper, 2020, 279, 284). Accordingly, although epistemology ‘can often seem somewhat removed from geographers’ concerns to make sense of the world around us…developing some understanding of epistemology clearly has value for geographers (ibid.). Creswell (2007, 15) concurs with this perspective advising that ‘good research requires making these assumptions, paradigms and frameworks explicit in the writing of a study, and at a minimum, to be aware that they influence the conduct of the inquiry’. Furthermore, it must be recognised at this juncture that the researcher’s novel and complex personal positionality, as brought along into this work, provided an additional facet for consideration when reflecting on epistemological perspectives. This standpoint necessitated persistent checking and clarifying, on an on-going basis, throughout the research process to ensure alignment with geographical values and paradigms. This aspect of researcher positionality will be critically examined in Section 3.7 below.

The work of Mood and Blackman, (2014) was particularly useful for the researcher in providing an overview map of philosophy and contextualising the general principles of philosophical thinking within a social science research context (see Appendix A). Supported by this mapping, a standpoint of critical realist ontology, constructionist epistemology, and interpretivist philosophical perspectives can be assigned to best described the researcher’s viewpoint on this research. Each of these positional aspects will be elaborated in the below section for clarity. With regard to fully appreciating and belonging within geographical thought (and more specifically within human, everyday geography and sustainable consumption fields), the standpoint of Creswell (2013, 2, 3) resonated strongly with the researcher and served to anchor and validate this research unapologetically in the everyday household context/setting:

Geography is a profound discipline...in addition to being profound geography is
also everywhere. The questions we ask are profound because of, not in spite of the everydayness of geographical concerns…so geography is at the same time ‘profound’ and everyday.

Fundamentally, this research is located in the interpretive paradigm wherein specifically a qualitative, problem-centred, practice-theoretical, postmodern/poststructuralist approach is undertaken to the study. Interpretivists identify that human experiences and accounts are complex and that reality is subjective, interpreted social action, consequently, a set of investigative approaches that enable researchers to make sense of this complexity are required. This contrasts with a quantitative positivist viewpoint, prevalent in much early geographical research, whereby factual knowledge, development and testing of theories and measurable scientific data govern research approaches (Robson, 2002). It is at this application of thinking point that the researchers positioning diverges from the mapping of Moon and Blackman (2014) being influenced by the epistemological thinking of geographer Couper (2020) who explained that postmodern/poststructuralist epistemology (arising from the influence of Thomas Khun (1962) and further developed by French philosophers such as Foucault and Derrida and others) provided a significant epistemological shift for the discipline of geography. Couper (2020, 283) advises that ‘postmodernism and poststructuralism can be difficult to distinguish explaining; if there is boundary between them, it is flexible and porous rather than distinct’. Therefore, taken together these perspectives determine that people understand meanings relationally and that knowledge and power are closely connected with knowledge expressed through language. Moreover, Couper (2020, 283) helpfully rationalises:

Epistemologically, a postmodern and poststructuralist understanding of knowledge is “antifoundational.” There is no underlying foundation, no “truth” against which to judge our claims to knowledge, or overarching system for deciding that one representation (or theoretical perspective, or discourse) should take priority over another. Knowledge is social, and knowledge (concepts, representations, practices) is also embedded within society. To understand society is thus to understand knowledge and its effects.

Postmodern/poststructuralist social practice and practice-theoretical approaches were explored in detail in Section 2.5 in the Literature Review. The emergent and underpinning philosophical assumptions upon which the approach is based are further
illuminated in this section in order to clearly situate this study theoretically, to explicate the researchers understanding and to foreground the researcher’s alignment and assumptions in relation to knowledge and values. As explained by Nicolini (2012, 1) ‘practice theories constitute, in fact, a rather broad family of theoretical approaches connected by a web of historical and conceptual similarities, and as such ‘practice-oriented approaches have become increasingly influential and applied to the analysis of phenomena as different as science, policy making, language, culture, consumption and learning’ (ibid., 2, emphasis added). Within the interpretive paradigm, the roots of modern practice-theoretical approaches can be denoted as phenomenological and can be traced back initially to prominent social theorists Giddens (1984, 1991), Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) and De Certeau (1984). Described by Simpson and Ash (2020) as comprised of a disparate pool of ideas, as arising from the work of German philosopher Edmund Husserl, which is essentially attentive to the concrete lived experience of people as they navigate their day-to-day activities rather than the abstract, phenomenological practice has long resonated with geographers. The work of geographer Seamon (2016) delves into the interface between experiences of human body and the everyday geographical world focusing on bodily perceptions and interactions between the human and the environment in a specific time and space from a phenomenological perspective.

Practices feature with primacy in the phenomenological tradition. In a fundamental text explaining the practice-based research approach, Nicolini (2012, 32) describes with clarity, and in an accessible manner, the nature of the practice-based paradigm whereby ‘the need to engage practically as well as cognitively with phenomena in order to understand them’ prevails. Nicolini refers to the important perspective of pivotal phenomenological philosopher Heidegger whereby ‘everydayness’ is denoted as; ‘the basic ontological dimension of our being in the world…meaningfully structured by a texture of social and material practices that remain unthought of as such, but that we more less share in common’ (2012, 34). Therefore, ‘mundane everydayness thus becomes the received, yet necessary indeterminate, cultural manifold within which we are all immersed, and which meaningfully discloses our world by way of our own un-theorised, everyday practical coping strategies’ (ibid., 35). Recently, Denscombe (2021) recognises a phenomenological approach as uncovering layer upon layer of social meaning related to an experience in order to understand in-depth the lived experience in question from the perspective of those involved. In this approach the Denscombe (2021,
the normal, routine facets of the everyday world around us are not trivial or inconsequential. Quite the opposite, the routine and ordinary features of social life, and the ways in which people manage to “do” the everyday things on which social life depends, are areas of particular interest.

In the late 20th and early part of this century, a wave of renewed interest in practice-based research (known as the practice turn or re-turn) can be attributed to the works of Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2002), Reckwitz (2002a, 2002b), and Shove (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2009; Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012) with an ever-increasing application of this approach apparent in sustainable consumption research and for the positive reinforcement of pro-environmental behaviour. Further supporting the clarification of practice-based approaches from an epistemological perspective, Gherardi (2006, 38) proposed three types of relations may be established between practices and knowledge:

- A relation of containment, in the sense that knowing and learning are processes that take place within situated practices. On this view, practices are constituted as objective entities, and which comprise bits and pieces of knowledge anchored in the material world and in the normative aesthetic system that has elaborated them culturally.
- A relation of mutual constitution, in the sense that the activities of knowing and practicing are not two distinct and separate phenomena; instead, they interact and produce each other.
- A relation of equivalence, in the sense that practicing is knowing-in-practice, whether the subject is aware of it or not. Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practices thus activated. The equivalence between knowing and practicing arises when priority is denied to the knowledge that exists before the moment of its application, so that when it is applied, something already existent is not preformed but the action instead creates the knowledge formed in the action itself and by means of it.

Later, Gherardi (2012) was keen to highlight and clarify that the above three relations should not mutually exclude each other, and that in emphasising one this does not consequently prejudice the others. Additionally, and particularly useful in the context of
the interdisciplinary areas drawn together in this study, knowledge itself can be further differentiated, Schatzki (2001) for example, focused on practical knowledge being of significant and critical importance and distinguished between two types of practical knowledge; *embodied* knowledge (that which is visible in bodily performances) and *sensible* knowledge (that which is reliant on the senses) and as a result attested that ‘knowledge then becomes an ongoing accomplishment through these performances ‘giving equal right to both doing and knowing, and eliminates distinctions between the two’ (Durrani, 2018, 4). Practice-based research approaches can thus enable the researcher to recognise and respect ‘different ways of knowing…including from experience, concepts, skilful practice, through artful means including storytelling and through emotional and instinctive knowing’ (Fletcher, 2021, 5).

Another consideration from an epistemological perspective which occupied the thought processes of the researcher early in this study, was the potential influence, if any, of interdisciplinarity on the researcher, on the research approach and on advancing dynamic contextual approaches to consumption research. In attempting to explore this question Zinsstag *et al.* (2011) consider that the complexity of sustainability is not adequately addressed by approaches limited to only one scientific discipline and advise instead that approaches comprised of transdisciplinary methods, participatory modes and the integration of knowledge facilitate the most comprehensive potential for flexible analysis of complex questions. In actuality much sustainability research is interdisciplinary in nature and helpful advice from the literature is for such research to take a comprehensive approach fully integrating natural systems, socio-economic process as well as including the role of culture into the equation, a lacuna in much such research, but which is accommodated in practice-theoretical approaches (Murphy, 2011). Hobson (2019, 292) agrees that from a geographical perspective ‘the ways in which multiple knowledges intersect with environmental issues’ and the positive outcomes and potential benefit of drawing attention to ‘institutional and cultural mediation of individual and collective responses to environmental concerns’ brings considerable and valuable critique to bear on sustainability strategies.

A problem-centred framing involves ‘a way of collecting knowledge – by involving people more actively into a process of knowledge constitution’ (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 2). Comparable to other methods of qualitative research, the Problem-Centred Interview approach comprises interviews with real people in their respective ‘social, cultural and
physical context’ enabling the researcher to generate an understanding of meanings and behaviours ‘through the eyes and lived experiences of the people’ (Schensul, 2008, 522). The Problem-Centred Interview approach is valuable in sustainable consumption research as the idea of problem-centring implicitly involves the perspective that the research topic under scrutiny be progressive and contributes to the betterment of society. In this particular study the Problem-Centred Interview is further combined, in the second phase of data collection, with innovative wardrobe studies to generate richer and deeper insights into intergenerational Irish users’ experiences of clothing wear, care and repair. From a theoretical and epistemological perspective, the Problem-Centred Interview offers the opportunity for respondents to:

co-construct and re-construct problems together with the interviewers in an interactive and interpretative process…to enhance the reconstruction and comprehension of a certain problem in the social world; at the interaction of practical and social scientific prior knowledge; and through dialogic interaction of respondent and researcher (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 18, 19).

As became clear for the researcher, when planning this practice-based research project, and as acknowledged by Gherardi (2012, 49) ‘a unified field of practice studies does not exist’ which can cause challenges for an early researcher, particularly when attempting to balance an interdisciplinary approach. Instead regarding methodological concerns, Gherardi counsels that methods under the ‘umbrella concept’ of a practice-based study ‘like all tools of a good craftsperson, must be adapted, invented, and made the object of bricolage, not of worship (ibid., 5). Evidently, taking practices as the ‘unit of enquiry…is one that requires us to really think about the types of questions that are consequently generated, and then about the methodological/analytic challenges that follow’ (Sustainable Practices Research Group, 2012, 18). Significant work took place at an early stage to identify and critically review both traditional and innovative methodological approaches employed across related multidisciplinary fields globally with a view to realising an appropriate research design for this study. The remaining sections of this chapter outline in detail the specific methods, tools and approaches employed and the rationale for their selection as part of this practice-based study.

3.1.3 A Problem-Centred practice framing

The Problem-Centred Interview, as defined by Witzel and Reiter (2012, 4), is ‘a
qualitative discursive-dialogic method of reconstructing knowledge about relevant problems’ from the perspective of the participant. They recognise that asking and answering questions is a common, tried and tested research method employed to find out information and yet they acknowledge too that there are different approaches to this which are more or less effective for some problems (ibid.). From a theoretical standpoint, ‘the main purpose of problem-centring is the facilitation of a conversation structure that helps to uncover the actual perspectives of individuals on a particular problem in a systematic and dialogical way’ (ibid., 24). The Problem-Centred Interview method was initially developed in Germany in the 1970’s and 1980’s by Witzel, a social scientist, for a study focused on occupational socialisation of young people and was further developed and refined in the context of an overall revival of qualitative approaches within the interpretative paradigm as until then the status of qualitative interviewing was considered unstructured and often therefore, inferior, or auxiliary to alternative quantitative approaches. It is important to clarify that, Problem-Centred Interview approaches do not necessarily always, or only, deal with problems but rather that the word problem arose from the German term ‘Problemstellung’ meaning specific research question and thus should comprise a societal or socially relevant problem. Witzel and Reiter (2102, 5) designate learning about and appreciation of the true motivations behind actions as a pre-condition of conducting Problem-Centred Interviews i.e., they recommend that ‘the research question has to correspond to an everyday problem in the perspective of practical knowledge that the respondent can articulate and also has an interest in dealing with’. This pre-condition aligns well with the selected problem and sub-research questions in this study which are oriented around the everyday use phase of clothing consumption.

The Problem-Centred Interview method was considered preferable, for this study, to other more unstructured narrative approaches, such as the Biographic Narrative Interview Method (BNIM) (Wengraf, 2001), which was also fully considered as potentially suitable but which was ultimately excluded as a result of the ‘fallacy of non-intervention’ principle; in other words the researchers fear that interview subjects may not be in a position ‘to unfold, complete and elaborate a story by themselves’ without intervention, question or checking on the part of the interviewer (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 8). Furthermore, given that this research is focused on a specific problem, or research question on everyday clothing consumption practice, it was considered that having the opportunity to specifically probe interviewees in relation to a particular
practice or action within the interview was crucial. Moreover, having been already proven useful in a disparate range of research contexts, the Problem-Centred Interview is considered valuable in interdisciplinary research and was effectively employed in a largescale life course study at University of Bremen Collaborative Research Centre 1988-2001 for example (Kluge and Kelle, 2001, cited Witzel and Reiter, 2012).

According to Witzel and Reiter (2012) the specific design of a Problem-Centred Interview research approach aims to enhance the researcher’s interpretative knowledge of the social context by reducing the gap between the researcher’s incoming prior knowledge, as brought into the research process, and the applicable and practical everyday knowing of the participant so that during the interview process both parties engage in co-constructing and reconstructing a given problem of focus in an active and interpretative process of data gathering (for further details see Figure 1 below). In this manner, through the interaction of practical and social scientific prior knowledge, and via discursive dialogue with each interview participant, the selected problem can be fully and utterly understood. Prior knowledge, as a significant element for reflexivity during this qualitative research process, is further explored later in this chapter in Section 3.7.3.

Figure 1. The Epistemological Challenge of the Problem-Centred Interview (Weitzel and Reiter, 2012, 18).
3.1.4 Application of the problem-centred interview

Succeeding a thorough review of interviews as a qualitative method, employing 200 papers from human geography journals, Hitchings and Latham (2020) attest that interviews are undoubtedly an established instrument for qualitative research and a notably versatile research tool widely employed in human geography research. Nevertheless, it is also apparent from that study that ‘human geographers might say more in their papers about how their developing interview styles and practical interviewing experiences have shaped the analyses that they present…enriching discussion of how we collectively ‘do’ them better’ (Hitchings and Latham, 2020, 396). Such perplexity of indistinct application technique or procedure is not an issue in the Problem-Centred Interview approach as Witzel and Reiter (2012, 35) set out comprehensive guidelines for preparing, doing, and processing Problem-Centred Interviews in their informative text ‘The Problem-Centred Interview’. The advised approach is divided into three stages; ‘the preparation of overall conceptual and practical approach; doing the interview and the processing of the material collected’. This approach was incorporated in planning and undertaking both the first and second interview phases of this research (as outlined in Figure 2 below).

![Flowchart of Problem-Centred Interview](image)

Figure 2. Flowchart of Problem-Centred Interview (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 36).
3.2 Wardrobe Studies

From the early stages of this PhD study, alongside extensively exploring pertinent literature on sustainable clothing consumption, the researcher also deeply resonated with contemporary and emerging empirical research around the sustainability impact of clothing use, much of which was seen to utilise innovative wardrobe studies approaches. Such research can be situated as mainly emanating from SIFO, the Norwegian Consumer Research Institute being undertaken by, or in collaboration with, Ingun Grimstad Klepp and Kirsi Laitala and also from the UK via sustainable fashion researcher and author Kate Fletcher and sociologist Sophie Woodward. ‘Wardrobe Studies’ or ‘Wardrobe Methods’ are a collection of recently emerging empirical approaches ‘within an understanding of practice where materiality is at the core’ which have been employed to date across a diverse range of disciplines (ibid., 375). Laitala et al. (2015, 97) describes wardrobe studies as ‘a methodological approach that combines methods such as qualitative research interviews, field work, inventories, and laboratory testing’. For clarity, the term ‘wardrobe’ in such investigations does not merely denote the physical space for clothing storage but refers to ‘clothing actions, relationships, meanings, and material effects’ that evolve over time and in the course of everyday life (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, 3) and also to ‘the material framework of everyday dress practices’ (Klepp and Bjerk, 2014, 375).

While the researcher was still considering and planning methodological approaches early in this research, Klepp, alongside colleague, Fletcher, jointly edited a publication ‘Opening up the Wardrobe, A Methods Book’ (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, 2) in which they compiled and detailed fifty examples of wardrobe study methods devised and employed to:

- gather information about people and their clothing beyond the point of purchase, with the express intention of generating new knowledge and uncovering deeper insights into the interactions between people, clothing and the world.

All the wardrobe methods therein are presented in a straightforward ‘how-to’ style and the text promotes an innovative and shared understanding of the possibilities of wardrobe-based enquiry. The methods detailed are classified into four categories of inquiry; investigating wardrobes; exploring individuals, practices and dynamics through clothing; transforming wardrobes and materiality. Apropos the theoretical approaches of the wardrobe studies genre, Fletcher and Klepp (2017) consciously
avoided using explicit terminology in relation to ethnographical and ontological traditions or concentrations given that there was such a variety of disciplines and approaches represented in the collection overall. Interestingly however, it was acknowledged that:

geographical methods like the fashion transect (for example) are strong allies in gathering knowledge of the world around us. The use of geographical methods and other methods like wardrobe audits pursue a systematic overview through counting and recording the contents and activity of wardrobes (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017, 169).

Furthermore, it was explained that, from a sustainable consumption perspective, a usefulness of wardrobe studies methods, is that the approach enhances ‘detailed knowledge about the scale, type and rate of consumption of clothes; rendering a more diverse and holistic understanding of the fashion system’ along with other benefits of investigating the ‘happenings and make up of wardrobes’ (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017, 5). In fact, it is proposed that ‘what happens in and around wardrobes profoundly shapes a garments sustainability potential’ and that ‘it is to wardrobes that we must turn to engage with radical sustainability change’ (ibid.).

Wardrobe studies methods are relatively contemporary as a qualitative approach, Fletcher and Kleep (2017) documented the earliest use of a wardrobe studies method as occurring in 1995. That was a text-based method employed by Hansen (2000) in her work on clothing consumption to explore clothing and dress practice amongst young adults. In 2011, a conference took place at the Copenhagen Business School focused on drawing together discussion on approaches and methods including ‘scholars from several different disciplines [who] have studied wardrobes and dress practices’ (Skov, 2011, 2). In this case the term ‘wardrobe ethnographies’ was tentatively used to describe the approaches being employed through a range of ethnographic and related qualitative and quantitative methods. Skov (2011, 4) who also recognised the usefulness of wardrobe methods for exploring ‘how people live with clothes’ and for inquiry ‘into the ways in which increasing consumption levels are normalised’ further expands the scope of the approach. She identifies wardrobes ‘as a space for a series of mundane repetitive activities’ and extends this to include, not only those activities related to dressing but also the ‘more mundane housework that goes into keeping the wardrobe full of clean clothes’ (ibid.). This wider scope is useful in terms of the broad range of wear, care, and repair practices under investigation in this specific study.
3.2.1. Wardrobe studies and geographical research

While the literature is not extensive, some previous geographical studies have explored the sustainability implications of everyday clothing use, from a wardrobe studies or practice-theoretical perspective. Collins (2021, 2020, 2019), for instance, examined everyday material consumption of clothing from both a practice-theoretical and a geographical scale, exploring everyday clothing consumption, divestment, and care practices, socio-cultural practices, and geographies of responsibility. Further, Collins and Dixon (cited Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, 115), employed a practice-based wardrobe approach (wardrobe interviews) to explore the attitudes of young adults towards clothing ‘novelty, newness, wear and repair’, a method described as aligning with ‘the recent creative methodological turn in human geography’. Additionally, Stanes (2019, 224), a cultural geographer, focused previous research on the material qualities of garments acknowledging the multiple material, temporal, spatial, and behavioural moments that occur while wearing items daily and across their lifespan and denoting the active use phase as ‘clothes-in-process’. Earlier, Stanes and Gibson (2017) explored the geography of polyester clothes via ethnographic wardrobe studies and geographer, Johnson (2017), employed clothing journals and still photographs, both aspects of wardrobe studies, in her research investigating the clothing practices of black, Muslim women in the UK, and further utilised the completed journals subsequently as a prompt in follow-up interviews with participants. A more recent paper on everyday consumption and storage of household items, including clothing, co-authored by geographers Collins and Stanes (2021), explored user decisions related to clothing attachment, storage of seasonal garments from a practice-based perspective and also considered users intentional or inadvertent household sustainability. Also, from a geographical standpoint but much earlier, Gregson and Beale (2004, 690) researching clothing consumption recognised wardrobe studies as ‘pivotally positioned in the practices of clothing consumption’ valuing the geographical exploration of everyday use beyond fashion to open-up ‘consumption practices of wearing, laundering, tidying and sorting’ along with divestment and circulation.

Following wider investigation into wardrobe studies approaches and consequent to reviewing the outcomes arising from empirical research undertaken via sustainable consumption focused wardrobes studies in other congruent fields (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017; Laitala et al., 2017; Woodward, 2016; Yates and Evans, 2016; McLaren and
McLauchlan, 2015), the researcher’s interest in the approach was intensified. It is fair to say that in this research, focusing on the lived actions and practices of an intergenerational group of Irish participants everyday garment wear, care and repair, the materiality of garments is truly at the core of the research focus and therefore, a wardrobe studies approach is considered a useful means to enhance data collection and enrich narrative disclosure.

3.2.2. The wardrobe study as a practice-based approach in domestic settings

The viewpoint of Klepp and Bjerck (2014, 373) that ‘the material is not just a carrier of different types of symbols, but an active element in the practices’ appropriately summarises the theoretical underpinning of a wardrobe studies approach. Consequently, while empirical wardrobe studies are often employed from an ethnographic approach and may utilise either quantitative or qualitative methods, wardrobe studies can be understood to align well with a practice-theoretical positioning. Lisbethl (2022, para 7) concurs that:

wardrobe studies are particularly suitable for studying practices that we often take for granted. The practices are important to understand in order to gain better knowledge of consumption patterns, and thus how they can be changed in a more sustainable direction. The special feature of the method is that the clothes are at the centre of the analysis.

Within ‘the family tree of wardrobe methods’ Fletcher and Kleep (2017, 168) identify a diverse list of tools which can be deployed and combined in an almost infinite manner including: fashion transect; wardrobe audit; wardrobe interviews; wardrobe actor network methods; textile text analysis; participatory wardrobe methods; clothing archeology; textile laboratory testing; wardrobe triangulation method; self-reflexive wearers; wardrobe activism and wardrobe consultation. Considering potential contexts for this type of research, Lisbethl (2022) recommends that wardrobe studies are preferably undertaken in the participants’ own home with the consequent advantage of enabling the researcher to gain insights into everyday organisational approaches, clothing storage information, as well as laundry care practices. As further explored in Article 1, several wardrobe study tools were selected and specifically tailored for use in this research particularly ‘focusing on modes relevant to a geographical reframing’. The scope and capacity of each of the specifically selected tools are examined below.

3.3.3 Capturing practices - wardrobe study tools selected for this study
Under the umbrella term wardrobe studies, a broad range of possible methods may be employed to explore the everyday lifeworld of clothing from a sustainability perspective. Those specifically selected for application in this PhD study included: wardrobe interviews (including a partial wardrobe audit); clothing diaries; household tour and still photographs. The sub-sections below provide an overview of the scope and efficacy of each of the selected wardrobe studies strategies. The precise manner in which each tool was specifically developed and tailored for application in this study will be outlined in the subsequent passages.

Wardrobe interview

The idea of a wardrobe interview is that ‘specific garments and/or clothing related behaviours act as a gateway to opening up the wardrobe’ (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, 173). Such interviews, ideally take place in the participants own home, with clothing items from the wardrobe being selected to assist in prompting and eliciting a richer, more detailed narrative, although sometime approaches may occur in more public spaces (c.f. Fletcher, 2016). Other recognised advantages of the wardrobe interview method is that, like all interviews, little specialist equipment is required and that the technique can be easily adapted and combined with other wardrobe approaches (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017). Wardrobe studies may involve all the wardrobe contents or may focus only on specifically selected elements, sections, or categories of interest. Sociologist, Woodward (2007, 2015a, 2015b, 2016) employed this approach extensively, exploring what she instead termed the ‘object interview process’ in research on the life course of denim jeans, to foreground the material and tacit aspects of clothing items to better appreciate the complexities of the material world, drawing on interdisciplinary insights. Reflecting on the development and benefits of such an interdisciplinary approach employing multiple methods, Woodward (2016, 363) observed that this ‘encourages reflexivity, as accepted ways of doing research are laid bare when faced with alternative knowledge practices’. As well as undertaking object interviews with jeans, Woodward (2016) combined still photographs and field-notes together with design workshops. Object led interviews were also employed by Collins (2019) in a small scoping study with undergraduate geography students exploring their perceptions of old or vintage clothing. In that case student participants were recruited to interview their peers.
Wardrobe audit

Like wardrobe interviews, wardrobe audits can be employed to review an entire wardrobe or alternatively only used to review selected identified elements or aspects. Wardrobe audits are valuable as they may combine ‘qualitative research interviews, fieldwork, and inventories’ (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017, 172). Woodward and Greasley (2015), for example, incorporated a range of wardrobe methods including wardrobe audits, photography, clothing diaries and observation to understand women’s everyday clothing consumption in the UK and completed an entire and detailed wardrobe audit in each case. Additionally, several previous Nordic based studies employed wardrobe audits effectively to explore garments removed from use or designed as at the end of their lifecycle over a set period (Kleep, 2001; Laitala et al., 2015; Klepp and Bjerck, 2014; Laitala, 2014). Another sustainable clothing consumption focused audit approach, adapted by Whitson-Smith (2018) involved participants undertaking a wardrobe self-audit at home on a given worksheet template in relation to six designated garment types that they wore regularly, and which were selected to specifically collect information on garment use, garment selection and everyday consumption behaviours.

Clothing diaries

Clothing (or wearer) diaries as text-based forms, proforma templates or journal style entries enable wearers to detail their personal actions and experiences of using a garment or garments. Two of the diary methods detailed by Fletcher and Kleep (2017, 178) were instigated by clothing designers and employed ‘cultural probes’ i.e., sample garments or artefacts given to users to wear while seeking them to document their user experiences. Utilising such processes can provide clothing designers with new design ideas and understandings. Another form of clothing / wearer diaries, inspired by ethnographic methods, were employed by McLaren et al. (2016) in a UK study on the longevity of clothing use. In that case, clothing diaries were designed to gather qualitative insights about participants everyday clothing use ‘recording wash, wear and care patterns of an individual, everyday garment over an eight-week period’ and were self-completed in the participants own homes with follow up diary interviews to discuss data collected (McLaren et al., 2016, 6). Geographer, Johnson (2017), investigating clothing practices of black, Muslim women in the UK, employed what she termed ’clothing journals’ to track all the different clothes worn by participants over a 4-day
period and further utilised the journals subsequently as a prompt in follow-up interviews. Clothing / Wearer diaries are also useful in historical research and studies to track consumer purchasing habits, although in each case it is important that users are empowered and committed to self-record data as accurately as possible (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017).

*Household tour*

Although some of the wardrobe studies approaches investigated did recognise that the wardrobe was broader than merely the bedroom closet or space storing garments and incorporated the review of adjacent or additional clothing storage as located throughout the home (Woodward, 2007, , 2015b, 2016; Stov, 2011), household tours facilitate an even more thorough exploration of intimate household areas to support an understanding of domestic practices and consumption habits. Household tours, sometimes also termed ‘walk-through tours’ (Strengers, 2010) or ‘go-along tours’ (Wills et al., 2016; Meah and Watson, 2013; Evans, 2012; Kusenbach, 2003), as a qualitative data gathering method are more commonly evident in practice-based geographical and consumption (often food or energy) focused research, rather than in fashion-based studies (c.f. Judson and Maller, 2014; Strengers and Maller, 2011; Maller et al., 2011; Evans and Jones, 2011; Strengers, 2010). The methodological technique is presented by Strengers and Maller (2011) as having the three useful data collection purposes; to prompt householders to further elaborate on practices within the natural context in which they are undertaken; to facilitate observation of the material dimensions of practices and the skilful performances of practices in households and, in some studies with multiple data collection modes, to enable cross-checking of reported with actual practices. In the case of practice-based research already situated in participants own homes, employing the addition of a household tour aspect is a relatively straightforward additional approach in terms of researcher time and commitment and yet has the potential to deliver innumerable additional and valuable insights from a practice perspective.

*Still photographs*

Still photographs are a comparatively self-explanatory, visual data collection, inventory or documentation method employed in empirical studies across both clothing and consumption research. Kara (2019) recognises photographs as the most common type
of art or artifact employed in research to enhance interview data collection. Photographs may be utilised for a variety of purposes including being employed as prompt to enrich interview narratives (Hitchings et al., 2015); to aid later accuracy and verification of researcher recall and analysis (Johnson, 2017; Wills et al., 2016); to document specific practices of garment use (Fletcher, 2016); as a periodic visual diary method employed over time e.g. daily or weekly (de Vet, 2013); to record practices as observed or multi-dimensional aspects of the situated context evident in fieldwork or wardrobe studies (Laitala and Klepp, 2017; Wills et al., 2016) or during household tours (Judson and Maller, 2014; Strengers and Maller, 2011; Maller et al., 2011; Evans and Jones, 2011; Strengers 2010). An alternative approach sometimes employed in everyday practice-based research of documenting observations via video recording or using videos to document and self-report in place of written diaries or accounts (Pink et al., 2015; Muir and Mason, 2012) was also considered by the researcher.

In summary, wardrobe studies methods as a systematic cataloguing or inventory method can be quantitative or qualitative in approach. They are often employed in sustainability focused research and are practice oriented.

3.4 Application of the Specifically Tailored Practice-Based Research Approach – Conducting the Fieldwork

Arising from the investigation of relevant literature and having fully explored the theoretical underpinning of a practice-theoretical research approach (Gherardi, 2012; Nicolini, 2012), the researcher became keenly aware that:

the mundane and potentially awkward nature of everyday social practices related to resource consumption in the home means that questions about the impacts and implications of methodological choices for social practices research becomes incredibly important (Browne, 2016, 199).

This consciousness, coupled with the interdisciplinary nature of the research focus, lead the researcher to consider a wide range of methodological advances from different disciplines keenly and carefully. The complexity of sustainable consumption, research in household’s necessities incorporation of the principles of interdisciplinary investigation and the use innovative multi-method strategies for data collection and analysis. Furthermore, mindful of existing debates around the limitations of interview or ‘talk-based’ only research methods (Hitchings and Lantham, 2019; Browne, 2016) versus the ardent defence of same (Hitchings, 2012) and the growing promotion of
potential alternative, innovative approaches (Strengers and Maller, 2015; Davies and Doyle, 2015; Fahy and Rau, 2013), all methodological options for exploring everyday practices were fully investigated. Ultimately, in the case of this study, an innovative, multifaceted, methodological framework was specifically developed drawing on the literature.

Consequent to design, ethical approval, and participant recruitment, the initial or first phase of the study involved an in-depth interview, formulated and undertaken following the Problem-Centred Interview approach in line with Witzel and Reiter (2012). Subsequently, the second phase of the research involved wardrobe studies, comprising four specifically tailored data collection tools; an in-depth wardrobe interview, including partial wardrobe audit; a clothing diary; a household tour and still photographs, all employed to ‘capture the types of norms, social expectations, complexities and conventions that underlie everyday household practices (in this case clothing use practices)’ (Maguire and Fahy, 2001a, 75). Although some of these selected tools were certainly influenced by a wide range of disciplinary perspectives, this innovative empirical design, and the selected approaches within, evidently ‘fit with human geography’s current enthusiasm for materiality’ focused studies (Hitchings and Latham, 2019, 394). Further, the combination of a Problem-Centred Interview with other data collection methods is a tactic supported by Witzel and Reiter (2012) to maximise, supplement and generate thick, in-depth data, particularly when the problem under consideration is a taken-for-granted everyday topic under qualitative research. There is a dearth of evidence in literature to date of wardrobe studies approaches being employed in geographical research. Therefore, exploration of the specific methodological framework employed here formed the basis of the first published paper from this PhD research ‘offering a fruitful window into the everyday geographies of clothing sustainability’ as a means of illustrating that ‘wardrobe studies methods could provide a useful addition to geographers toolbox…in terms of future research innovation’ (see Article 1, Maguire and Fahy, 2021, 76). Table 3 below, extracted from that paper, illustrates in summary the two stages of the multifaceted, practice-oriented, wardrobe study methodological approach employed in this research.
### Chapter 3: Methodology

Table 3. Stages of the multifaceted, practice-oriented, wardrobe study methodological approach employed in this study (all 15 participants took part in each stage) (Maguire and Fahy, 2021, 74)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method:</th>
<th>Usefulness:</th>
<th>Limitations:</th>
<th>Ethical issues:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1: Problem-Centred In-Depth Interview</td>
<td>Universal guide consistently applied for cross-case analysis, gathers narratives, facilitates clarification regarding everyday practices, expedient timewise and financially</td>
<td>Text-based, relies on recall ability at a single point</td>
<td>Voluntary informed consent sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardrobe Interview including partial wardrobe audit of various garments</td>
<td>Narratives of individual garments, allows concrete questioning around practices, deeper descriptions possible as method assists memory recall and emotional evocation, advances co-fabrication of data with material surroundings, enables garment use comparison</td>
<td>Time commitment, access to the intimate household level required</td>
<td>Avoiding undue intrusion, Putting participants at ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Diary</td>
<td>Self-documented insights into everyday wear and care practices</td>
<td>Dependant on participant commitment and accuracy,</td>
<td>Consideration of depth of investigation and data required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

68
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method:</th>
<th>Usefulness:</th>
<th>Limitations:</th>
<th>Ethical issues:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2</td>
<td>Extent: one-month, with fashion clothing wear and laundry care practices noted</td>
<td>recorded on a written template, completed diaries are utilised as an interview prompt</td>
<td>text-based but potential for audio/video diary methods too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardrobe Studies approach consisting of 4 aspects:</td>
<td><strong>Household Tour</strong>&lt;br&gt;Participant directed tour focusing on clothing storage spaces and laundry care areas within the household</td>
<td>Context generated in household setting, spatially focused, triangulation, can corroborate talk-based interview narratives, advances relationship between part and whole, if proximal access is difficult there is scope for participants to video record tour</td>
<td>Challenging to simultaneously document, photograph and interview, potential interference from background noise or distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Photographs</strong>&lt;br&gt;photographs to document household tour and selected clothing items during audit</td>
<td>Provides corroborating visual data, may be documented by participant/researcher</td>
<td>Linked analysis, photographing items unobtrusively without impacting the interview flow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.1 Research context and setting

This PhD research study was set in an Irish context. Ireland emerges as an interesting research setting for consumption research for several reasons. Firstly, there is currently a dearth of literature examining sustainable consumption in Irish households (Lavelle and Fahy, 2016). Secondly, although Ireland as a country has a rich tradition of fashion, clothing, and textile craft industries (De Cléir, 2011) no previous empirical studies have focused on exploring clothing consumption, care, and sustainability practices amongst Irish users, or on clothing repair as a sociological phenomenon. Ultimately, practices of everyday clothing use amongst Irish users are therefore, largely unknown to date and there is consequently no current baseline data available on clothing wear, care or repair practices in Ireland. More specifically, the data for this study was gathered in counties Donegal and Sligo, in the North West of Ireland, with urban and rural participants evenly represented. This region of Ireland has a long tradition of clothing and textiles production and remains home today to several globally successful textile and fashion industries (Creative Ireland, 2022).

Even more explicitly, at a micro level, the household has become an important locus of focus emerging ‘as the crucial scale of social organisation for pro-environmental behaviour’ (Head et al., 2013; 351) and ‘a key nexus point for examination of micro-level everyday practices’ (Foden et al., 2018). Therefore, in this study the household scale is identified as an important contextual site of focus and the research is concentrated particularly on everyday clothing consumption patterns and associated social norm aspects, within households. Understanding everyday ‘clothing practices in a holistic and contextualised manner’ is considered vital in providing insights into sustainable consumption (Woodward, 2015a, 131). In this research, the everyday clothing active use phase is under scrutiny and is understood here to comprise three key clothing use categories: wear, care, and repair. Consequently, this empirical research study is timely and well placed to support real-life insights into the everyday consumption patterns and social norms of contemporary Irish clothing users.

While acknowledging, and remaining fully cognisant of, the significant sustainability impact of upstream clothing production and downstream clothing disposal (Coscieme et al., 2022), the focused context for this research, was concentrated in the everyday clothing use phase specifically about clothing already acquired, owned and in use. Certainly, this is not the most ecological impactful phase however, it is the phase of
most precise interest to the research as a professional home economist immersed in sewing and textile skills development and home economics curriculum design, and belatedly, as an early researcher in everyday and environmental geographies and sustainable consumption.

3.4.2 Sample population – selection, recruitment, and size.

In qualitative research, the selection of participants can be undertaken through a sampling plan or by identifying a specific target population or sub-group in the population (Witzel and Reiter, 2012). The latter approach was deemed most appropriate in determining inclusion factors for participants in this research as it was important to identify respondents who could best contribute to the particular clothing use and sufficiency problem under investigation and further to ensure that a complete range of generational views were represented. This type of non-probability, purposive sampling approach ‘operates on the principle that we get the best information through focusing on a relatively small number of instances deliberately selected on the basis of their known attributes’ (Denscombe, 2021, 78). Influenced by the approaches of two earlier funded research studies involving clothing sustainability (McLaren et al., 2016 and Laitala et al., 2015), the researcher identified three target generational groups of focus. McLaren et al. (2016, 231), researching as part of a large UK Government funded study entitled Strategies to improve design and testing for clothing longevity (c.f. Cooper et al., 2016) investigated clothing longevity, choosing to work with three main consumer groups selected as representing different fashion market segments and having diverse lifestyles, expectations, attitudes and behaviours:

- younger consumers most associated with ‘fast fashion’ consumption;
- older, professional ‘slow fashion’ consumers with a tendency to focus on durability and high quality;
- parents of school age children whose clothes are subject to high wear and tear.

Earlier, Laitala et al. (2015, 98), researching strategies to extend clothing lifecycles also elected to work with three defined intergenerational groups:

- Young adults age between 18 and 35 that are either single or couples, but not living with parents anymore and do not have own children.
- Families with children below the age of 16.
• Adults above the age of 55, who are either retired or approaching retirement, and have no small children living at home.

The rationale employed in the latter instance was to recruit participants from different life stages, gender, economics status, and family types (Laitala et al., 2015). Broadly mirroring the above rationale for purposive sample selection led the researcher to define the following three, slightly adapted, target demographic cohorts for this research: participants aged 8-24 years, termed in this study Young Adults (YA); participants 25-49 years, who comprise a group of parents with young children (PwYC); and participants aged 50+ years, labelled in this study as older adults (OA). Inclusion of these three intergenerational groupings, selected for their generational spread and distinct fashion market segment, provided greater potential for a variety of perspectives, attitudes, and practices regarding clothing consumption to emerge and enabled subsequent data analysis across groups. It was also considered possible by the researcher that clothing care and repair capacities and skills may vary across life stages (Wilson, 2022) and thus having a spread of intergenerational groups would enable later analysis in this regard. For the purposes of this research YAs were defined as between ages 18-25 years. PwYC were identified as those parents with children currently attending primary or post primary school and OAs were defined as those age 55 years and older in pre-retirement or retirement. It was anticipated from the outset that more females than males would take part in the research as clothing management and care may be seen as being predominantly undertaken by females within the household however, input from male participants was also sought to ensure that their viewpoint was reflected. In relation to the gender breakdown of participants the researcher was cognisant of research in the UK undertaken by the UK Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP, 2017) which made it possible to estimate environmental impacts for different garment types to provide a target list for future attention with respect to sustainability concerns – three of the top four priority items were women’s i.e., women’s dresses, jumpers, and jeans with only one male garment identified (men’s T-shirts). Furthermore, it is important to clarify, that inclusion criteria and group composition for this research focused on involvement by participant age and life stage rather than on any other purposive profiling factors such as place, gender, social status nor indeed on participants overt sustainability interests, beliefs, or capacities. In fact, participants here were recruited for a study on clothing use and care practices and were thus not made explicitly aware of the researcher’s interest in sustainable clothing consumption and sufficiency. In
consideration of all the above, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria were decided. Participants will be included if they:

- are competent adults characterised as belonging to one of the three life stages under investigation,
- are over 18 years old,
- are resident in the North West of Ireland in counties Sligo or Donegal,
- have freely given consent to take part.

Participants will be excluded from this research if they are:

- under the age of 18 years old,
- not fluent in the English language due to the in-depth nature of the study,
- not available to participate in the household tour or wardrobe study aspect of the research.

In relation to conducting purposive sampling, Denscombe (2021) endorses that the researcher must select a sample based on relevance to the topic under review and knowledge or experience about the topic, thus the sample is deliberately selected to ensure an entire range of for example ages or types of participants are included and compares this to some degree like selecting a representative sample. To purposively access potential participants from each intergenerational group deemed applicable in this study (YA; PwYC and OA), the researcher identified and compiled a directory of community groups comprised of members within the specific life stages required within the North West. Where possible a recruitment letter was sent via email or post to the Chairperson/Leader of the identified local social or community groups (see Appendix B). Participants for two of the generational groups (Parents with Young Children and Older Adults) were also recruited in person when the letter was followed up by the researcher attending meetings of relevant local community groups (for example, a mother and toddler group; a parenting group; a women’s group and a men’s shed meeting). The researcher brought along hardcopies of the Participant Information Sheet, to each local meeting and was kindly afforded a brief opportunity to explain the purpose and context of the study in plain language with prospective participants enabled to ask any additional questions, seek further clarity as needed and to interact with the researcher in-person. Those interested in being involved in the study provided their contact details and indicated if there was a preferable day/time for the initial interview.
to take place on a proforma template (see Appendix C). In regard to recruiting Young Adults, correspondence about the study was circulated via a mailshot to three college student unions in the North West of Ireland, including a detailed yet accessible Participant Information Sheet with explanatory images and a profile photograph of the researcher included.

Concerning sample size, as is common in small-scale research, the approach taken here was cumulative, i.e., participants were added ‘until a point is reached where there is sufficient information and where no benefit is derived from adding any more to the sample’ (Denscombe, 2021, 82). In this manner a total sample of fifteen participants was finalised for this study, ultimately comprising thirteen female and two male contributors. A breakdown of the composition of the final sample group is outlined in Table 4 below (extracted, Article 3, Maguire and Fahy, 2021) and is visually represented in Figure 3 subsequently (extracted, Article 1, Maguire and Fahy, 2021).
Table 4. Profile of study participants across three selected generational groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Adult (18-24 years)</td>
<td>YA1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Hospitality Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with Young Children (25-49 years)</td>
<td>PwYC1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adult (50+ years)</td>
<td>OA1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Self-Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Retired Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Flick, (2018) explains that there are several points when sampling decisions are taken during a study; not just when collecting initial data or case sampling, but also in material sampling during data analysis, and in later selecting presentational samples during the project write up, which is particularly pertinent in an article-based study. Nonetheless, the researcher grappled initially with doubts around appropriateness of the overall sample width and depth, both of which were eventually curtailed organically by small-scale research project resource constraints, in particular time pressures (Flick, 2018) and the sole researcher as the chief project resource (Denscombe, 2021). On the contrary, however, a benefit of maintaining a small sample size is that it facilitated a richness of data collection not possible in a project undertaken on a larger scale. This also enabled the researcher to personally undertake all aspects of the research ensuring a level of consistency and oversight. With this sample size the researcher was able to delve which each participant in-depth, closely, and authentically thus reflecting the ‘lived experiences of people in the everyday world’ and providing ‘descriptions that are detailed enough to reflect the complexity of the social world’ (Denscombe, 2021, 138). The small sample group size was deemed appropriate for this type of qualitative research, as the goal of the study was not to attain a representative value but to gain deeper understanding; the study was not designed to be representative, rather the focus was to explore in detail everyday consumption practices in clothing active use. The relatively positive socioeconomic status of all fifteen participants in this study is acknowledged, based on their geographical location, household profile and access to domestic laundry facilities.
\textbf{3.4.3 Pilot study}

In an effort to ensure maximum quality assurance and validity in research design and instrumentation, and additionally due to the overall innovative, experimental nature of the proposed study, a ‘complete pilot’ was undertaken with three participants (Harvey, 2023). The pilot participants were drawn from the overall volunteer participant group with one pilot participant selected from each target generational group i.e., one young adult (female), one parent with young family (male) and one older adult (female). Pilot data collection took place in participants own homes. As the focus was to test and refine research design to ensure maximum capacity to investigate the given research questions, this full pilot was afforded adequate time and each data collection tool was fully implemented across the two interview stages; ‘trying it out in the field with real participants’ as is the advised best practice (Denscombe, 2021, 210). More broadly, embarking on a complete pilot also enabled further advancement of core researcher skills and initial development of an analysis strategy for the overall study. The pilot interview data from the initial Problem Centred Interview and second wardrobe interview was subsequently transcribed for each of the three participants. Following a two-day NVivo Training Workshop delivered by QDA training and undertaken by the researcher, data collected from the pilot study was analysed using NVivo, Version 11 Pro, employing an NVivo database tailored to the study to code and analyse pilot study data. Results of the complete pilot were thoroughly reviewed by both the researcher and the research supervisor together with additional material gathered via completion of three pilot text-based clothing diaries and three household tour videos, with a view to strengthening effectiveness of data collection and to anticipate any practical issues which could arise and impact on the study proper. The main amendments made to the research design subsequent to undertaking the complete pilot included:

- In the initial Problem-Centred Interview;
  
  o the initial question, in the Wear section, was amended from a specific question on estimating the number of garments in the participants wardrobe (now moved to Wear, Q6) to a more open and general question. This involved adding two new open questions at the outset of the interview. The initial question now requires participants to describe their daily routine to dress for a typical workday. Subsequently, a second open question was inserted on describing how participants dress for a weekend
These amendments were made post-pilot to enable the researcher to capture richer, more detailed, narrative accounts of participants everyday clothing section routines and related decisions. These amendments were made in line with advice from Witzel and Reiter (2012, 68) about the beginning of the Problem-Centred Interview being the true core of the interview and a critical point to ensure the quality of the following narrative dialogue; ‘the aim is to facilitate the establishment of a narrative conversational structure…the opening question should be general and non-directive’.

- Amendments were made to sequencing of questions to ensure conversational flow was maximised (e.g., Wear, Q 6 and 7 are linked and were amended to immediately follow each other).
- The verb in question 3, in the Wear section, related to clothing storage within the home was changed from *how* to *where* to differentiate the question further from question 4 regarding the system of clothing storage.
- Question 5 related to clothing wear, was amended to insert prompt time periods as respondents in the pilot had struggled to define length of ownership.
- A new question (Wear, Q 10) was added to identify times when participants share / swap clothing with friends or family as this information did not emerge organically from the pilot interviews.
- Several questions were re-phrased or amended to a more open style to encourage greater participant narration (Wear, Q 9, 11 14, 15 and Care, Q 9) and prompts were added to further support participants response in some cases (Wear, Q 9, Repair, Q 6).

- In the Wardrobe Interview;
  - The first request for selection and discussion of a garment from the participants wardrobe was amended from ‘A garment you have owned for a long time’ to ‘A garment you have worn for a long time’. This change was made to ensure differentiation in discussion from the garment selected and narrated later under section iii; ‘A garment you never wear’.

- In regard to the Clothing Diaries;
Following the complete pilot as undertaken with the initial three participants, one substantive change made was to reduce the length of time participants were required to self-document the Clothing Diaries on the given diary template. When the diaries were initially developed and employed (McLaren et al., 2016; Coooper et al., 2016) the documentation period was for an eight-week period. However, analysis of results from the pilot study, indicated that data saturation was reached earlier, and that some repetition of actions and practices was evident in the diaries. This information, together with consideration of the time commitment required to complete the diaries by voluntary participants led to the decision that one month was a sufficient duration to record the clothing diaries.

- Regarding the Household Tour;
  - The decision was made post-pilot to employ still photographs instead of video recording to document the household tour aspect of the wardrobe interviews in the data collection stage proper as it proved very challenging for the sole researcher to video record accurately while also moving around the participants home and maintaining a natural and pertinent flow of conversation and questioning.

Following the careful updating of interview protocols and data collection tools post-pilot, an additional complete pilot was undertaken with one more participant (a Young Adult, female) to test the final updated research tools and data collection approaches. In addition, the final pilot served to enable the researcher to gain further confidence in the in-depth Problem Centred Interview and wardrobe studies process, and to ensure overall satisfaction with the level of data collection achieved though the newly refined tools.

3.4.4 Conducting the fieldwork – Generating primary data in two stages

Subsequent to the completion of the pilot study and the ensuing finalisation of the data collection tools, fieldwork proper for this study was undertaken with fifteen participants, across three generational groups in the North West of Ireland between July 2018 and May 2019. The part-time researcher focused sequentially on data collection with one target generational group at a time to ensure adequate contact was maintained with participants and that follow-up wardrobe interviews took place in a timely manner. The two-stage interview process was conducted in the main in participants own homes, with at least four
weeks between stages to enable completion of the clothing diary during the interim period. In a small number of instances, a longer interim period was necessary between interviews, because of participant/researcher availability, and occasionally the initial interview took place in an alternative setting for mutually agreed convenience. Fortunately, there was no loss of participant involvement from the initial group of people recruited though to fieldwork completion and the total number of in-depth interviews undertaken was thirty.

Data Collection Stage 1 - Interview 1 - Problem Centred In-Depth Interview

Miller and Glassner (2021, 64) suggest that the ‘opportunity to collect and rigorously examine narrative accounts of social worlds’ is a real strength of qualitative interviewing. Following detailed consideration of several potential approaches, the Problem-Centred Interview method (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) was identified by the researcher as the most appropriate in-depth interview technique for use in this study, being structured yet open in design. The design of the initial interview protocol or guide took account of the Problem-Centred Interview technique described by Witzel and Reiter (2012, 4) as a ‘discursive-dialogic method of reconstructing knowledge about relevant problems’. This approach with its orientation towards socially relevant problems is ideal when the research problem to be addressed, as in this case, corresponds to ‘an everyday problem in the perspective of practical knowledge’ and when the researcher endeavours to learn about ‘the real motivations behind actions’ (ibid., 5).

Preceded by an extensive literature review, the interview schedule for Interview 1 was developed comprising three sections focused on the everyday clothing use categories of Wear, Care and Repair (see Appendix D for details). Questions were critically reviewed through the lens of Social Practice Theory to ensure that everyday routines and practices were a significant focus of investigation. Two sustainable clothing studies previously undertaken in the UK were particularly influential regarding section development and question design for Interview 1; one related to consumer perceptions of sustainable clothing (Fisher et al., 2008) and one which examined clothing longevity perspectives (McLaren et al., 2017). The Problem-Centred Interview approach facilitates both general and specific exploration of the identified problem supporting the creation of comprehension. As explained by Witzel and Reiter (2012, 77) ‘the effort of generating material…starts with the opening question…storytelling is invited through various forms of general probing (e.g., specific questions, examples, thematic comparison) and ad-hoc
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questions…gradually disclosing the respondents view of the problem in an open and inductive way’. Döringer, (2021) describes the interview guide for Problem-Centred Interviewing as having a narrative beginning with specific follow-up questions and ad-hoc questions towards the end to provide a supporting thematic framework with the interviewer as an active, engaged listener. The broad opening interview question in this case related to clothing wear in which the participant was asked to ‘please describe a typical workday for you – as part of your daily routine how do you select what clothes to wear and get dressed for the day?’ This served to open up a relaxed narrative conversation on everyday clothing practices.

In the Problem-Centred data collection process, the researcher, as interviewer, is encouraged to integrate ‘dialogic and narrative forms of communication throughout the whole interview communication’ and to master ‘techniques of generating and enhancing comprehension’ such as mirroring back points, clarifying and even careful confrontations, perhaps using humour to clarify doubts (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 79, 80). Brinkmann and Kvale (2018, 62) further advise carefully preparing and ‘setting the interview stage’ to maximise potential for narration enabling the participant to build trust, talk freely and expose their feelings and experiences. The researcher, as a relatively early-stage investigator was conscious to prepare thoroughly for the interview process and undertook a Qualitative Research Methods Workshop led by Dr Richard de Visser at the University to specifically support interview skills development. In this manner, the many concurrent roles of interviewer as an active, alert, meaning-making, sensitive, observational and collaborative party in the interview process became more natural for the researcher and were practiced (Holstein and Gubrium, 2021). Advice in relation to interviewer qualifications (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2018) and interviewing skills (Denscombe, 2017) and interviewer training (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) was also helpful in preparing to undertake the fieldwork proper to maximum effect. Fifteen initial Problem-Centred Interviews were conducted for this research, spanning up to one hour and twenty minutes in length. In the case of this study, it was not necessary to specifically collect social background or demographic data during Interview 1 as this was targeted and self-recorded by participants in the text-based clothing diary tool.

Data Collection Stage 2 - Interview 2 – Wardrobe Interview

The second phase of data collection was more exploratory and innovative in design
comprising a wardrobe studies approach which consisted of a wardrobe interview; a clothing diary; a household tour and employed still photography to document visual artefacts of note during the process. The wardrobe interviews were once again problem-centred in approach and furthermore utilised a partial (sectional) wardrobe audit approach, adapted from Whitson-Smith (2017, 62), whereby the narrative conversation is based around a number of garments selected from the wardrobe enabling ‘insight into how the everyday personal circumstances of the participants lives affected their garment use behaviour’. This method was designed to enable an understanding of the specific individual factors that may have inspired or hampered sustainable clothing practices and how they might be fostered in future (Whitson-Smith, 2017). For this study, in each case, the second stage data collection took place in the participants own home, and in or adjacent to their wardrobe to enable easy selection of desired items for discussion, although it is possible to enact this method at a remove discussing pre-selected garments.

Interview proceedings commenced with opening remarks and social catch-up from the last meeting and then the researcher was shown to the wardrobe location and the discussion focused on clothing already owned. Ensuring that the participant felt comfortable having the researcher present in the sensitive and intimate nature of the setting was to the forefront at this point and the researcher was careful to reassure and to check in with each participant in this regard at an early stage in case of any concern. Participants were then required to audit their wardrobe and to self-select garments for discussion. The tailored interview schedule contained prompt questions designed to generate in-depth, narrative discussion on the rationale for selection of each item, details of the garment use lifecycle, garment longevity etc. The six prescribed garment categories under discussion in the wardrobe interview included: a garment worn for a long time; a garment with emotional attachment; a garment that is never worn; a garment worn frequently, a garment likely to be disposed of soon and a garment that has been repaired. This approach, as advised by Whitson-Smith (2017) is useful where it is not possible to access the entire wardrobe of research participants and instead several principal items are pre-selected for in-depth discussion and review depending on the focus of the research question. A detailed schedule for Interview 2 is available in Appendix E. The use of the physical garment as a discussion prompt was effective in generating a detailed and rich narrative on everyday clothing use post purchase for this sustainable focused enquiry and the selected garments often led the participants to disclose details regarding clothing wear, care and repair that had not been a feature of the initial interview.
The next element of the wardrobe studies interview centred on discussion prompted by the joint review of the clothing diary which participants had engaged in completing for a four-week period between interview one and two. The clothing diary (see Appendix F) was tailored to collect information on ‘the everyday life of clothes’ and required the participant to choose one garment currently worn and to record the garment details or ‘story’; information about garment use and care; as well as noting the number of hours the item was worn recently. Participants also recorded details of their demographic profile and background in a section at the beginning of the diary which could be completed in private, in their own time. An associated proforma template for laundry details or ‘wash diary’ was included whereby each time that the selected garment was laundered over the four-week period details were entered by the participant. This diary section collected information related to garment care such as the specific mode of washing; the number and type of other garments washed in the same load; the selected wash temperature, setting and cycle; the laundry products employed and procedure for drying. The clothing diary tool employed in this study was not devised by the researcher here but was originally designed and used in the UK for a study funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and the UK charity, WRAP which explored consumer perspectives of clothing longevity and practices of clothing use (Cooper et al., 2016; McLaren et al., 2016). That overall study adopted an exploratory mixed methods approach employing focus groups and clothing diaries. The clothing diaries were specifically devised as ‘an empirical tool for qualitative data collection in the specific research environment (participants own homes) and to gather insights into everyday garment wear and care practices’ (McLaren et al., 2016, 5). As an element of that study, participants firstly completed the clothing diary templates, in that case for an eight-week period, and then a ‘diary interview’ took place to investigate ‘clothing longevity and explore the social factors behind their clothing use behaviours (ibid., 5). Due to the aligned nature of the research focus, it was concluded that this clothing diary tool was suitably appropriate for use as part of this research. The researcher is appreciative that permission was sought and kindly received for use of the clothing diary template in this study (see Appendix G), email confirmation from McLaren, October 2017). The original diary template was reviewed and was deemed appropriate for use in its original format, with relevant branding added for this study.

At the end of Interview 1, each participant was provided with a hardcopy of the clothing diary, together with enough printed copies of the wash diary template, stored in a plastic
pocket which could be kept next to the washing machine for convenience over the intervening four-week period until interview two. The requirements of the diary were fully discussed with participants at that point and any questions were answered. As per the requirements of the diary, participants were encouraged to take still photographs of the wash and care cycle as specific points as prompted on the diary itself and to collect these photographs for passing later to the researcher. It was also acknowledged that participants could choose to video record the laundry process instead of keeping a text-based diary, if they so preferred, however, this option was not actually employed by any of the fifteen participants in this study. During the wardrobe interview, subsequent to the review of the six selected garments, a diary focused conversation or ‘diary interview’ took place utilising the completed four-week clothing diary as a prompt to illicit detailed narration of everyday clothing care and laundry practices. The completed diaries and associated still photographs were subsequently provided to the researcher as an additional artefact for later analysis. Within the scope of this research a crucial emphasis for the completed diaries was to use them as a tool to generate fuller discussion on everyday laundry and garment care practices as part of the second interview. There is potential for further analysis and the output of a joint publication focusing specifically on comparison of data collected using the clothing diary tool in the UK and Ireland, at a later stage.
Following, or in some cases aligned to, discussion of the clothing diary, and drawing on the work of Strengers (2010, 2011, 2013) regarding household energy practices, a household tour was employed, as a final element of the second interview, to further interrogate and collect data within the home on everyday laundry, clothing care and repair practices. Strengers (2010) advocates for the benefits of supplementing interviews with household tours which are utilised in this manner as a prompt for participant memories and also to facilitate observation of the material dimensions of practices and observation of skilful performances of practices within households. Household tours essentially involve the participant taking the researcher around their homes and demonstrating sites of interest and specific materials or equipment normally involved in the performance of the practices in focus, for example, in this case, laundry sorting, washing machines and dryers, laundry products and clothes lines or clothes drying locations. Narrative data from the household tour component of the wardrobe study was captured on the second interview audio recording, as well as through still photography captured during the walk along tour.
Images generated specifically for a research study by either the researcher or the research participants, also known as ‘created’ images, can effectively document ‘events, people, cultures, and environments’ within the research process (Denscombe, 2021, 278, 279). The work of Rose (2016) gained valuable epistemological currency for a broad range of visual research approaches in research emphasising the significance of appreciating the ‘talk’ generated between the image and the subject under review and appreciating how valuable contemporary knowledge can be generated via visual methods. Emmison (2021) recently explored the exponential growth in use of visual research approaches in social science research and categorises four common types: researcher produced visual materials; analysis of existing materials; use of video technology and participant-centred approaches. The initial and latter types of visual material were both employed in this study (researcher produced images taken in the wardrobe interviews and participants actively involved in production of photographic images during the period between interviews to support documentation of everyday laundry practices in the clothing diary). When capturing visual data via still photographs, the researcher was very mindful to maintain the anonymity and personal privacy of participants and to assure participants, both in advance and at the time of the interview, that the focus was on everyday clothing use practices and not on individuals. Furthermore, the researcher ensured to clarify that it was completely unnecessary for participants to ‘tidy up’ in advance of the household tour. Permission for data collection by visual methods was granted in advance and was reconfirmed again during each interview, to ensure full participant satisfaction before proceeding, in each case.

Succeeding each of the in-person interviews, the researcher, as the sole interviewer, undertook to record in writing field notes to complement the audio recordings and other artefacts collected, and to document some of the contextual and non-verbal contexts observed by the interviewer in each case (following the conventions of Flick, 2018 and Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018). This process of producing a ‘postscript’ is considered a valued part of the Problem-Centred Interview process and can include aspects related to before, during and after the interview conversation, notes from the conversation, notes on the context and atmosphere as well as background information on the process or relationships involved (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 95). Postscripts in this research were kept intentionally brief due to the large volume of data already generated for each case and so as to ensure their ease of usefulness subsequently. Initial data analysis also commenced intuitively during the interviews and from this postscript point on as the researcher
reflected on interview comments, wrote up, reviewed and reflected on fieldnotes and expanded raw notes post interview with initial interpretations and emergent themes documented for later reference.

Each interview was digitally recorded with permission and was later transcribed verbatim and stored digitally alongside associated diary entries and still photographs to facilitate detailed case and cross case review and analysis. The researcher had initially employed the use of NVivo, Version 11 Pro for the purpose of transcription and associated storage of case data successfully in analysis at the complete pilot stage however, due to the time lag between the pilot and data collection proper and the time pressures of the researcher concurrently working as a full-time academic, it was felt that unfortunately there was insufficient time to devote to developing competency and full functionality of the software at that point and consequently transcription took place using Microsoft Office Word. Flick (2018, 438) acknowledges that in regard to transcription ‘a standard has not yet been established’ following review of the literature advice it was decided to transcribe verbatim and as authentically as possible but without necessity to focus on detailed linguistic conventions as the focus of analysis here is on the embedded clothing use practices and behaviours not on conversational analysis (Witzel and Reiter, 2021). As per data protection good practice (Denscombe, 2018), each transcript was assigned an anonymous code sequentially recognising the generational group the participant was part of and their interview sequence, e.g., YA1, PwYC1 or OA1 and so on. Data transcription, processing and organisation commenced as soon as possible after fieldwork process began in order that new understandings gleaned could feedback into, improve and refine the ongoing data collection. Collected material was carefully categorised and stored according to the given generational group, participant, interview category and alongside all aligned artefacts (still photographs from researcher/participant, text-based diaries etc.). It was aimed to transcribe interview one during the four-week interval period when the participant was completing the clothing diary and in advance of interview two. Where this transcription timeline was not achieved, the researcher reviewed the audio file and postscript notes in advance of interview two to become familiar again with the initial data and to prepare for the next stage. Transcription by the sole researcher of 30 in-depth interviews in this nature required a significant time investment, estimated at three days per interview or up to ninety days total. While this was a significant time investment, the process of self-transcription benefited the subsequent data analysis process as it enabled development of intimate familiarisation with the data in each case.
3.5 Data Analysis

The fieldwork undertaken in two stages as described above, produced a large volume of data within fifteen cases, across three generational groups. Unhelpfully, but understandably, neither the practice-theoretical perspective (Nicolini, 2012; Gherardi, 2012; Shove et al., 2012) nor the wardrobe studies literature (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017) lay out a definitive, ideal data analysis approach. Likewise, Witzel and Reiter (2012, 99) also recognise that ‘the interpretative paradigm does not suggest a method of choice for the analysis of interview data’ from the Problem-Centred orientation. Nonetheless, to make sense of the multitudinous data collected, detailed interpretation and classification of both the linguistic and visual material was needed, preferably respecting all the elements incorporated in the innovative design of this study (Flick, 2018). Following wide consultation of qualitative data analysis literature, the core basis of the data analysis duly followed the three-phase strategy directed by Witzel and Reiter (2012) as the interviews were already carried out in line with the Problem-Centred method. Essentially, the three phases or steps of analysis followed were:

(i) Basic coding and reconstruction of pre-interpretations,
(ii) Vertical analysis and interpretation,
(iii) Horizontal analysis and interpretation (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 102).

This selected analysis procedure was further supported with valuable insights from other qualitative approaches such as; coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990); analysing images (Denscombe, 2018; Rose, 2016); zooming in and out (Nicolini, 2010) and the constant comparative method (Glaser, 1965; Creswell, 2007).

Specifically, the analysis process undertaken involved inductive and deductive manual coding of data, in-depth vertical assessment across all data sources, leading to the construction of fifteen detailed individual cases and horizontal cross-case analysis, synthesis, and representation of the findings considering research questions and key theoretical lenses. At each of the above stages data was examined and re-examined regularly relative to several different theoretical lenses (clothing wear, care and repair practices; social practice-theoretical perspective scrutinising inherent meanings, materials and competencies (Shove et al., 2012); generational perspectives) to uncover participants everyday clothing consumption practices, actions and routines and the inherent implications for sustainable consumption. The supplementing, cross-
referencing and meticulous triangulation of data from varied sources drew together rich material from the disparate innovative wardrobe studies approaches employed (including Problem-Centred initial and Wardrobe interviews and still photographs of garments selected; text-based clothing diaries and related participant photographs; household tour transcripts and related images). Appendix H provides an example of the range of data pieced together per participant for one sample participant from each of the three generational groups (i.e., Young Adult 1, YA1; Parents with Young Children 1, PwYC1 and Older Adults 1, OA1).

While the value of multimethod qualitative approaches is widely recognised (Mik-Meyer, 2021; Silvermann, 2021; Denscombe, 2018), with regard to visual images, a rich aspect of the data collection in this study, it is acknowledged in the literature that ‘genuine analytical procedures that directly relate to images still remain to be developed’ (Flick, 2018, 361). Nonetheless, this prevalence in the use of visual methodologies as a valued aspect of social science research is still growing exponentially (Emmison, 2021; Pink 2012b) and images are respected as a valuable medium for analysing social issues (Flick, 2018), among other benefits. One data analysis approach, advised by Flick (2018), is the regarding and reading of visual images as texts, while Berger (cited in Flick, 2018) recommended that the way we see an image depends on the perspective of the viewer and their theoretical frame. Rose (2016) details a broader range of analysis approaches appropriate for visual research methods including compositional interpretation; content and cultural analysis; semiology, psychoanalytical analysis and discourse analysis some of which are quite complex in application and perhaps best suited to visual cultural or media studies research. The researcher here opted to follow the procedure for analysis of image-based data (Denscombe, 2018) which is recommend aligning closely with general processes for qualitative data analysis and then to consider four elements; focusing first on the image; considering the producer of the image and their intentions; considering the viewer and lastly exploring the context in which the image was produced in each case.

As the data analysis process progressed and particularly during the third phase of horizontal analysis when the amount of analysis seemed to be exponentially increasing at some points, the spiral data analysis approach (Creswell, 2007, 151) (see Figure 5 below), as well as the concept of data ‘winnowing’ (Wolcott, 1994) were effectively employed and returned to by the researcher. Both these methods served to constantly
revise and review perspectives on significant data, to re-analyse cases in light of new ideas developing and to avoid researcher fatigue and frustration with the complex and iterative stages of the ‘contour’ analytical process. Furthermore, as this PhD involved the publication of several peer-reviewed papers the timelines, aims and themes for each of the publications, along with pertinent feedback from the associated peer-review process for each one inevitably also permeated, shaped, and focused the on-going data analysis process. Obviously, as the word threshold for published articles was quite constricting in each case, the researcher found the use of memoing (Flick, 2018; Strauss and Corbin, 1990) valuable to document specific impressions, questions, ideas and to help refine and ‘conceptualise the data in narrative form…to advance more abstract levels of theorising’ (Flick, 2018, 453).

Figure 5. The Data Analysis Spiral (Creswell, 2007, 151).

3.6 Ethical Considerations in this Study

Regardless of the research approach selected, inevitably, ethical issue will arise and will require careful consideration in the course of any qualitative research study (Flick, 2018; Creswell, 2007). Silverman (2021) corresponds that in qualitative research, where the emphasis is on conducting research focused within the participants lifeworld, ethical matters require particularly comprehensive consideration, and even more so when the
research is situated within participants private lifeworld, in their own home (Hall, 2010, 2009). As the researcher is aware, ethical quandaries are somewhat subjective and at times difficult to definitively resolve (Flick, 2018). The route to ethical clearance in this study proved to be quite complex and involved. Principally, reservations arose due to the intimate setting of the proposed research, in this case located within the home particularly in participants bedrooms which initially posed some significant obstructions from the perspective of the ethical review committee. Ultimately, this study received full ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee, University of Galway, on the 20th December 2017 following initial provisional ethical approval being granted on the 14th September 2017 and further more specific follow-up clarifications being provided. The granting of approval from the University’s Research Ethics Committee ensures that the researcher/s involved in empirical studies have fully and widely considered all relevant potential ethical issues and that they are committed to comply with the highest possible standards in their research endeavours. As ethical considerations were central to the tailored design of this study, further details of the core ethical concerns and considerations relevant for this specific research process are detailed in the below section, focusing lastly on the much-interrogated point of researcher security when undertaking wardrobe studies in the intimate household setting.

### 3.6.1 Informed consent

In gaining support from participants to become involved in a research study, it is advised to clearly set out the purpose of the research and cautioned not to engage in ambiguity about the nature of the research (Creswell, 2017; Witzel and Reiter, 2012). The researcher fully considered this caution to ensure compliance as in this case participants were openly recruited for a study on everyday clothing use and care and not explicitly for a sustainable consumption focused investigation. Ultimately, the researcher and Committee were satisfied that with regard to informed consent all participants fully appreciated and potential risks and benefits to involvement in the study in the broad research area of everyday clothing use and that they freely and voluntarily agreed to involvement in the research appreciating the commitment and requirements (Flick, 2018).

Consent was freely and consciously given by the sample participants on signing the study Consent Form (Appendix I) following review of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix J) and clarification of any further queries by the researcher. The Participant
Information Sheet (Clothing Use Study Information Letter) provided detailed information outlining the research objectives and methods of enquiry written in clear and accessible language with accompanying images. It was very important in this study to outline details regarding the specific fieldwork requirements pertinent to wardrobe studies, including particularly the wardrobe audit, household tour elements. In the experience of the researcher, participants here were genuinely intrigued by the innovative fieldwork approaches proposed and were genuinely enthusiastic to participate. In instances where participants were purposefully recruited in person (particularly in the case of participants for both PwYC and OA generational groups, as mainly occurred during local community group meetings) this process enabled an initial introductory conversation and chance to reassure participants and answer their queries which was very helpful. In the case of Young Adult participants this initial ‘conversation’ was more likely to take place virtually, which did not appear to pose a challenge to those digitally native participants. Given that the research area/topic was not of a sensitive nature, that all of the participants in this research were competent to provide self-consent and were over eighteen years old and not considered specifically vulnerable groups, informed consent procedures were deemed sufficiently appropriate.

Researchers in the qualitative research paradigm are cautioned and urged to be woke to and fully appreciative of the considerable vulnerabilities of research participants and the unquestionable power dynamics at play in the research context and of the researcher commitment needed to mitigate this in so far as possible with true and full informed consent (Tisdale, 2003). In this regard, additional protective measures undertaken included: participants were informed in writing in all consent documents that their participation could be withdrawn at any stage during the process with no consequences; contact details of the researcher and the research supervisor were provided along with that of the Research Ethics Committee should the participants like further information or have any additional queries; Once the participant received all the relevant information, they were further afforded up to two weeks to fully consider their participation in the project; the researcher continued to check with participants throughout that consent remained valid at each point of contact and stage of the fieldwork.

3.6.2 Participant wellbeing

Denscombe (2018) recommends consideration of three aspects related to participant
The University Research Ethics Committee Guidance Notes (NUIG, 2016) concur with the breadth of these three considerations denoting personal harm as social harm. In the case of this research, given that the research field is not of a sensitive nature and the documented processes of informed consent (as outlined above) was in place, it was considered that the risks to participant’s wellbeing and safety were minimal.

Participant wellbeing includes matters related to avoidance of harm for those involved in the research (Flick, 2018) but also importantly, involves a commitment by the researcher to ensure that participants are justly and fairly represented in the analysis of data and consequent study write up. Such fair representation can include for example, a conscious commitment that interpretations be fully grounded in the data and that no personal judgments are levelled at participants regarding for example, social status, personality nor unfair, socially embarrassing comparisons made etc. (flick, 2018). Additionally, cultivating a strong level of reflexivity on the behalf of the interpretive-oriented researcher is critical in establishing trust with research participants and in negotiating the often uneven roles inherent between interviewer and interviewee during the research process (Creswell and Miller, 2000). In this regard, the researcher was mindful to engage in a genuine, honest, and meaningful manner with volunteer participants, giving freely of their time to support the research being undertaken.

Finally, in this regard, while conducting the fieldwork, the researcher was at all times mindful to gauge the level of participant fatigue and to attend to their wellbeing as specifically required. Due to the in-depth nature of the narrative data collection and the potential for this to span several hours, the researcher was conscious to guard against participant fatigue in pacing the interview appropriately, offering and incorporating time for comfort and stretch breaks during the data collection and conscious that the researcher was usually in the position of being a guest visitor in the participants home and, on a practical level, bringing along a small snack / home-baked items to easily facilitate a coffee break. Considering the clothing diary element, while participants were encouraged to partake for the four-week period intervening the interviews, in recognition of the commitment involved, if the participant expressed fatigue in this regard, they were offered the option to record practices over a shorter diary period.
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3.6.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants is a core ethical concern in social science research (Silverman, 2021; Denscombe, 2018; Creswell, 2007). A number of factors were relevant in the enactment and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity in this study:

- Confidentially, in the manner of protection of the participants identity was enacted by assigning each member of the sample group a numbered code in place of their name. This was assigned to all forms of data gathered and personally signed consent forms were securely stored separately to other forms of data collected.

- Research participants were informed from the outset of the nature of the research as part of a PhD study and were assured that all information provided was confidential to the study and would not be divulged except in legitimate means specifically for study data presentation.

- The researcher committed to ensure that all relevant data protection measures be enacted to the highest standards ensuring the confidentially, integrity and security of stored information and files as per the Acts and Regulations outlined in the University Data Protection Policy. A query arose in regard to the appropriateness of retention of data in the case of withdrawn participants during the Research Ethics Committee provisional approval process. This led to the procedure being further clarified in the researcher’s response with confirmation that participants could withdraw without impact from the study at any point and that data collected up to that point would not, in that instance, be employed.

- A further specific query arose from the Research Ethics Committee regarding the type of data to be collected via video recording. At the initial point of application for ethical approval it was anticipated and planned that video recording would be utilised during the wardrobe interview to document visual evidence of clothing items and artefacts discussed, and during the household tour aspect to show the researcher how and where participants cared for their clothes. Video recording was proposed as an alternative to the use of both audio recording and photography which was anticipated as potentially onerous and encumbering for the researcher to use
dually while also conducting the interview. Self-video recording by participants as an alternative to documenting the clothing diary in written form was also proposed. Both aspects did ultimately receive ethical approval however, subsequently, neither were in fact enacted. Post the complete pilot it was decided to omit the use of video recording in preference to audio recording and still photographs for straightforwardness and furthermore, all participants voluntarily opted for text-based diary entries, which proved more straightforward in terms of both informed consent and data storage.

- Legal limits of data confidentially were plainly notified to participants i.e., the confidentially of information cannot be entirely guaranteed in all circumstances and can only be protected within the limits of the law. The researcher remained au fait with circumstances in which information gleaned may need to be disclosed and specific sectoral guidelines re criminal behaviour and child protection, as pertinent in undertaking fieldwork in private households.

- Data collected during the study was stored on a secure, password-protected drive on a computer and / or in a locked cabinet which only the researcher can access – as per outlined in the Universities Code of Good Practice in Research and Data Retention Policies. Stored files were given an administrator password and only the researcher had access.

### 3.6.4 Specific ethical considerations for wardrobe studies

In the initial Research Ethical Application for this study, the planned research design and methodological approach, including wardrobe studies aspect were detailed. As the wardrobe interview aspect was proposed to take place in participants own homes, the standardised Geography Fieldwork Risk Assessment Staff Form (NUIG, 2016) was referenced, and the form was included in the application appendices. However, in the granting of provisional approval the REC adjudicated that the fieldwork form provided did not adequately meet the risks to the researcher in entering ‘more private areas of the participants’ homes (e.g., the bedroom) and further proposed that the researcher be accompanied ‘due to the sensitive nature of data collection (e.g., entering a participant’s bedroom)’ (NUIG REC Response, 2017, see Appendix K). While highlighting how innovative the methodological approach is, this feedback certainly posed significant challenge to the feasibility and practicability of undertaking the wardrobe studies aspect.
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of the proposed research, a core element of the research design. Time was invested in extensively researching the wardrobe studies approach and ethical implications therein. A very useful support was communication from Woodward (see Appendix L), a UK academic who had extensively carried out wardrobe studies research (2017; 2016; 2015; 2007; 2001) who confirmed that she ‘never had to be accompanied in the interviews’ and indeed felt that ‘being accompanied might be less ethical, as this may be intimidating to research participants’. This information, together with the development of more detailed Procedures for maintaining contact during fieldwork (adapted Loughborough University Guidance notes (nd) and Social Research Association, UK, Code of Practice for the Safety of Social Researchers, 2001) supported a detailed feedback letter to the REC (see Appendix M) and ultimately secured the granting of full ethical approval for the research (Ref: 17-Sep-06, Appendix N). As suggested by the ethical approach challenges outlined above the methodological design and specific approaches employed in this research can yet be considered novel and unique within geographical research and hence it was the core focus of a recently published Area paper, dedicated to discussion of methods (see Article 1).

3.7 Positionality: Reflecting on the Research Process

3.7.1 Autoethnography of the researcher

As a qualitative, interpretivist, researcher my personal positionality is completely unique. Still, my individual identity cannot be entirely isolated from this research study and inexorably impacts on the process to some degree. Considering the focus of this study and its theoretical underpinnings, my positionality as the researcher was very influential and consequently, it is imperative that I ensure to remain reflexive vis-à-vis my incoming and evolving beliefs and experiences, and fully mindful of my (potential) impact on the research. As I work to investigate, debate, analyse, interpret, and write, I am not separate from this study, rather, in the perspective of Dwyer and Buckle (2009, 61) I am ‘firmly in all aspects of the research process and essential to it’. Hence, it is critical that I fully extricate my incoming values and beliefs as influential in the present research context and accordingly, important as part of this thesis, to articulate my positionality as it unquestionably frames and permeates the study.

Many factors have been instrumental in my route to this research, not least my completion of an undergraduate degree in home economics which, following a period
teaching at post primary level, lead to a role as Lecturer in Home Economics, mainly in the specific sub-disciplinary areas of Textiles, Fashion and Design and Family Resource Management and, latterly during this PhD study period, to a post as Head of School of Home Economics. The day-to-day academic role was extremely fulfilling, both lecturing in home economics and leading students in textiles, fashion and design laboratory sessions focused on both theoretical and practical skills development. As predominantly initial teacher education students of home economics, many of these pre-service teachers will in turn later pass sewing, craft and design skills on to their own post primary students. Still, the experience raised questions within me about the apparently diminishing level of incoming practical sewing skills, scant awareness of clothing materiality and burgeoning acceptability of the disposability of fashion amongst my students, and even wider questions about how this was all manifesting in wider contemporary society. My academic practice, and professional membership of the International Federation for Home Economics (IFHE), opened up opportunities for me to become involved in conferences, projects and research collaboration with colleagues, nationally and internationally and to gain broader, deeper and global awareness of sustainable consumption. It became obvious to me that while some aspects of home economics (e.g., food-energy-water nexus) were high on the agenda for research, review and consideration regarding sustainable consumption impact, others were, as yet not (fashion, textiles and clothing). Furthermore, my active involvement in the national Ubuntu Network (a community of educators working to support integration of Global Citizenship Education in post primary initial teacher education) and internationally in the Partnership for Education and Research About Responsible Living (a Network of educators and researchers from over 140 institutions globally work on aspects of education for sustainable consumption, consumer citizenship, sustainable lifestyles) led to research engagement in areas of sustainability, sustainable consumption and Education for Sustainable Development, and to advancement of my research skills and confidence. Working on such inter and transdisciplinary research projects enabled me to both explore effective, holistic, and novel pedagogical approaches to embedding sustainable consumption in home economics education (c.f. for example, Maguire and Mc Cloat, 2017; Maguire et al. 2013) and in turn to experiment with employing such ideas in practice with my students and researching outcomes; with varying degrees of impact and interest for sustainability. Concurrently, such exposure to international colleagues and varied pedagogic practices opened my eyes wide to the impactful contributions of colleagues regarding the potential of the
discipline to support sustainability transitions globally (IFHE, 2008; Dewhurst and Pendergast, 2011; Turki, 2012a, 2015; Lorek and Whalen, 2012; Mberengwa and Mthombeni, 2012; Otake et al., 2012; Powell and Renwick, 2012; Lorek, 2015) and specifically with regard to clothing sustainability (Norum, 2013). However, there was also a developing realisation that often ‘the field is neither well understood nor widely recognised’ (Nickols and Kay, 2015, 2) for its potential and impact, an ideological issue which remains under debate still to this day (Mc Gregor, 2022).

Two journal articles I read in early 2016 particularly prompted the further development of my initial questions and thoughts around sustainable clothing consumption, manifesting into the seeking out of an academic engaged in cutting-edge research the field of sustainable consumption for some initial conversations (now gratefully my research supervisor) and ultimately, to further action in the formulation of a firm PhD proposal. The first article, arising from the combined fields of sociology and geography (Shove and Walker, 2010, 471), explored the ‘distinctive challenges of understanding transitions in practice and of governing these so as to engender more sustainable ways of life’. This was my first introduction to Social Practice Theory as a way of exploring routines of daily life and of the potential to intervene deliberately and positively to induce changes in practices engendering more sustainable ways of living. It was a paradigm shifting, ‘Aha!’ moment when I considered, through the eyes of a home economist, the potential that a practice-theoretical lens could offer the discipline and wondered why this was the first time I was meeting these concepts (c.f. Wahlen and Dubuisson-Quellier, 2018, published later). The second significant paper (Gill et al., 2016, 34, 35) specifically focused on sustainable clothing consumption, describing research set in Western Australia which once again applied a practice-oriented perspective to examine, in this instance, the ‘use phase’ of clothing consumption from a design and material culture perspective and the potential opportunities therein ‘for transition to sustainability in the spectrum of clothing use’. Although not discipline explicit to home economics and applying diverse methodological approaches, what was of great interest to me was the fact that the focus, in both pieces of research, was on mundane, ‘everyday micro-practices’ (ibid., 33). Furthermore, the latter research was set specifically within use phase of clothing which I had also been pondering in my own practice, although this was the first instance where I noted that precise terminology used to describe the clothing ‘wearing’ stage. I was enthused by the parallels I could immediately draw between these works and the discipline of home economics where the
recognition of everyday life in families and households is held as a significant quadrant of our practice (IFHE, 2008; Vaines, 2004) well as, by a new body of aligned interdisciplinary literature opening up to me.

As the study developed, it is important to also acknowledge the influence of innovative, contemporary Irish and pan-European social science consumption research on-going at the same time, particularly due to the involvement in this work of my supervisor, Professor Frances Fahy, and thus the knowledge transfer that arose as the supervision process progressed (c.f. Davies et al., 2015; Fahy, 2022). This consumption focused research was overall influential on my thinking in two ways: firstly, thinking about the type of innovative and novel research methods being employed was fascinating in terms of piquing interest and developing awareness of potential methodological approaches to contemporary social since research at an early stage in this study. Secondly, the work exposed me directly to cutting-edge, interdisciplinary, transformative, everyday practices and household consumption based empirical research being presently undertaken by consumption scholars, human geographers and sociologists which heretofore had not been obvious, nor within my field of reference. As a home economist I had somewhat conflicted feelings when reading early discoveries of such research; on the one hand I was absorbed by the type of innovative and pioneering research on domestic consumption practices taking place within Ireland, and on the other hand I was exasperated that the discipline home economics, as a discipline centrally situated in the domestic household, and supporting development of quality of life amongst individuals and families, had no role to play and that researchers from the field of home economics had not/were not contributing to such published work (c.f. Muster, 2013; Nickols and Kay, 2015). I questioned why home economists were not collaborating in such research? And indeed consequently, why the discipline was not benefiting from receipt of associated largescale funding and high-level publication profiles? I realised that the answer was evidently that no Irish home economist was undertaking and publishing research directly in the areas of sustainable household consumption or everyday life with most published research instead centred on the academic discipline and curricular area aspects of the field and profession. I reassessed and pondered, if the everyday household concept/paradigm/aspect is so core to our profession (IFHE, 2008), what exactly are home economists contributing to contemporary discussions? I reflected on my involvement to date with IFHE colleagues and searched for answers amongst wider international home economics voices, finding the thinking of Mc Gregor (2012) a very
useful guide, and a link to other European home economists who had also considered such questions (Von Schweitzer, 2006; Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008; Turkki, 1999; 2015). In essence, this bourgeoning consciousness led to augment my motivation, in a ‘do-it-yourself’ manner, for involvement in contemporary, Irish, research aligned to everyday practices and household sustainable consumption matters. Remarkably, at the point when I initially committed to formally register for PhD studies, no home economics discipline specific level 10 programmes were on offer in Ireland. Nonetheless, with its focus on both society and the environment, Geography proved a natural fit for this research and for me as a researcher. Candidly, the decision to register for a PhD in geography was largely by virtue of my initial conversations with Professor Fahy; emerging as a direct result of her foresight, enthusiasm, and interest to work with me on this interdisciplinary project and her vast experience and excellence in the field of environmental geography and sustainable consumption.

Although somewhat aware from the outset, it was only during the course of this research; perhaps somewhere between development of the research design and early interactions with participants in the field, that it coalesced fully for me that my interest in everyday clothing practices, arose not only from my professional role as a home economist but, was innate in me from a much earlier life stage. I have always loved clothing, fashion, and style. My affinity, appreciation and creativity in this regard emerges in multiple ways (in clothing acquisition and selection; in novel everyday clothing combination and wear; and also, via garment design, creation and upcycling) and is, I now realise, a vital form of my individual self-expression and indeed personality, as developed from early childhood. As I undertook the pilot study, it was impossible to participate in wardrobe studies interviews and audits without also reflecting on my personal wardrobe, which is admittedly vast and varied! Newer items purchased or acquired are certainly more fully and entirely considered now as a direct result of this on-going research study. Older items sit comfortably amongst the new and are still regularly worn and appreciated as my shape has been largely consistent, thus contributing to the overall breadth of items. Many garments, I now realise, hold strong emotional connections and inspire fond memories of occasions, events, and people; but are they worn often enough to retain? It is particularly thought provoking for me that items sourced inexpensively, second-hand or acquired from others (and often upcycled in the process) are as much loved, treasured and regarded as those that were new or expensive as initially purchased. I must contend that there are some stored but currently unworn items, a negative hoarding of recyclable
materials from a sustainability perspective, which perhaps deserves re-evaluation in light of my newfound knowledge about the wellbeing benefits attributable to a sufficiency wardrobe?

Furthermore, as I continue to investigate and review clothing use literature, across a multitude of disciplines, I have come to understand that I have in fact been inherently and instinctively engaging in many sustainable practices in everyday clothing use from an early age. This was, I also appreciate more fully now, mainly influenced and prompted by my mother, a fellow fashion lover and competent dressmaker; creatively and innovatively (and I imagine, indispensably) applying her sewing skills frequently, and sensibly minimising unnecessary laundry burdens where possible as a homemaker and mother to six, within a tight budget. My mother was, and remains, often responsible for undertaking all types of repairs, alterations, and upcycling of garments for extended family members, neighbours, and acquaintances, with such items frequently to be found in a bundle near the sewing machine awaiting her expert attention. Reflecting on user rationales for extending the life of such garments, I offer that my interest in the generational profiles and motivations of those initiating lifecycle extension may have been significant in contributing to the three generational group sample selection in this research, rather than selection of other approaches initially considered possible amongst samples of college students with whom I was directly involved. It is furthermore noteworthy that during this PhD research, since its initiation in 2016, there has been an obvious upsurge in public engagement and awareness of clothing consumption as an aspect of everyday sustainability and that mainstream media reporting of the issue has dramatically increased; an important observation in terms of echoing the socio-cultural context for this on-going research.

The researcher reflexivity in this section is presented with a consciousness that a researcher’s unique and complex mix of cultural, political, and social origins frames both their life view and their position in the world. This may consequently influence how the research process is orchestrated, the research participants’ perceptions of the researcher and ultimately, how the research outcomes and knowledge are constructed (Holmes, 2021) and it is therefore critical to foreground this during the research process.

3.7.2 Interdisciplinarity – combined wisdom and understandings

‘A commitment to interdisciplinarity is often seen as a necessary precondition for
successful sustainability research’ however, ‘it is much less clear what this type of research is expected to look like and what ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations it is supposed to rest upon’ (Fahy and Rau, 2013, 11). This PhD research study spans the disciplines of Geography, Sustainable Consumption and Home Economics as well as drawing on aspects of Fashion, Design, Visual Culture, Social Sciences, Education and wider to explore the active use phase of clothing consumption in Ireland through a complex intergenerational data set generated using in-depth Problem-Centred Interviews and wardrobe studies. Schmidt (2021) proposes that a core intention of interdisciplinary research ‘is to bridge different disciplines, which leads to a certain level of integration and even to synthesis or unification’. However beneficial, undoubtedly efforts at disciplinary combination, joined-up practice, and holism, can pose ‘significant hidden barriers…many of which only become visible during the actual research process’ (Fahy and Rau, 2013, 11). In the case of this study the researcher was challenged at points in attempting to draw together the disparate fields involved while maintaining due regard for the varied and fundamental ontological, epistemological, and methodological divergences. As the research progressed and the researcher gained assurance, there emerged a clarity of focus on several unifying threads which supported the piecing and stitching together of the constituent interdisciplinary fields and uniting them in the goal of seeking improved sustainability transitions. The researcher proposes everyday geographies and clothing use phase as the critical nexus points for the research with an overarching practice-theoretical lens employed as a valuable theoretical standpoint. Employing theories of practices in this manner and deeply exploring users’ everyday interactions with clothing facilitated a deeper understanding and a more nuanced and holistic view of everyday wearer garment relationships, cultures, rituals, behaviours and practices post purchase from many angles. At times when the threads were indistinct, ambiguous, or even, dangerously entangled, genuine reflexivity was required on the part of the researcher with cognisance to each identified key nexus point, the original research aims and the fundamental motives of the researcher, with the innate interdisciplinary positioning often negotiated and re-negotiated, aligned, and re-aligned. Detailed discussion with the research supervisor and supervisory team also frequently served to set the path clear again.

Schmidt (2021, 24) contends that ‘the value associated with interdisciplinarity is one that is sense-making’ boundaries are dispensed with, and fundamental divergences overcome for the greater good. From the researcher’s perspective, this interdisciplinary
study has enabled development of a broader and deeper research skillset across fields by synthesising and selecting from a diverse range of potential methodological approaches to best suit the inquiry focus. The research has necessitated the connecting, intersecting, and integrating of ideas, concepts, and methods from across independent social science and human geography disciplines to foster new knowledge on everyday clothing consumption and reveal potential for improved sustainability transitions and new understandings and potential across each of the integrated fields.

3.7.3 Prior knowledge and the data collection process

The curiosity of the researcher provides an initial framework and reference point for any research study, nevertheless, it is recommended that at an early point, the researchers prior knowledge must be ‘disclosed and explicated’ (Witzel and Reiter, 2012, 24). This enables the researcher, and indeed the audience, to appreciate the circumstances under which actions and decisions are made and enables a truer appreciation of the study interpretations and outcomes. Failing to do so would potentially diminish the overall learning as well as the capacity for appreciation of new knowledge created. Nonetheless, it is also recognised that many researchers struggle in doing so with what is described as the ‘Dr Jekyll- Mr Hyde’ syndrome. This is syndrome whereby one is torn between attempting to achieve research best practice in maintaining impartiality and in applying valuable prior knowledge for the benefit of the overall study; a challenging dilemma to negotiate for the researcher (ibid.). Differing forms of prior knowledge are distinguished (e.g., everyday, contextual, research and sensitising) and each is recognised as needing to be managed and balanced throughout the research process (ibid.) with some literature alternatively advising ‘bracketing off’ or ‘suspending’ incoming knowledge as the best approach (Denscombe, 2021, 135).

Ultimately, validity is improved when the researcher consciously delves into and brings forth their incoming conceptions and predispositions as carried forward into the research and when the researcher consciously decides ‘how and in what way his or her personal understandings will be introduced into the study’ (Creswell, 2007, 62). The previous sections in this chapter have attempted to meet this advisement; foregrounding prior knowledge and positioning, to lay aside biases and make clear attempts to balance out their impact.
3.7.4 Limitations of the methodological approaches employed

No study is without limitations and throughout the next three chapters, encompassing the three published papers, the limitations of the various approaches employed are discussed. In the concluding chapter the topic of limitations is revisited and critical reflections on the overall study are considered.

3.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 has been concentrated on communicating details of the methodological design and approach employed in this research. Each of the fifteen participants across three generational groups in the sample undertook an initial Problem-Centred Interview, followed by an in-depth wardrobe interview including wardrobe audit, household tour, clothing diary keeping with still photographs taken to augment data collection. This innovative design was devised in line with the research focus on everyday clothing use practices and applying a practice-theoretical lens. Some of the principal ethical considerations arising were detailed as well as some of the main benefits and limitations of the overall methodological approach. The subsequent sections of this thesis detail the three published articles arising from the research study and discuss the overall research findings and the implications arising therefrom for the wider sustainable consumption policy agenda.
Chapter 4: Article 1


Figure 6. Article 1 Cover page
Abstract

Everyday household sustainability challenges and dilemmas, particularly related to consumption of domestic resources energy, water, and food, are already an important focus in contemporary geographical inquiry. This paper seeks to advance the perspective by exploring a less obvious aspect: everyday fashion consumption practices specifically in the use phase of clothing. Whereas research on clothing sustainability impact has largely pursued production, acquisition, and divestment, here the spotlight is on the active everyday use of clothing already owned. Data was gathered in Ireland using wardrobe studies, a range of visual, verbal, and aural methodological approaches employed to uncover knowledge about wardrobe contents, user practices, cultures, and experiences, along with overarching systems. A central aim of the paper is to explore what geography can learn from wardrobe studies methodologies, thereby opening new opportunities to investigate and to generate valuable data regarding sustainable consumption in both the home and the wardrobe. Consequent to a critical review of current geographical work concerning the sustainability implications of clothing use and an examination of existing research on the geographical dimensions of household sustainability, the paper presents some key ways in which wardrobe studies may be more widely employed by geographers as an effective research method to reframe, analyse, and appreciate the complexities of everyday actions in the clothing use phase.

Keywords

Clothing Use Phase, Fashion Consumption, Ireland, Reframing, Social Practice Theory, Wardrobe Studies
4.1 Introduction: Clothing, Households, and Geographic Research

Valuing and extending the everyday active use phase of clothing is particularly critical in today’s contemporary consumer society, when frequently relationships between users and material objects have become increasingly more transitory and disposable. A focus on the “everyday” as a way of conceptualising the places and spaces in which we live has long been a valuable lens for geographic inquiry (Pred, 1981). Yet, the everyday use phase of the clothing lifecycle has only recently come into focus as a “critical fulcrum across which more sustainable practices might be leveraged” (Gill et al., 2016, p. 33). This paper documents the development and application of wardrobe studies as a methodological approach employed to generate a richly layered intergenerational dataset on everyday fashion consumption practices. A significant feature of the discussion is a consideration of how geographers can customise and apply wardrobe studies methodologies to investigate everyday clothing use practices and wider inquiry. While representing the potentiality of these approaches in future geographical research, empirical data, and fieldwork regarding clothing use phase, as conducted in 2019 in Ireland, are offered to illustrate. The complexities and relationalities of how fashion is practised, consumed, and valued are inherently inseparable from geography. As argued by Crewe, “clothes are inherently geographical objects, yet few of us consider the social and economic significance of their journey from design to production to consumption” (2017, back cover). Furthermore, high-level global reports have documented the sustainability and circularity of the fashion industry as weak and requiring renewed effort to positively impact its harmful trajectory (Global Fashion Agenda, 2019). Essentially, users need to be aware that “the most sustainable garment is the one we already own … [and that] repairing, rewearin, reusing, and renting are preferable to recycling or discarding clothes” (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019, p. 4). From a fashion perspective, Fletcher (2016) appreciates the value of exploring everyday clothing use in-depth recognizing the multifarious experiences, activities, and material connections users have in their lived worlds. Some cross-disciplinary research likewise reinforces that householder affinity, both experientially and socially, with clothing throughout the use phase, together with individual competency in clothing care, maintenance, and repair, is critical to ensuring prolonged use (Armstrong et al., 2016; McLaren et al., 2016). In recent geographical research explicitly focusing on the material qualities of garments, Stanes denotes the active use phase as “clothes-in-process” (2019, p. 224), acknowledging the multiple material, temporal, spatial, and
behavioural moments that occur while wearing items daily and across their lifespan. Relatedly, another geographer Collins (2019, 2020) examined everyday material consumption of clothing from both a practice-theoretical and a geographical scale, exploring everyday clothing consumption, divestment, and care practices, socio-cultural practices, and geographies of responsibility. Notably, these studies focused on only one segment of user practices, i.e., youths (aged 16–34). Earlier, Gregson and Beale recognised wardrobe studies as “pivotally positioned in the practices of clothing consumption” (2004, p. 690), valuing the geographical exploration of everyday use beyond fashion to open-up “consumption practices of wearing, laundering, tidying and sorting” (2004, p. 690) along with divestment and circulation. This paper builds on earlier work to explore what geography can learn from wardrobe studies methodologies, thereby opening new opportunities to investigate and generate valuable data regarding sustainable consumption in both the home and the wardrobe. Undoubtedly, “the household has emerged as the crucial scale of social organisation for pro-environmental behaviour” (Head et al., 2013, p. 351). Within the household, a wealth of geographical research connecting the dilemmas and challenges of household sustainability already exists, underlining the importance played by such microlevel practices (Evans, 2017; Reid et al., 2010). This paper further distils a practice-oriented perspective on the everyday geographies of household consumption as related to clothing with the nascent conceptual approach of “reshaping the domestic nexus” or “nexus at home” research (Foden et al., 2018, pp. 10, 1). Previous work in households has largely concentrated on the interdependence and infrastructures for principal domestic resources supply and demand, such as energy, water, and food, but here attention is moved to a relatively underexplored aspect: fashion consumption practices. We posit clothing use practices remain relatively under-researched, with comparatively little known or understood about these multitudinous and often hidden everyday activities. Following a brief appraisal of current geographical work concerning the sustainability implications of everyday clothes use, Social Practice Theory, and wardrobe studies, we present a critical review of the methodological approaches applied in this study. The results and accompanying discussion sections identify how wardrobe studies can be applied as an effective geographical research method to reframe, analyse, and appreciate the complexities of everyday action in the clothing use phase and wider.

4.2 Social Practice Theory, the Geographer, and the Wardrobe
Though not originating in the field, there is an emerging geographical scholarship generating concepts and evidence around everyday life and resource consumption in the home that draws on a post-structural Social Practice Theory (SPT) mode to better understand human activities over time (Hui et al., 2017; Reid & Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019; Strengers & Maller, 2015). Social Practice Theory elements can be conceptualised as distinct analytical viewpoints to the performativity of social life facilitating applicability with more ease (Reckwitz, 2002). Fundamentally, Shove et al. (2012) suggest that a triplicate of elements comprises any practice: material, competence, and meaning. The approach is increasingly employed in discussions and research about sustainable consumption (Welch & Warde, 2015). Various studies demonstrating the application of SPT have emerged as connected to domestic household management (Hoolohan et al., 2018); clothing consumption (Gill et al., 2016; Hitchings et al., 2015); laundry (Pink et al., 2015); and clothing repair and longevity (McLaren et al., 2016). Geographers too are expanding their variety of innovative methods and methodological hybrids to advance SPT research. This is evidenced by, for example, Maller and Strengers’ (2017) use of memory scrapbooks; de Vet’s (2013) use of diaries; and Browne’s (2016) use of focus groups. Further, use is demonstrated in participating back-casting approaches applied by Davies and Doyle (2015) and what are essentially advanced interview techniques or interviews supplemented with photographs (Hitchings et al., 2015); household tours (Evans & Jones, 2011); household living labs (Sahakian et al., 2019); and clothes journals (Johnson, 2017) among others. However, it must be acknowledged that there is no unified SPT approach or preferential methodological tactic (Schatzki, 2002). Indeed, Nicolini (2013, p. 213) recommends “a toolkit approach” fully recognising practices as complex and multifarious. Moreover, there is scope for still further contemplation regarding empirical methods in SPT research that link practices with future sustainability (Maller & Strengers, 2017). We attempt here to further add to the diversity of and reflection on SPT methodological approaches as the interdisciplinary study presented draws on innovative wardrobe study methods to expand and reframe geographical inquiry. These methods are only recently emerging and are being utilised “within an understanding of practice where materiality is at the core” (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014, p. 375). Noticeably, wardrobe studies, as a methodological style, are predominantly evident to date in sociological, fashion, and design-led studies. Fletcher and Klepp present a collection of tools and methods for enquiring into the “lifeworld” of garments, contending that the wardrobe is “critical to the future direction of knowledge and practice in fashion and clothing” and that the more
these methods are applied, the greater understanding will emerge regarding clothing use as actions in and around the wardrobe “profoundly shape a garment’s sustainability potential” (2017, pp. 2, 5). In this context, Spurling et al. (2013, p. 19) suggests “reframing” as a useful method to re-examine everyday sustainability dilemmas, arguing that problem framings which rely on a practice perspective “moves beyond individual behaviour on the one hand and its context on the other – whether material infrastructure or social norms – to a unit of analysis that integrates both behaviours and their material, social and cultural contexts”. Latterly, Watson et al. also present “reframing” as a final significant step in “the change points approach” (2020, p. 5) for effectual household sustainability policy development. Our wider study, situated within the household, focuses on the practices and processes of everyday clothing wear, use, and care across a range of intergenerational life stages, which facilitates a review of changing practices over time and an examination of the resemblances and variances significant to each group. Within this work, utilising SPT as a lens enables a deeper understanding and a more nuanced holistic view of wearer–garment relationships, cultures, rituals, behaviours, and practices of clothing use post-purchase. Specifically, this paper reports on the efficacy of the wardrobe studies methodological approach as an effective geographical research method and is a departure to previous clothing studies where fast fashion and lifecycle analysis have often dominated (Crewe, 2017).

4.3 Reflections on Application: Wardrobes as Practice

Drawing on empirical data and fieldwork conducted in the north west of Ireland between July 2018 and May 2019, the remainder of this paper critically reflects on the development and application of wardrobe methodologies to generate a richly layered intergenerational dataset on the use phase of clothing and on the outcomes and potential innovative application of this approach in geography and more broadly. A multifaceted, practice-oriented, in-depth, qualitative wardrobe study was applied to analyse how previously undocumented practices in everyday clothing active use were constituted and changing across this selected intergenerational sample group. In total, 15 in-depth cases were conducted with five participants from each of three target demographic cohorts across varying life stages (see Figure 1).
Groups were selected for their generational spread and as distinct fashion market segments in line with two other large-scale European projects on a connected theme (Laitala et al., 2015; McLaren et al., 2016). Within wardrobe studies, a broad range of possible approaches exist (Fletcher & Klepp, 2017). Those relevant here include, first, “wardrobe interviews,” where wardrobes or selected garments therein are used as a gateway to orchestrate conversations, similar to ethnographic object interviews (Woodward, 2016) or to determine specific social relations (Pink et al., 2015). Also valuable are “wardrobe audits,” comprising an entire or partial systematic review of wardrobe contents, associated relationships, and practices (Laitala et al., 2015; Smith, 2018). For clarity, the term “wardrobe” does not merely denote the physical space for clothing storage but refers to “clothing actions, relationships, meanings and material effects” that evolve over time and in the course of everyday life (Fletcher & Klepp, 2017, p. 3) and to “the material framework of everyday dress practices” (Klepp & Bjerck, 2014, p. 375). Geographers Gregson and Beale already agree that “wardrobes are not simply accumulations in clothing things but are embedded in the within-household consumption practices of tidying, sorting, storage and displacement” and therefore, that wardrobes need to be viewed “as a fulcrum for clothing wearing” (2004, p. 699). In this work, an innovative, multifaceted, methodological framework was specifically developed drawing on the literature and employing modes relevant to a geographical reframing (see Table 1). Essentially, following an initial Problem-Centred Interview (Witzel & Reiter, 2012), the wardrobe study aspect comprised: an in-depth wardrobe interview in participants’ homes, including a partial wardrobe audit; a text-based clothing diary; a household tour; and still photographs to record visual data reflecting the approach of wardrobes as practice.

Figure 1 Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender: Female / Male</th>
<th>Location: Urban / Rural</th>
<th>Household Type: Detached / Semi-Detached / Student Accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young Adult</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 18 - 24 (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents with Young Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25 - 49 (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Older Adult</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50+ (n=5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1: Stages of the multifaceted, practice-oriented, wardrobe study methodological approach employed in this study (all 15 participants took part in each stage):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method:</th>
<th>Usefulness:</th>
<th>Limitations:</th>
<th>Ethical issues:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview 1</td>
<td><strong>Problem-Centred In-Depth Interview</strong></td>
<td>Text-based, relies on recall ability at a single point</td>
<td>Voluntary informed consent sought</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wardrobe Interview including partial wardrobe audit of various garments</td>
<td><strong>Wardrobe Interview</strong> includes: narratives of individual garments, allows concrete questioning around practices, deeper descriptions possible as method assists memory recall and emotional evocation, advances co-fabrication of data with material surroundings, enables garment use comparison</td>
<td>Time commitment, access to the intimate household level required</td>
<td>Avoiding undue intrusion, Putting participants at ease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Diary</td>
<td><strong>Clothing Diary</strong> includes: Extent: one-month, self-documented insights into everyday wear and care practices recorded on a written template, dependant on participant commitment and accuracy, text-based but potential for consideration of depth of investigation and data required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method:</td>
<td>Usefulness:</td>
<td>Limitations:</td>
<td>Ethical issues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview 2: Wardrobe Studies approach consisting of 4 aspects:</td>
<td>with fashion clothing wear and laundry care practices noted</td>
<td>completed diaries are utilised as an interview prompt</td>
<td>audio/video diary methods too</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household Tour</strong></td>
<td>Participant directed tour focusing on clothing storage spaces and laundry care areas within the household</td>
<td>Context generated in household setting, spatially focused, triangulation, can corroborate talk-based interview narratives, advances relationship between part and whole, if proximal access is difficult there is scope for participants to video record tour</td>
<td>Challenging to simultaneously document, photograph and interview, potential interference from background noise or distractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Photographs</strong></td>
<td>photographs to document household tour and selected clothing items during audit</td>
<td>Provides corroborating visual data, may be documented by participant/researcher</td>
<td>Linked analysis, photographing items unobtrusively without impacting the interview flow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Reflections on Outcomes: Reframing Wardrobe Methods

Reflecting on the key ways in which geography can learn from wardrobe studies methodologies, we found that utilising such methods facilitated intimate conversations about many aspects of everyday fashion consumption practices which may have been challenging to access through traditional oral and text-based approaches such as standalone interviews. For example, wardrobe studies provided access via the household tour (see Table 1) to pertinent information regarding clothing storage practices within the household and unveiled the significance of nostalgically stored, but underused, clothing, which although retained remained unworn. The process also revealed interesting discourses concerning second-hand clothing use across lifecycle groups, uncovering a surprising acceptance of this among younger participants and an almost sole preference for clothing acquisition through second-hand means by two older adult participants. Correspondingly, multifaceted elements regarding the diverse ways in which householders organise everyday laundry tasks (echoing Yates and Evans, 2016) and evidence of the minimal practice of clothing repair, even among householders with skills to do so, emerged via the diary and tour (see Table 1), reflecting Collins (2019). The overall results highlight a range of significant topics, however. Within this paper, we focus below on three main aspects that highlight key learnings from wardrobe methodologies that could further advance future geographical approaches.

4.4.1 Exploration of the physical place and space dedicated to clothing use in the home

Household tours facilitate geographers’ access to authentic everyday material encounters, to subject–object relationships, and to meanings associated with material possessions (Gregson, 2007), with a chief benefit being admission to the home as a location of intervention and adaption (Pink et al., 2015). Participants in this research facilitated a tour of clothing storage and clothing care spaces in their homes, enabling access to wardrobes, closets, utility rooms, outdoor spaces, and so on, which would have been otherwise unexplored through traditional interview-only methods. Following Klepp and Bjerck, such access enabled exploration of how “clothes relate to each other on the whole or within parts of the wardrobe” (2014, p. 473) and facilitated exploration of the home “as constituted by multiple flows … and human agents who have the capacity to direct some of these flows” (Strengers & Maller, 2015, p. 10). For example,
during the household tour, one participant (PwYC2) explained that open-plan shelving instead of drawers for storage of clothing helps her to see, select, and wear more of her clothes more regularly. The excerpt below demonstrates the usefulness of this material data gleaned during the household tour:

RESEARCHER: So, there are no drawers, they’re [clothes] just all folded in your wardrobe?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, and that’s why it makes it so easy to get dressed because I would just come in and go “oh, what do I fancy?” You can see my house is very open plan; I don’t do clutter. I never understand women who are like … “and I found this dress, and I forgot all about having it!” When we moved in here, that was one of the stipulations, a walk-in pantry, a walk-in wardrobe because I can’t do drawers … I would just wear the thing on the top all the time because I can’t rifle through. There isn’t even a drawer, everything is on a shelf…

Spatially focused explorations or tours at the follow-up interview stage can also methodologically facilitate corroboration for earlier interview narratives and enable enhanced understanding of the relationship between parts and the whole. Such triangulation via visual, verbal, and aural methods (see Table 1) enhances the potential to gather insights possibly missed through other, more traditional approaches. For example, in Interview 1, a participant (OA3) made comments regarding tumble dryer use for clothing care which were later further verified:

PARTICIPANT: I’m really guilty of using the tumble dryer because I’m lazy … It’s easy to do. It’s probably why our electricity bill is so high because of the tumble dryer being on so much. I should worry, but I don’t!

Subsequently, during the household tour, in the second meeting, the same participant further expanded:

PARTICIPANT: So, this is my utility. That’s my laundry basket then and that’s my washing machine and my tumble dryer beside each other. When I come in to do a wash, it’s usually a light or dark, or if there’s a delicate … they’ll go in the machine and, they literally come out and into the dryer and I then just sort them into piles and, they go upstairs.
RESEARCHER: And is there anywhere outside you’d hang clothing out?

PARTICIPANT: There is a line but I’m very lazy. It doesn’t go out to the line very often. It’s one of my lazy things, I’m not here a lot …, on the go a lot.

Accordingly, it may be argued that proximal wardrobe studies, comprising combined multifaceted approaches, can enhance research validity by clarifying previously collected data or verifying aspects of an earlier conversation. While proximity in data collection and fieldwork is so integral to geographers, we acknowledge that wardrobe studies can be undertaken fruitfully without either direct access to the home or physical proximity to the wardrobe. This is evidenced in approximately half of the 50 wardrobe methods cited by Fletcher and Klepp which, although conducted remotely, still utilise “clothes as a way in” or successfully employ “artefacts as a rewarding starting point” (2017, pp. 54, 59).

4.4.2 Active selection and sorting: revealing deep meaning and emotions

McLaren and McLauchlan (2015) connect emotional garment attachment with sustainability and extension of the clothing use phase. When participants were requested to select various items for the wardrobe audit aspect, we found that this brought to light everyday mundane but often intimate conversations not revealed earlier through the initial Problem-Centred Interview. The wardrobe interviews here were individualised and concentrated on interrogating selected garments (following Whitson-Smith, 2017) and garment care objects (see Table 1 above). Concern was initially raised by the University Research and Ethics Committee regarding researcher entry to more intimate, private areas of the participants’ homes (e.g., bedrooms). With the formulation of a detailed set of advance protocols and ongoing personal safety procedures for maintaining contact during fieldwork, access was subsequently facilitated. From a practice perspective, this access was invaluable and frequently led to participants unveiling emotional attachment to particular clothing items, for example:

PARTICIPANT: I’m emotionally attached to my raincoat. Everything else comes and goes but this, as you can see, is actually worn, and I’ve got a new raincoat, but I just feel so good in this! … and I probably should get rid of it because it’s starting to wear through but I’ve no intentions of doing so for a while because I absolutely love it. About six years ago now, I gave up a job because I was being stressed about it … I took a leap of
faith. I finished on the Friday and I booked to go see [names festival] and to me that was the beginning of my new life! I bought this and it came with me … it symbolises a newness … yeah, a new start with a nice bright coat!

Clearly, as participant PwYC2 selected the item, she recalled and disclosed how her emotional connection to the raincoat, owned for a long time, meant she would extend its use even though visible signs of wear were evident and despite having already purchased a replacement item.

4.4.3 Uncovering participant competencies across the clothing use phase

In this study, clothing diaries, adapted with permission from McLaren et al. (2016) and documented for one month, provided specific data related to clothing use and laundry care practices, and exposed participants’ everyday care competencies and skills. These diaries were further utilised as a prompt during the wardrobe interview to provoke in-depth narratives (de Vet, 2013). Overall, the diaries revealed limited variation in machine cycles, wash temperatures, or detergent types utilised across the three participant groups, with washing at 40°C mainly employed and care labels rarely consulted. Just one participant (PwYC1) recorded in her diary washing at “30°C” and utilising a plant-based “biodegradable detergent” with “distilled vinegar” as a conditioner. Notably, it was previously conveyed by this participant, in Interview 1, that machine washing was “always done on a 40°C because … I mean, our clothes aren’t very dirty so, 40°C is perfect.” Yet subsequently, during the wardrobe interview, when interrogating the diary entries related to clothing care and undertaking the household tour it was disclosed:

PARTICIPANT: We’re very conscious of trying to save water, not using what you don’t need so we only do one wash a day. I’m using the eco stuff [detergent] and the vinegar and so it’s just put that into my head a little bit more. Stuff I wanted to change but, because I was doing it for this [study] then it’s made me change it quicker instead of keeping putting it on the back burner.

The research approach encouraged this householders’ behaviours to become a little more visible, and on reflection “change points” and “opportunities for intervention” were exposed (Hoolohan et al., 2018, p. 11). While these are only three key observations from this study, they do highlight examples of the insight geographers could garner
should they adopt these methods in future studies. Further, we reflect that the three themes – access to spatially focused exploration, deep emotions, and uncovering competencies – mirror the three elements of SPT (Shove et al., 2012; Spurling et al., 2013).

4.5 Conclusion: Wardrobe Studies – A Useful Tool for Geographers?

As demonstrated in this paper, wardrobe studies methodologies can capture the types of norms, social expectations, complexities, and conventions that underlie everyday household practices (in this case clothing use practices) and how these can be challenged. In outlining the specific wardrobe studies methodologies applied and empirical data gathered in this study, we argue that these methods offer a fruitful window into the everyday geographies of clothing sustainability, providing invaluable insight and evidence on a range of issues such as consumption and care in domestic settings. We have illustrated that these approaches can facilitate a practice-based and geographical reframing of everyday fashion consumption in the home. Building on Nicolini’s (2013, p. 213) recognition of practices as a complex affair, the innovative, multifaceted, methodological framework selected and presented here (incorporating interviews, wardrobe audit, clothing diary, household tour, and still photographs) is but one version of a wardrobe studies methodological approach and certainly can be further tailored to meet specific future research needs and circumstances. In concluding that wardrobe studies methods could provide a useful addition to geographers’ toolbox, we also contemplate that some similar methodological approaches are already evident in both wardrobe studies and geography – a methodological overlap that can potentially be explored and built on in terms of future research innovation. It is hoped that highlighting approaches and methodologies that explore the sustainability impact of the clothing use phase through SPT will provide a springboard for more geographers, and social scientists, to fully consider how to positively influence consumption in this phase of clothing lifecycles.
Chapter 5: Article 2

Article 2: Maguire, H. and Fahy, F. (2023) Unlocking insights in the everyday: Exploring practices to foster sustainable maximum use of clothing. Cleaner and Responsible Consumption. 8, 1-9. 100095

Unlocking insights in the everyday: Exploring practices to foster sustainable maximum use of clothing

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Abstract

Recent research highlights the importance of understanding consumer behavior and the potential for sustainable consumption practices to improve environmental outcomes. Maguire and Fahy (2023) explored the everyday practices of clothing consumption and found that consumers often adopt practices that can minimize the environmental impact of their clothing choices. The study suggests that by promoting sustainable consumption practices, individuals can achieve a more sustainable clothing footprint.

1. Introduction and scope

Recent research highlights the importance of understanding consumer behavior and the potential for sustainable consumption practices to improve environmental outcomes. Maguire and Fahy (2023) explored the everyday practices of clothing consumption and found that consumers often adopt practices that can minimize the environmental impact of their clothing choices. The study suggests that by promoting sustainable consumption practices, individuals can achieve a more sustainable clothing footprint.

Figure 7. Article 3 Cover Page
Abstract

Each stage of the fashion clothing lifecycle exerts multitudinous negative impacts on the planet. To date, research and policy interventions toward sustainable clothing consumption have largely concentrated on the initial and final life-stages of clothing production, and garment disposal. However, such efforts, even alongside industry technological advances, have failed to balance ever-expanding fashion consumption demand. More recently, alongside wider sustainability debates on sufficiency and consumption corridors, the active use phase of clothing lifecycle is emerging as a vital piece of the sustainability puzzle. An in-depth exploration of users’ real-life everyday interactions with clothing can facilitate a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of wearer garment interactions and use practices with implications for sustainable consumption. This paper presents the findings of an empirical, qualitative research study on the active use phase of clothing consumption in Ireland drawing on a complex intergenerational dataset gathered using in-depth Problem-Centred Interviews and wardrobe studies. Findings reveal that participants were largely unaware of both the positive impacts of prolonging wear and the adverse impact of frequent washing on clothing longevity and sustainability. A range of other barriers and enablers to sustainable clothing consumption also emerged, such as the impact of social media on repeat garment wear, the widespread disregard of garment care labels and the considerable acceptability of second-hand clothing wear. In providing such a snapshot into actual everyday clothing wear and care practices, we argue that it is possible to unlock insights into the various ways sustainable maximum use of clothing can be supported and we present implications for future sustainable policy development. We advocate that existing good practice in anti-consumption and sustainable maximum use must be recognised, understood, and promoted to become increasingly more widely culturally and socially acceptable and therefore, impactful in supporting sustainability transitions.

**Keywords:** Sustainable Consumption, Everyday Practices, Clothing Maximum Use, Household, Wardrobe Studies, Ireland

5.1 Introduction and Scope

Recent research highlights that lengthening and extending product lifespans is an important component of sustainable clothing consumption (Vesterinen and SyrJälä,
2022; Fletcher and Fitzpatrick, 2021; Klepp et al., 2020). However, ‘making a garment last is very different to making a long lasting garment’ (Fletcher, 2016, 197). The underutilisation of clothing has a substantial detrimental sustainability impact and, together with the lack of garment recycling, is costing more than 500 billion dollars in lost value annually (Rouch, 2021). Gill et al. (2016, 39) labelled pro-environmental everyday clothing care and maintenance practices as ‘sustainabilities’ proposing that ‘use time’ – the period in which clothes are worn and washed could hold the key to practicing sustainability. Admittedly, everyday clothing active use practices may not be the most significantly environmentally impactful phase of the detrimental, fast fashion, ‘make-buy-dispose’ clothing consumption lifecycle (Rouch, 2021, 4) nonetheless, we posit that research in this phase has the potential to provide important insights into fashion consumption patterns and householder socio-cultural norms supporting future sustainable policy development. Plainly, the actions and everyday agency of householders with regard the practices of using, wearing, and caring for fashion in real-life contexts beyond the market have a critical, but as yet ill-understood, impact on the overall unsustainability of the fashion system. Moreover, the clothing active use phase can potentially be, straightforwardly and effortlessly, positively influenced to maximise everyday use, yet little influence to leveraging this potential is being affected currently.

Responding to a recent call for empirical research on sustainable consumption to focus on clothing usage from a consumer perspective (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022), this paper explores everyday practices in clothing consumption across the everyday use phase amongst 15 cases in Ireland. The region is selected as an interesting research context as although Ireland has a rich tradition of fashion, clothing, and textile craft industries (De Cléir, 2011) there is a dearth of literature examining current clothing consumption and sustainability practices amongst Irish users. Initially, in Section 2, the concept of the everyday as a useful focus of sustainability research is reviewed, with the household scale identified as an important site of practice. Following this everyday clothing consumption lifecycles are explored with cognisance to the potential benefits of lengthening and extending overall garment lifetimes. Section 3 details the methods employed in this research study to explore sustainable practices across the everyday clothing use phase in Ireland with a review of the significant emergent outcomes presented in Section 4. The paper concludes with a discussion on prospective policy implications arising from the insights uncovered in everyday clothing consumption practices and draws implications for future approaches. In this research, the clothing
active use phase is under scrutiny and is understood here to comprise three key activities: wear; care; and repair of clothing. Strictly speaking, repair could be considered an element of clothing care, however, in this research it was of specific interest and merited examination separately (Maguire and Fahy, 2021). This research investigated clothing use in a broad sense comprising all activities involved in wearing clothes: storage and organisation; selection and co-ordination; wear, repeat wear and non-wear. While clothing care is understood to include laundring habits; care label and fabric identification, washing; drying; stain removal; and care practices employed to extend clothing wear between washes. The overarching concept of sustainable clothing consumption is broadly conceptualised, following Rausch and Kopplin (2021, 1), as implying ‘pro-environmental actions at every stage of the garment's life cycle’ with the specific focus in this paper on everyday sustainable maximum use of garments already owned.

5.2 Literature Review

5.2.1 The everyday and household scale as a focus of attention for sustainability

Originating in the social sciences, everyday life as a concept and distinct area of inquiry emerged in the 1920’s and has more recently become increasingly pertinent to researchers, across a wide range of disciplines, seeking to achieve increased sustainability (Pink, 2012). Lefebvre (1991, 97) seminally observed that ‘everyday life is profoundly related to all activities and encompasses them with all their difficulties and their conflicts; it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground’. Pertinent here, Felski (2000) proposed that everyday life is the essential taken for granted continuum of mundane activities that form the basis for all human endeavours and conceptualised everyday life as comprising three aspects; time (repetition/routine); space (home); and modality (habit). Recognising the growing body of interdisciplinary research in everyday life and acknowledging the contemporary concentration on sensory, practice and spatial aspects Pink (2012) explored a range of methodological approaches to capture the everyday. She identified value in ‘the theoretical tools of practice and place [to] enable us to understand everyday how innovation, change and activism develop’ and thus to reveal how improved sustainability practices may be leveraged (ibid., 11). Still, it is precisely the ordinariness and commonness of the everyday that can mean it is under-researched or, that research therein risks being undervalued. In everyday research, the household has become an important locus of
focus emerging ‘as the crucial scale of social organisation for pro-environmental behaviour’ (Head et al., 2013; 351) and a key nexus point for examination of micro-level everyday practices (Foden et al., 2018). Social Practice Theory has been broadly adopted as a means of usefully analysing and conceptualising everyday routinised practices and consumption patterns (Welch and Warde, 2015; Reckwitz, 2002). Nonetheless, meaningfully improving household sustainability in the long-term is undoubtedly complex and, as suggested in recent literature (Goggins et al., 2022; Laitala et al., 2020), must involve a recognition that alongside practices and place, socio-cultural factors are also significant in providing further insights to better understand everyday householder actions, skills, competencies, and meanings.

In grappling with achieving a balance between the global need to enhance sustainability, set against the problematic nature of ever-increasing householder consumption demands and expectations the concept of “consumption corridors” is an alternative perspective gaining impetus (Fuchs et al., 2021; Sahakian et al., 2021; Lavelle and Fahy, 2021; Defila and Di Giulio, 2020). In this approach, there is a recognition of minimum, as well as maximum, consumption levels, and the space or corridor between the two provides householders scope to live sufficiently well without sacrificing the needs of others. Vladimirova (2021, 114) recently applied this concept to fashion consumption concluding that ‘living with less is a path to happiness’ and that fashion needs can be met ‘with a relatively small number of matching, good-quality garments that can serve the owner for a long time’. Notwithstanding this, fashion garment production volumes globally are growing by 2.7% annually and less than 1% of products are recycled into new garments (Balchandani et al., 2020) so action on circularity is a sustainability imperative. Yet, to inform and support this agenda, ‘relatively little is known about consumers’ actual care and maintenance behaviours’ relating to everyday clothing use and longevity (Cooper et al., 2019, 12). This paper seeks to address the lacuna and focuses on everyday practices of clothing consumption, specifically exploring everyday clothing wear and care practices in Ireland amongst an intergenerational sample group. The overall research study utilised innovative wardrobe studies and practice-theoretical approaches to investigate everyday active use and wear of clothing already owned, laundry care, as well as garment repair practices. It is hoped that by providing a glimpse of mundane everyday clothing practices, useful insights and implications for household sustainable policy may emerge and outcomes may also inspire wider research and discussion on other routinised and hidden household consumption practices.
5.2.2 Typical clothing lifecycles and sustainability during the clothing use phase

It must be acknowledged here that ‘the most sustainable garment is the one we already own … [and that] repairing, rewearing, reusing, and renting are preferable to recycling or discarding clothes’ (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019, 4). Fast fashion, as characterised by rapid obsolescence, is a key driver of unsustainability whereas making even relatively small changes at a user level has been shown to effect a notable difference, with lengthening and extending garment lifetimes one of the most effective means of reducing the related environmental footprint (Goworek et al., 2020; McLaren et al., 2016; McLaren and McLauchlan, 2015; WRAP, 2017). Lifespans of clothing vary greatly and there is a dearth of research available on the impact of individual clothing consumption lifecycles on sustainability. Langley et al. (2013) reported an average active use period of 3.3 years per garment, while an EU report estimated that all garments have a lifespan of 1–3 years based on participant estimates (Wolf et al., 2014). Laitala et al. (2020, 1) recognised that ‘increasing the use of each product, most often called longer lifespans, is an effective environmental strategy’ and that length of clothing use is dependent on technical durability as well as continued acceptability of a garment. Even extending the life of clothing by an extra nine months has been estimated to reduce carbon, waste and water footprints by around 20–30% each and to have an estimated £5 billion a year saving possible to the costs of resources used in clothing supply, laundry and disposal (WRAP, 2017). Earlier research recommended ‘quite simply, if clothes have a longer useable life, they can be replaced less frequently – reducing the volume discarded and meaning fewer resources are consumed in manufacturing’ (Cooper et al., 2013, 3). McLaren et al. (2015) extensively examined consumer clothing longevity perspectives, consumption patterns and use behaviours of younger, older professional and parental consumers concluding that there is potential for lengthening clothing lifetimes at each of the lifecycle phases. Consistent with findings of previous research (McLaren and McLauchlan, 2015) McLaren et al. (2015) found that consumers' capacity for prolonging active life is largely affected by the initial purchase quality together with their own ability to assess fabric durability and capacity for adequate care and maintenance at home.

Concerningly, Cooper (2018) reported that the average individual owns 115 pieces of clothing of which 30% of the items have not been worn in the previous year. Reasons cited for non-use included not checking wardrobes often enough (53%); retaining
clothes that are not wearable as they no longer fit or require altering (80%) or storing clothes that are in disrepair (62%) (ibid.). Specifically exploring the clothing active use phase or ‘usage phase’ Vesterinen and SyrJälä (2022, 1) identified that this stage of the consumption lifecycle is, in fact, a positive and pro-sustainable one and recommend ‘that by intensifying usage it is possible to decrease acquiring and disposing of clothes and slow down the cycle of fashion’. Resisting the notion that all stages of the clothing consumption cycle are detrimental, they propose a shift in terminology to transform understandings of the usage stage amongst consumers and fashion industry claiming that ‘while sustainable clothing consumption is a vague and polysemous term, sustainable anti-consumption, consisting of anti-acquisition, pro-usage and anti-disposal, communicates a clearer message’ (ibid., 10, emphasis original). They suggest that this radical perspective and approach may have potential to empower users into awareness, action, and responsibility, focusing more on maximum clothing utilisation and away from sustainable acquisition and recycling, which both continue to fuel a consumption agenda.

5.3 Research Approach and Data Collection

As this specific study focused on the ordinary everyday activities of people regarding their clothing, a practice theory approach is relevant (Shove et al., 2012; Schatzki, 2002). Theories of practice have become increasingly employed in discussions and research pertaining to everyday sustainable consumption (Welch and Warde, 2015). A practice is a routinised behaviour made up of several interconnecting elements: bodily actions, mental activity, emotional meaning, materials ‘things’ and background knowledge or ‘know-how’, and in such an approach the research focus is on the practices themselves rather than the individuals that undertake them (Reckwitz, 2002, 253). When exploring everyday practices, Yates and Evans (2016, 113) advise that ‘it is essential to contextualise the behaviour in question by considering the dynamics of related activities encompassed in the practice and the effects of related and interlocking practices and cultural meanings around it’, therefore, a breadth of scope is important, in such investigations, for more complete understanding. Wahlen (2011, 512) echoes ‘further research is needed in order to assist exploring routine practices and their chances as well as obstructions for sustainable development in more detail’. This research involved a broad range of innovative, multifaceted visual, verbal and aural methodological approaches or wardrobe studies employed to uncover knowledge about Irish user
practices related to clothing wear, care and repair. Fieldwork was undertaken in the North-West of Ireland between July 2018 and May 2019 with fifteen in-depth cases conducted involving five participants from three target demographic cohorts or life-stages; Young Adults (YA), 18–24 years; Parents with Young Children (PwYC), 25–49 years; and Older Adults (OA), 50 years+. Inclusion factors involved participants generational spread and fashion market segment, in line with related projects (McLaren et al., 2016; Laitala et al., 2015). Non-probability, purposive sampling was employed with participants recruited for each intergenerational group via college student union mailshots and in-person announcements at locally based community groups. We do acknowledge the relatively positive socioeconomic status of participants, based on their geographical location and access to domestic laundry facilities.

Clothing wear, care and repair activities are often embedded in taken-for-granted household routines and therefore, connection to physical garments may aid participants in remembering and articulating routines and details related to them, and thus the use of wardrobe studies is effective (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017). In this research, subsequent to an initial Problem-Centred Interview (Witzel and Reiter, 2012), the wardrobe studies aspect comprised an in-depth wardrobe interview in participant's homes; a partial wardrobe audit; a text-based clothing diary; a household tour and still photographs to record visual data reflecting the approach of wardrobes as practice (see Maguire and Fahy, 2021 for further details of the context and methodological approach of the overall study). The wardrobe interviews were specifically tailored and centred around narrating and interrogating self-selected items from individual wardrobes and garment care objects in each participant's home (following Whitson-Smith, 2018). Both the wardrobe interviews and participant directed household tours enabled access to households and facilitated tours of clothing storage and clothing care spaces (including wardrobes, closets, utility rooms, outdoor line-drying spaces) which would have been otherwise unexplored through traditional interview-only methods. Furthermore, text-based, clothing diaries gathered specific data related to garment use and laundry care practices and exposed participants everyday care competencies and skills via a short, self-documented template (adapted with permission McLaren et al., 2016). Diary entries were further employed as a prompt during wardrobe interviews provoking more in-depth narratives and fully uncovering everyday practices (De Vet, 2013). While invaluable in generating data on clothing wear and care practices, the intimate nature of fieldwork approaches employed within households in this study required careful
consideration, detailed explanation for ethical approval and tactful implementation in practice to ensure participants were fully at ease and assured (Fletcher and Kleep, 2017; Hall, 2014). For clarity, participants here were recruited for a study on clothing use and care practices and thus were not aware of the researcher’s interest in sustainable clothing consumption therefore, questions on sustainable practices were not explicitly posed in data collection. Instead, such practices were uncovered inductively from the rich data generated via the innovative multifaceted approaches employed which, despite their complexity, genuinely engaged the interest and complete involvement of the fifteen participants for the duration of the fieldwork, enabling data saturation, with no withdrawals experienced. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that this research was qualitative in nature, therefore, had no intent or scope to quantify individual clothing lifespans. The aim was rather to explore the everyday practices of participants and the potential for actively and meaningfully maximising use and prolonging lifespans of clothing already owned and the sustainability and policy implications emerging therefrom.

Following comprehensive transcription of all the interviews (n = 30), a thorough three-phase strategy was adopted for data analysis involving coding; exploring each participant’s individual case (vertical analysis); followed by a synthesis of the themes across intergenerational cases (horizontal analysis), as advised by Witzel and Reiter (2012). This deep analysis involved on-going manual inductive and deductive coding, systematic contrasting, comparing and interpreting of individual cases, as well as detailed further scrutiny of the entire study data examining everyday practices of clothing wear, care, and repair together with participant responses related to meaning, materials, and competencies, in line with the overarching theoretical lens of practice theory (Shove et al., 2012). The empirical results reported herein should be considered in the light of several limitations including the limited sample size possible in this in-depth qualitative study which is not representative of the wider Irish population; the imbalance in gender representation across the sample, due to the self-selection of participants who volunteered to be involved; and the potential for researcher bias. We also acknowledge that the findings presented are a snapshot of participant practices at one point in time. Efforts were made to ameliorate these challenges, increase rigor, and reduce bias by employing the variety wardrobe approaches described above to collect and triangulate data. While the sample size in this study is small, overall, the in-depth and multi-method approach employed offers an opportunity to explore the complex and
shared nature of linked and overlapping household practices and to investigate the prevailing socio-cultural influences on actions and pertinent findings are presented below.

5.4 Results and Discussion

Results presented and discussed in this paper concentrate on exploring everyday clothing wear and care practices as emerged inductively amongst the cohort. Reporting on clothing repair practices is not a focus of this paper as that aspect of the research is fully interrogated elsewhere, as is analysis of generational variances in everyday clothing practices (see Maguire and Fahy, 2023 [Forthcoming]). Four emerging aspects related to wear consumption are discussed below, followed by four facets of everyday clothing care which emerged as significant outcomes in this research, see Table 1 below for an outline of themes discussed. Subsequently the overall awareness, or otherwise, of participants regarding the sustainability of their clothing wear and care actions is considered.

5.4.1 Emerging clothing wear practices

Practices of wear frequency

Acknowledging the importance of clothing longevity as a mechanism for increased sustainability (Laitala and Klepp, 2020; Cooper et al., 2019; McLaren et al., 2016) factors that influenced participant wear practices were examined, and aspects emerging as significant, in order of prevalence, were: garment comfort (including suitability for activity, weather, garment fit); capacity of garment for repeat wear (including versatility, inconspicuousness, durability); value of garment (including initial cost and emotional value/attachment) and garment fashionability. The constraints of this paper prevent full exploration of all influencing factors so garment comfort, as the most often cited aspect influencing repeat garment wear, is selected for discussion below.

Participants in this study agreed that garment comfort was the most influential factor in ensuring that a clothing item was selected for wear on a given day or re-worn often. In the self-completed clothing diaries, where participants were tasked to trace and record wash, wear, and care practices of a selected individual garment over 1 month, ‘comfortable’ or ‘comfy’ was noted in responses from twelve of the fifteen participants
in answer to the questions ‘When do you wear it? How do you feel in it?’. Furthermore, during both the initial Problem-Centred Interview exploring daily wear practices of participants and in later wardrobe interviews when narratives of individual garments selected were explored (n = 30), most participants across all life-stages recounted the need for garments to be comfortable. Clothing comfort was previously recognised alongside warmth, protection and function as one of the practical motives influencing clothing wear (Ellen Macarthur Foundation, 2017) and that report additionally identified social and emotive reasons amongst the complex factors influencing clothing wear. Earlier, Shove (2003) researched the significance of comfort, alongside cleanliness and convenience, as influencing household sustainability practices and particularly explored laundry from a social and practice perspective. Some examples of participant comments, indicating the importance of comfort in influencing wear clothing practices arising from responses in this study were:

YA2: ‘How I decide what I’m wearing is what’s most comfortable so if it’s not comfortable for college, I won’t wear it … I don’t go on fashion trends, I go with what I like, what’s comfortable’

PwYC2: ‘sometimes you put on [a garment] and it just doesn’t feel right, I might have loved it last year but … if I’m not comfortable I definitely won’t wear it …’

OA4: ‘I love these trousers … I go for comfort often … they’re easy to wear and comfortable … I won’t be getting rid of these trousers; I do see myself wearing them loads more …’

Evidently, and similar to research by Stanes (2019, 224) comfort related here not only to the garment itself but also to textile materiality or the feel of the clothes ‘in-process’. For example, OA5 reported seeking out wool, or a percentage of wool, fibre content when selecting jumpers for increased comfort, quality and durability in use. Conversely YA1 and YA 4 both mentioned enjoying ‘comfy’ jumpers but lamented the pilling and short lifespan of their fast fashion, synthetic blend garments. It is perhaps no coincidence that these latter responses were voiced by two YAs as Stanes research study (2019, 235), specifically researching YA participants, concluded that most had ‘little knowledge about the origin of textiles or how fabrics are produced’. Other respondents here also commented on clothing materiality as linked to comfort describing ‘if it feels cold, if it makes me itchy, I won't wear it … or it's scratchy … it has to be comfortable, the type
of fabric would be important to feel, 100%’ (PwYC2). However, some participants also disclosed not considering fabric composition e.g., ‘that wouldn't be something I pay attention to really’ (YA1); ‘it's not something that I'd look out for or notice, no’ (YA3); and ‘it's not something you really think of or look for’ (OA2). Findings from Cooper et al. (2019) further reinforce a lack of consumer confidence in accessing garment/fabric durability across a range of customer demographics and called for the implementation of a durability index on labelling to assist consumers select more wisely. Thus, attention to ensure complete comfort of garments at initial purchase point, together with careful review of fabric composition, has potential to foster increased longevity of clothing use and frequent reuse of items.

Practices to extend/end clothing lifespan

Discussion took place, in both the initial Problem-Centred Interviews and wardrobe interviews, regarding length of clothing ownership and participant divestment practices supported via participant selection and narration of garments worn regularly for a long time and clothing owned for a long time but not regularly worn anymore. This process enabled generation of valuable data regarding factors influencing clothing lifespan and divestment practices. A diverse range of factors emerged as influential in user decisions to end garments wear lifespan including deterioration in garment appearance or quality rendering it unfit for ongoing wear; uncomfortableness/poor garment fit; an overall excessive number of garments relative to clothing storage space available; unworn nature of an item; garment (un)fashionability; and excessive garment care requirements. Reasons cited for retaining clothing were ongoing wear and usefulness; emotional attachment; and clothes hoarding. It is noteworthy that, emotional attachment did not always ensure garments were worn, in some cases treasured items were retained but unworn, reflecting similar findings in other related research (Laitala et al., 2015; Woodward, 2017). Responses show that overall participants here were largely unaware of the impact of clothing longevity or prolonging wear as sustainable clothing strategies, in line with the findings of earlier research (Cooper et al., 2019) and that positive practices, where they existed, were actually inadvertent (Woodward, 2015a). In some cases, involvement in this research increased awareness and enabled participants to reflect on practices e.g., ‘doing this study I think more about the purpose of the clothes and how I wear them … I will try to keep them for longer … some I never wore, they were just sitting there, and it just made me think, don't waste them … ‘. Such research
which advances understanding of real user's practices and routines and provides insights into everyday clothing wear and divestment practices can have important implications for future upscaling and targeted application of sustainability policies.

Second-hand clothing wear practices

Amongst this cohort overall there was positive acceptance to wear of second-hand clothing across all life-stages with two participants identifying second-hand clothing as their main source of clothing acquisition (PwYC 2, OA4) and only two participants disclosing that they did not purchase second-hand garments (YA4, PwYC4). YA4 conveyed that she found the thought of charity shop shopping objectionable (‘I wouldn't, I don't like going into charity shops … the smell, the thought of who might see me there? who owned it before?’). The same participant did nevertheless admit wearing second-hand clothing shared from family members. PwYC4 likewise explained: ‘no, I just wouldn't have the patience for sourcing them and no, the idea of it would put me off, where have they come from? No thanks!’.

Concerningly, it also emerged in this research that second-hand clothing use was not always linked to a sustainable consumption mindset and could be conversely linked to a consumption agenda (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022). YA1 disclosed ‘I enjoy creating new outfits, I see something that may/may not work but I'll buy it anyway because thrift stores are cheap, and you can try it on later and decide then’. Several others, including two participants who mainly acquired their clothing in charity shops, agreed that the low cost of second-hand items can be a temptation to overconsume as explained below:

PwYC2: ‘It’s cheap! That’s a big motive! It became a bit of an addiction; you could end up with an awful lot of clothes … now I try to be more selective’

OA4: ‘… I try to be cautious but sometimes I’ll buy something just because it’s cheap’

Insights gleaned here demonstrate that second-hand clothing acquisition and use may represent both consumption attitudes and sustainable anti-consumption mindsets, depending on the linked beliefs and behaviours inherent reflecting wider sustainability debates about sufficiency. The broad acceptability of second-hand clothing use, as
evidenced amongst these participants, can prove positive in increasing circulation and renewing lifespans of clothing items however, it must be carefully balanced to lengthen and maximise clothing use, rather employed as a mechanism for increased consumption and acquisition of inexpensive garments.

**Clothing repeat wear practices**

The unsustainable practice of avoiding repeat wear emerged across each of the intergenerational groups and can be considered a barrier to sustainable maximum use of clothing. For example, YA 1 identified: ‘I think about what I wore last week and then don't repeat too often … you don't want to wear the same thing twice’. YA 2 concurred saying: ‘You shouldn't wear something too often … I don't want to go out one night and someone sees me again and they're like – did you not wear that last time?’ and likewise YA3 identified ‘if I have some money, I will buy something new for going out’. Interestingly, several YAs linked such repeat wear resistance to ‘outfit of the day’ (OOTD) hashtags and innumerable photo sharing opportunities on social media whereby specific garments are consequently visually and publicly recorded worn at a particular point in time. Even amongst OA participants a similar conscious avoidance of repeat wear surfaced, for example, OA3 stated: Now in my retirement, I go to the golf club often or women's group, I don't want to be seen in the same thing all the time’. It is apparent that challenging socio-cultural beliefs around the acceptability of repeat garment use versus current norms of promoting newness, fast fashion, and disposability together with mainstreaming strategies to overcome repeat wear avoidance is critical if clothing sustainability and circularity is to increase. Alongside the sustainability benefits there is potential to promote the broader benefits of everyday rewear such as developing a stronger personal style; increased clothing creativity and confidence; and the sufficiency of minimalism.

**Reflections on clothing wear practices**

In summary, reflecting on the findings from this research, possible enablers to support more sustainable maximum use of clothing in future everyday wear and frequent rewear could include: initial selection of garments for maximum comfort in prolonged wear; heightened knowledge and discernment regarding clothing materiality to support wear longevity; improved user awareness of the connection between prolonging
garment wear and sustainability; and wider socio-cultural acceptance of repeat garment wear. In future more dynamic and interdisciplinary sustainable policy development based on actual users’ experiences, as arising from contemporary practice-based research such as this, could prove more effective than linear knowledge to action models which have been largely ineffectual.

Furthermore, most participants in this cohort demonstrated acceptability of second-hand clothing. The potential for maximising sustainable clothing use through wear of pre-worn but not yet ‘used’ clothing requires local, convenient, and mainstream access to quality second-hand garment and encouragement for responsible divestment and social sharing of items suitable for extended wear to new users to overcome barriers such as garment hoarding and landfill disposal of clothing, practices which emerged here amongst some participants. It also requires the clothing user, as a ‘powerful actor’ (Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022, 7), to question current clothing acquisition and divestment practices based on socio-cultural norms of pride in newness and novelty and to willingly adopt instead a commitment to clothing durability, longevity, and care.

5.4.2 Emerging clothing care practices

Care label competency practices

Clothing care labels convey information related to both material composition and fabric care governed by legislation and statutory regulations (Europa, 2022) and may also carry sustainable care advice (GINETEX, 2022). Analysing both interview data and clothing diaries revealed that most participants in this study did not commonly read care labels, with only one participant in each life-stage group often reading labels (YA4, PwYC3, OA5). Two more OA participants conceded checking labels occasionally ‘before the first wash, then I know it’ (OA4) and ‘sometimes when buying’ (OA2). This finding is substantially lower than emerged in research by Cooper et al. (2019) which concluded that half of all consumers do not read labels and is significantly less than an EU survey by GINETEX (2017, 1) which established that ‘70% of Europeans follow the textile care instructions featured on the labels’. Interestingly, OA2 later elaborated that the reason she checks care labels when shopping is to avoid purchasing clothing with complicated laundry requirements explaining: ‘it's rare that I would buy something that couldn't tumble dry … I never handwash. I don't think there's anything in my wardrobe that is handwash only. I would avoid it’. Additionally, several participants declared that
they, in fact, cut off clothing labels as they irritate or annoy (YA2, PwYC2, PwYC4). These practices are in line with research (Cooper et al., 2019, 24) which concluded that ‘care labels are often confusing, misunderstood or ignored, not followed after the first wash, and cut out if bulky or uncomfortable’. Interestingly, one YA participant (YA2) who expressed disappointment about a new jumper losing shape after just one wash disclosed later that the item had been washed in a 60° cycle and further, that she had not reviewed the garment care label advice: ‘I notice when I wash something that's wool, it kind of loses its texture … loses its shape a little’ … ‘a 60° cycle, that's what I use to wash everything’. In the wardrobe interview YA2 agreed that future reference to care labelling was fundamental: ‘I didn't look at the care label … it's too late now! (checking label) OK, it says 30°!’

Regarding awareness and understanding of clothing composition many participants here claimed that they knew a garments fabric composition by seeing or feeling it. However, prompted by discussion referencing her clothing diary entry, YA1 latterly expressed ‘looking at the labels for this diary, checking them, some of the items I thought were wool were actually synthetic! I could have thrown them in the washing machine! I never look at what they are made from, but I will now as it does make a difference on price and care’. Cooper et al. (2019, 24) finding similar knowledge gaps and consumer misconceptions concluded that ‘many customers lack knowledge and understanding of different fibre and fabric types’ and that ‘this is exacerbated when shopping online’. Overall, the widespread disinterest amongst the participants here to care labels checking may suggest a disconnect, rather than a strong emotional connection, with garments which in turn may hamper appropriate clothing care subsequently and potentially curtail maximum garment longevity.

Laundry care practices - Cycle and temperature

Most environmental impacts during the clothing active use lifecycle arise as a result of laundry practices (Laitala and Klepp, 2020; Cooper et al., 2019; Wolf et al., 2014; Jack, 2013). Analysis of comments and practices related to wash cycle and wash temperature indicate that participants were largely unaware that ‘washing clothes is commonly understood to reduce the lifespan of clothes’ (Jack, 2013, 672) or that laundry processes have a multitude of environmental impacts associated with the consumption of water, energy, chemicals and cleansers (Wolf et al., 2014). Participants across all lifecycle
groups routinely employed machine washing temperatures of 40° and above. Only one participant in this research (PwYc1) revealed regularly employing a lower 30° cycle. This participant expressed concern regarding energy costs and garment deterioration of hotter cycles saying, ‘you're washing at 30 most of the time and its also an energy saver … I do think if it is too hot it just wreaks the clothes anyway’ (PwYc1). This strongly contrasts with responses of YA2 who identified ‘if they are not whites, wash them all together … just put them in and whatever happens, happens … I use 60° to wash everything’. PwYC4 also employed very hot cycles for children's clothes explaining ‘a 60° wash is needed to get the stains off’, while others employed a hot wash occasionally, for example, ‘for sheets’ (OA1) or ‘for sheets and bed linen’ (OA2). Remarkably, recent advances in cold water technologies and detergents did not emerge as a feature of laundry patterns prevailing amongst this cohort. Clothing laundry practices can be a source of inconspicuous consumption in households and the wash temperature practices emerging here tally with Cooper et al. (2019) where consumers were resistant to low temperature or less frequent laundering on grounds of hygiene and this finding requires further consideration at policy level.

**Practices of wash frequency**

There is consensus in the literature that laundry has a high environmental impact. Laitala et al. (2020) found that laundering frequency is the most influential factor for differences in the environmental impacts per wear between garment types. Yates and Evans (2016, 112) agreed that ‘increasing use of washing machines and the escalation of associated environmental impacts’ are resulting in more ‘resource intensive patterns of laundry’. They also acknowledge that different standards of laundry frequency exist, and this rate can have a large impact on clothing lifespans and on environmental impact (ibid.). When wash frequency and care practices to consciously extend wear between washing were analysed, it was evident that varying concepts and practices of cleanliness existed across this cohort. Amongst the YAs a feeling of carelessness arose towards wash cycle selection along with inattention to advance clothes sorting. When asked about extending wear between washes one YA replied, ‘I don't ever consider that’ (YA3). In the PwYC group there emerged a concerted effort to extend time between washing by all but one participant, nonetheless, it was clear that the rationale for this was reducing the overall volume of laundry, rather than a sustainability agenda. PwYC 1 and 3 both mentioned pretending to children that an item had been washed and replacing it back into use after
airing, folding or spot cleaning, thus reducing wash frequency and garment deterioration inadvertently while prioritising overall laundry volume. PwYC4 however, described washing children's clothes after every wear, revealing when probed that this practice was not due to heavy soiling but rather enabled outfits to be laundered together and ready for wear again periodically. This finding aligns with UK research whereby it was claimed that UK customers are more likely to wash clothing after 1 wear than any other EU country (Environmental Audit Committee, 2019) and which suggest that used or worn garments are routinely consigned as ‘dirty’ after they are worn irrespective of whether they are dirty, in part because of normative injunctions to not wear the same clothes on consecutive days (Gram-Hanssen, 2007). OA participants in this study expressed more strongly the importance of not over-laundering garments, but again did not connect this action to sustainability benefits. OA1 explained: ‘I wash something when it needs washing, when you've stained it … or when it smells … I don't wash everything everyday or every time I wear it’ while OA 5 described ‘I wouldn't be throwing them out into the wash everyday or every wear’.

Participants did disclose some encouraging actions undertaken to extend wear potential between washes. YA 1 recounted removing minor stains from garments enabling them to be worn again. YA 4 described: ‘I would try to wear a garment more than once if I can, before washing I would be visually checking for dirt and assessing how often I have worn it’. PWYC 3 explained: ‘I will do the sniff test, especially on heavier items and fold them up for another wear or air them and then put them back in the wardrobe’. OA 1 described her approach to a dress worn for only a few hours: ‘it smelt ok, and it was clean, I hung it up and I wore it again today’. While OA5 mentioned: ‘I brush [trousers] and hang them up and they would do again’. However, in response to questions regarding extending wear between washes YA1 identified ‘I have enough clothes to not really need to do that’. Evidently, in this research a variety of care approaches and wear practices existed across the cohort and ‘understanding the context of routines and expectations of the people who perform laundry holds potential to radically reduce resource consumption’ (Jack, 2013, 666). Socio-cultural norms and acceptable practices of cleanliness are tightly held impact behaviours, and, in this regard, transformative shifts require much encouragement and elevated prominence within sustainability discourses. Moreover, it is important that positive existing good practices is spotlighted, valued, and encouraged rather than considered something to guilty hide.
Laundry drying practices

Yates and Evans (2016) proposed consideration of eco-labelling on garments to increase householder awareness by promoting the vast environmental benefits possible with line-drying. Such advice was not required by participants in this study as the overwhelming majority identified preferring to line-dry laundry outside. However, weather was cited as a constraining factor for natural air drying by over half the cohort. Commonly, all the participants had invested in ways to overcome weather influences while still enabling line-drying of laundry, for example, fourteen of the fifteen participants indicated owning a clotheshorse for hanging laundry to dry indoors, while one (OA5) used a rack over a solid-fuel range cooker for the same purpose. Several other mechanisms were employed to overcome adverse weather conditions while still enabling natural line-drying outside, for example, installing a covered outdoor drying area (PwYC1, PwYC2, PwYC3, PwYC5, OA4, OA5) or purchasing standalone covered clothesline (PwYC4, OA2). It is apparent, that such mechanisms were particularly important for all participants in the PwYC group where laundry drying was a daily task and the overall number of garments being laundered was more extensive.

Regarding mechanical laundry drying, only one participant (OA3) selected tumble dryer use over line-drying for most laundry items. OA3 identified the rationale for her approach as convenience explaining: ‘there is a line, but I am very lazy. It doesn't go out to the line very often’. Another participant in the OA group also linked laziness with tumble dryer use indicating ‘if there's loads of smalls I'll put them in the tumble dryer, instead of the time it takes to individually hang them’ (OA2). In the YA group a different rationale for tumble dryer use emerged; in this case linked to timelines for return to college as explained by several YA’s (YA1, YA2, YA3). When describing her favourite jeans YA2 explained: ‘if I wash them on a Sunday they'll go in the dryer, if I wash them on a Saturday they might line-dry in time’ and further elaborated: ‘when I line-dry them they tend to be a bit stiffer … I prefer them tumble dried, they're soft and warm then to wear immediately … ‘. The capacity of tumble drying to produce a soft garment finish was echoed by several other participants who divulged using the dryer ‘to finish off’ (YA4, PwYC3, OA5) and ‘to freshen up garments’ (YA4, OA2, OA5). Although previous research has indicated that the selected clothes ‘drying method contributes significantly to the variance in energy use between garments made of different fibres’ (Laitala et al., 2020, 21), participants here mainly expressed concern regarding the
energy costs for mechanical drying, rather than the sustainability impact (YA5, PwYC1, OA5). Nonetheless, participants were obviously committed to selecting air-drying over other less sustainable drying methods, although only 1 participant directly connected this choice to improved environmental impacts (PwYC5). It is important that examples of already existing low carbon, sufficiency practices (such as widespread line drying) are made visible, recognised as good practice, reinforced, and positively encouraged.

**Reflections on clothing care practices**

Considering the significant heterogeneity in everyday clothing care and cleanliness practices evident amongst this cohort, some opportunities emerge to leverage more sustainable care practices and to foster sustainable maximum garment use. Firstly, the overwhelming disinclination by participants to read clothing labels for care and materiality information was seen to adversely impact garment longevity in some instances. Clothing care labelling methods should be reconsidered to ensure ease of communication of post purchase care, durability, and circularity instructions; contemporary modes such as quick response (QR) digital code labelling and eco-labelling could potentially be effectively employed and the mechanisms for attaching labels to garments could also be reviewed. Secondly, data revealed multiple examples of everyday clothing care being in fact comprised of inadvertent, routinised, habitual practices and decision making rather than conscious action. Moreover, participants in this research were largely unaware of the impact of frequent washing on decreased garment lifespan, nor was wash frequency directly connected to negative clothing sustainability impacts. It is plausible that information on the importance of sustainable maximum use is so subsumed amongst the prominence of industry driven sustainable fashion messaging, motivated from a sustainable consumption, acquisition, and consumerist perspective, that it is ineffectual. There is potential therefore, for future sustainable clothing policy initiatives to further concentrate on promoting the positive sustainability impacts of reduced wash frequency and lengthening clothing wear rather than continuing to value technological advances in clothing care equipment and products and for clothing users to become much more informed and conscious actors in the sustainability agenda.
5.5 Unlocking Insights - Everyday Clothing Consumption Practices and Impact on Sustainability Transitions

This paper focused on the impact of clothing wear and care practices during the everyday active use phase and the potential to foster more sustainable maximum use, and therefore, consumption. The research sought to provide a snapshot into actual everyday clothing consumption in Ireland exposing micro-level daily routines and practice-cultures, where limited qualitative research currently exists. The findings presented above revealed four emerging clothing wear practices along with four notable approaches to clothing care garnered from an intergenerational cohort. The insights gleaned add to current understandings of clothing active use post-purchase, revealing opportunities to extend positive action to maximise clothing use, thus increasing clothing longevity, and may also offer a contribution towards more efficacious future initiatives and policy development.

Within the growing global discourse seeking innovative solutions for a systemic, sustainability challenge of unprecedented scale and difficulty, households are a valuable site for research into everyday consumption behaviours (Head et al., 2013) and sustainable practices (Foden et al., 2018). Concentrating this study in the ordinary, real-life, context in which practices occur yielded a deeper understanding of the socio-cultural influences and patterns of everyday actions on clothing consumption in Ireland. A practice-oriented perspective, in this case together with intimate wardrobe studies, helped to yield important insights into user everyday practices. From data analysis for this study it emerged, on multiple occasions, that participants were merely not aware or conscious of their everyday clothing wear and care behaviours until they were prompted and compelled to review them. Furthermore, it was repeatedly evident that participants had not previously considered the sustainability impact of their routine, everyday actions, or indeed considered viable alternative approaches before being interviewed. Several earlier household-based studies explored ‘inadvertent environmentalism’ (Hitchings et al., 2015, 369), and considered the potential to be ‘accidently sustainable’ (Woodward, 2015, 131) or to undertake ‘inconspicuous consumption’ in the ‘habitual use of resources in daily routines’ (Jack, 2013, 666). Like this research, those studies employed a social practice-theoretical lens to understand and uncover everyday consumption and appreciated the potential of the mundane, everyday context for creation of ‘intervention ideas … to translate into low impact lifestyles’ (Hitchings et
al., 2015, 269). A range of barriers and enablers to sustainable clothing consumption emerged, such as the impact of social media on repeat garment wear, the widespread disregard of garment care labels and the considerable acceptability of second-hand clothing wear. Bringing such unconscious actions and complex routine clothing practices to the fore more broadly has positive potential for improved sustainability of garment wear and care practices into the future and a range of innovative avenues for enhanced knowledge transfer and development of user engagement and agency must be employed to affect progress.

In conclusion, transitioning towards more sustainable household consumption is a key contemporary challenge, and operationalising such transformation at societal level is proving exceedingly slow and complex. This research illuminated some areas where participants are already, consciously, or unconsciously, engaged in activities and actions that can reduce everyday clothing consumption and enable sustainable maximum use, yet some of these practices are not yet widely accepted or promoted. For example, respondents in this research undertook daily actions such reduced wash frequency, repeat garment wear between washing, line-drying, and even refolding clothing items to pretend they had been laundered, with some level of unease and embarrassment. While admittedly some of the examples arising in this study represent only small actions, even small changes can play a part in improving the overall sustainability picture if they are widely adopted and further, such awareness may also correspondingly induce positive spillover impacts on other daily household practices or resource use. Evidently, varying practices and standards prevail regarding household resource use, cleanliness and comfort, and this study additionally demonstrated deviation across intergenerational groups. It is important that these variances are more widely explored, understood, and shared through future research. Furthermore, examples of existing good practice in anti-consumption and pro-usage must be recognised and promoted in order for them to become increasingly culturally and socially acceptable by the collective and therefore, more impactful in supporting sustainability transitions.
Chapter 6: Article 3

Article 3:


Sew what for sustainability? Exploring intergenerational attitudes and practices to clothing repair in Ireland.

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Abstract: While a traditional practice, clothing repair has recently garnered more attention from geographers and social scientists examining potential pathways to increase sustainable consumption and contribute to a circular economy. Clothing repair is fundamentally about extending the active life of garments and is a key phase of a closed-loop system effectively reducing the need for virgin resources thus avoiding clothing obsolescence or disposal as waste. Repair as a societal phenomenon in Ireland is an under-researched topic, this paper aims to explore the potential of an experience-centered perspective to advance understandings of current attitudes to and practices of clothing repair.

This research study employs innovative wardrobe studies and practice theoretical approaches to provide a snapshot of lived intergenerational practices of everyday clothing wear, care, and repair in Ireland. The findings reported in this paper relate specifically to clothing repair and arise from empirical in-depth interviews which took place in participants’ own homes and in, or in close proximity to, their wardrobes. The paper highlights the complex multidimensional impact that attachment, memories, and materiality play in user decisions to repair, or not to repair, a garment, and associated decisions related to clothing discard. The paper unpacks intergenerational competencies and confidence in undertaking everyday clothing repair, user-repair cultures, and sewing skills. The discussion concludes with a critical consideration of findings in the context of wider debates surrounding sustainable clothing consumption and the circular economy.

Keywords: clothing repair, practices, intergenerational, sustainable consumption, Ireland

Figure 8. Article 3 Cover Page
Abstract

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Keywords: Clothing Repair, Practices, Intergenerational, Sustainable Consumption, Ireland

6.1 Introduction

Repair and alteration of clothing have been practiced for generations, both in a commercial context and in the home with much value traditionally placed on garment materiality and longevity. Lately, however, it is widely understood that the cultural and economic value attributed to clothing items has dramatically altered in today’s mass-produced, fast-fashion society, and garment lifespans are significantly truncated.
Therefore, it is timely to consider, what attitudes to and practices of garment repair and alteration exist amongst contemporary clothing users? Does value gained through possession, complex clothing topographies, personal histories, geographies, and memory become significant as an instigating factor for clothing repair and longevity in everyday active use? And further, can current clothing repair practices provide any insights to progress a sustainable consumption policy agenda or approaches? Recognising repair as a societal phenomenon and an under-researched aspect of the clothing consumption spectrum, this paper aims to examine clothing repair practices taking place in Ireland. While there is emerging interest in the topic, studies exploring repair practices as part of the sustainability agenda are under-represented in the global sustainable consumption research landscape. Drawing on empirical data gathered in Ireland, this paper will provide a snapshot of approaches to, and intentions, towards clothing repair across three life-stage groups with the potential to understand current barriers and enablers to repair which may have implications for future sustainability policy impact.

The initial section of this paper situates the research within recent advances pertaining to the circular economy, clothing sustainability and repair cultures. It details the necessity to extend clothing lifespan, explores repair as a critical aspect of this and outlines the importance of understanding attitudes to and practices of clothing repair in the content of attempts to advance clothing sustainability. The study is then contextualised by considering the significance of garnering intergenerational, life-stage insights for sustainability transitions and, the place and household-based situation of this work. The methods section illuminates the potential of wardrobe methodologies in operationalising practice-centred explorations of clothing repair and provides an overview of the multi-method qualitative approach undertaken. Empirical findings presented demonstrate the central themes arising, reveal attitudes to and practices of clothing repair in Ireland and highlight the generational insights gathered. The conclusion section offers an analysis that situates the contribution of the research in broader practice research and sustainability policy contexts.

6.2 The Circular Economy and Clothing Repair Cultures

Recent policy level shifts at European Union level aim to accelerate transition from a linear towards a more sustainable, circular economy (European Commission, 2020; 2019a) and to advance a pathway towards achievement of the Sustainable Development
Goals (United Nations, 2015). The Commission has specifically identified clothing and textiles as a priority product category and has presented a new systemic strategy to scale up sustainable and circular textiles to tackle the impacts of fast fashion and to ensure textiles are increasingly durable, repairable, reusable, and recyclable (EEA, 2022; European Commission, 2019b). Alarmingly, in the last decade, the cost of new garments has decreased relative to inflation, yet each item purchased is worn less, perhaps as little as just ten times (EEA, 2019; EMF, 2017). The adverse impact of such unsustainable textile use is vast; textiles have the fourth-highest impact on the environment and climate change over their lifecycle, after food, housing, and mobility (EEA, 2022).

Lengthening and extending product lifespans is agreed upon as a critical aspect of sustainable consumption (Vesterinen & SyrJälä, 2022; Shi et al., 2022; Paço et al., 2021; Van der Velden, 2021). Historically, cloth was considered a valuable commodity, and clothing was regularly repaired and maintained (Brown, 2012) ‘shaped by factors such as home economics or material scarcity’ (McCorkill, 2021, 1). The potential for (re)engagement with clothing repair and maintenance, is gaining attention as a means of prolonging clothing active life and increasing sustainability and circularity of garments (Gwilt, 2021, Diddi & Yan, 2019; Van der Velden, 2021) although the location of much such research to date is in workshop, community, and institutional settings, rather than in the household. De Castro (2021, 8) endorses clothing repair noting that ‘what has made economic sense for previous generations will make environmental sense for generations to come’. Repair is a key phase of a circular economy, as repair extends product lifespans ensuring longer continuous active use, reducing the need for virgin resources, and avoiding product obsolescence and disposal as waste. Moreover, repair enhances the viability of second-hand clothing markets (Cernansky, 2022) and, as most repairs are undertaken locally, generates viable regional enterprise. Currently, a global socio-cultural or activist movement known as ‘right to repair’ is gathering momentum and is advocating for increased regulation governing repair, together with producer innovation to support easy access to repair services, resources and availability of product spare parts thus avoiding planned obsolescence (EEA, 2022). Further and upstream, at clothing design stage, the capacity to design for repairability or to develop garments that actively facilitate repair, altering, or replacing of components is also being promoted to enable repair be undertaken effortlessly later downstream (McCorkill, 2021; Laitala & Klepp, 2020; Heinze, 2020; Connor-Crab & Rigby, 2019). There appears however, to be some disparity regarding the current prevalence of clothing repair which has been
reported as ranging from ‘largely disappeared’ (Gwilt, 2014, 1) to ‘currently fashionable’ (McCorkill, 2021, 1).

Various types of clothing repair approaches are evident across literature with repair practices spanning a spectrum of complexity, precision, and effectiveness. Barker (2007) explains that clothing repair may include preventative mending, darning, patching, component replacement, as well as other repairs and general maintenance. Depending on repair complexity, a range of tools and equipment is required to undertake repair tasks, ranging from basic hand sewing tools to sewing machines. Gwilt (2021) classified garment users as possessing either novice or amateur skill levels and highlighted preferences for hidden versus visible repairs, although the latter require a greater level of technical skill and competence to achieve. Collins (2019, 7) earlier explored the socio-cultural acceptability of visible repair in research amongst youths, as well examining their perceptions of the wearability of older clothing and found these elements ‘not inherently undesirable’. While, exploring household object maintenance, but important here from a socio-cultural perspective, Gregson et al. (2009, 248) identified a ‘spectrum of practices’ related to repair ranging from ‘the quick fix mask’, which may not fully erase object damage, through to complete ‘restoration’ or ‘refabrication’. That research connected repair practices to ongoing consumer-object-value and cautioned that the former approach may devalue a given object, while the latter potentially elevates it higher. Accordingly, repair success or failure may link to item retention or obsolescence and therefore, potentially to further consumption (ibid.). Jain (2021) meanwhile, categorised three types of repairs explaining that; self-repair is undertaken by the garment user (in the home or in a group setting) in possession of a range of competencies and tools; paid repair is undertaken by professional repair services, tailors or by fashion brand services and unpaid repair is completed for the user by a close relative or friend, often a parent or grandparent. Following Diddi & Yan (2019, 3) clothing repair, in the context of this study, is defined broadly as ‘tasks undertaken to extend the use period of clothing that is damaged and/or does not fit (e.g., fix rips, sew buttons, altering the fit of the garment)’. Further, in this research, acts of clothing repair, mending, and alteration are largely described interchangeably to identify practices undertaken to enable extension of a garment lifespan for everyday active use and the research focus is on repair at clothing user level, rather than as a fashion industry sustainability tactic (Cernansky, 2022).
Motivations for, and barriers to, repair are important to consider when examining the pervasiveness of the practice. Several qualitative studies noted lack of time and lack of repair competency as barriers to repair practice (Laitalia & Kleep 2020; Cooper et al., 2019; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Gwilt, 2014). In research by Diddi & Yan (2019) the key motivations identified for mending clothes included longevity, reduced environmental impact, and emotional attachment to garments; disincentives to mending included the high cost of professional alterations services, lack of repair skills, and time required. Likewise, McLaren & McLauchlan (2015) also identified repair costs and absence of both time and sewing skills as barriers to undertaking clothing repair and moreover added the shameful social stigma of wearing visibly mended clothing as tied to traditions of poverty and hardship, and user detachment fuelled by a vast array of alternative low-cost fast fashion garments as additional deterrents. Furthermore, a lack of knowledge regarding the environmental impact of clothing and fashion was later noted amongst study participants (McLaren et al., 2016). Jackson (2014, 228) proposed a philosophy of ‘broken world thinking’ as a fulcrum point for ‘rethinking repair’ rather than allowing breakdown and decay. Norum (2013) explored the desire and ability of consumers to perform clothing maintenance activities and raised concerns regarding the transfer and ongoing acquisition of maintenance-related skills with the decrease in inclusion of clothing repair in educational curricula. Earlier, Fisher et al. (2008) claimed that clothing users do not routinely repair items that become damaged except for perfunctory mending practices such as hemming and reattaching buttons. The dearth of repair engagement in that study was attributed to a lack of repair skills, garment attractiveness, easy availability of new clothing (particularly considering prohibitive professional repair costs), and ease of access to professional repair services (ibid.). Memories and emotional attachment to clothing require consideration too, as an influencer or barrier for repair. Literature has highlighted that how much garments are valued has an influence on the level of care and maintenance they will receive and the likelihood of repair occurring (Nazli, 2021). Additionally, different types of garment value beyond purchase price value have been identified, such as functional, aesthetic, emotional, social, and sensory value (Niinimaki & Armstrong, 2013; Fletcher, 2012; Laitala & Boks, 2012), all of which may act as a motivation or barrier for repair and longevity. Understandably, clothing repair activities cannot be examined in isolation as practices directly link to unworn clothing and clothing discard practices. Clothing discard decisions are explained as largely tied to an individual users’ perceptions of self (Alevizou et al., 2021) and such decisions are shown to occur at all stages of the
(sustainable) consumption process.

More recently, self-repair practices have seen a move out of the household with repairs instead taking place in formally or informally organised collaborative community workshops, mending clubs, and repair cafés, providing for shared development of participant skills and competencies, social exchanges, and opportunities for overall enhancement of participant and societal wellbeing. Durrani (2018, 1) describes such repair cafés as ‘communal repair/mending workshops that seek to provide an alternative to the make-take-waste paradigm dominating the fast fashion industry in most Western countries’. McLaren & McLauchlan (2015, 223) expound this type of ‘sharing economy’ approach to repair as having social and creative wellbeing outcomes as well as shared skill development potential. Lately, Gwilt (2021, 873), reporting on ‘Make, Do and Mend’ workshops organised in the UK, further adds materials pooling, advice sharing, participant enjoyment and development of deep social connection as advantages to undertaking garment mending in collaborative repair cafés as opposed to undertaking garment repair as an isolated, chore-based, task in the domestic setting. Meanwhile, Milburn (2017) supports a wider benefit of clothing repair activities as potentially mindful, thoughtful, ethical, and creative practices with the possibility to open discussions on meaning-making and materiality in clothing repair. Rodabaugh (2018, 79) concurs, relabelling hand-sewn repair as ‘mendfulness’ and extolling the many opportunities for creative expression which repair presents.

6.3 Research Context

When investigating repair practices, Ireland emerges as an interesting research context for several reasons. Firstly, as highlighted in a previous Irish Geography article, there is a dearth of literature examining sustainable consumption in Irish households (Lavelle & Fahy, 2016). This paper builds on that work to generate a more comprehensive picture of current clothing consumption and repair practices. Secondly, very little research on repairing as a sociological phenomenon is currently available in Ireland. A notable exception is the current Repair Acts Ireland project, which is engaged in mapping repair histories and activities, initially in one county, and in exploring therein repair services, community repair groups, voluntary repair collaborations and repair cafés. It is recording accounts of individual users repair behaviours with a view to both exhibition output and a practice research focus (for more information see: www.repairacts.ie/). Finally, Ireland has a rich heritage of engagement with fashion, clothing, and textile
craft industries (De Cléir, 2011). The data for this study was gathered in counties Donegal and Sligo, in the North West of Ireland, between July 2018 and May 2019 with both urban and rural participants evenly represented (Maguire & Fahy, 2021). Ultimately, attitudes to clothing repair and current clothing repair practices in Ireland are largely unknown at present and there is no current baseline data available on its repair. Consequently, this research study is timely and well placed to support real-life insights into the everyday consumption patterns and social norms of contemporary Irish clothing users.

Alevizou et al. (2021) call for more intergenerational research exploring fashion consumption. The lived worlds of different life-stage consumers regarding clothing repair are also unknown with little current literature available and only limited available internationally. For instance, Norum (2013, 2015 & 2017) report on significant gaps in clothing repair skills between baby boomer and Generation X cohorts to millennials and in clothing disposal to trash charity and second-hand stores (Norum, 2015). Meanwhile, Diddi & Yan (2019) reviewed the benefits of community mending events to foster opportunities to share knowledge across generations. In this research, three life-stage groups were selected for investigation, each comprising five participants. The intergenerational groups were delineated as follows: 18-24 years, termed in this study Young Adults (YA); 25-49 years, who represent a group of parents with young children (PwYC); and 50+ years, labelled as older adults (OA).

More recently, the everyday active use phase of clothing lifecycle has been the focus of practice research (Laitala & Klepp, 2020; Saunders et al., 2019; Fletcher & Kleep, 2017) and is believed to be a ‘critical fulcrum across which more sustainable practices might be leveraged’ (Gill et al., 2016, 33) with examination of user practices at the household scale an important element (Head et al., 2016). Cooper et al., (2019) and McLaren et al. (2016) recognised the value of researching clothing use, in-depth, including the immediate experiences, activities and material connections users have in their personal lived worlds. Specifically in relation to clothing consumption, several practice-based, household-based studies have emerged lately, for instance, Evan’s (2019) sociological review of everyday consumption patterns as practices, six points or moments of consumption are proposed over the lifecycle of a product: front-end acquisition, appropriation and appreciation (3A’s) and latter-end devaluation, divestment, and disposal (3D’s). Particularly pertinent here is the connection of the 3D’s to opportunities
for, and practices of, clothing repair, and user appreciation as a potential driver of clothing attachment and desire for repair. Nazli (2021) developed a repair motivation and barriers model illustrating the importance of a range of technical, value, and emotional aspects in influencing householder decisions to undertake repair. The work of Strengers et al. (2016) exploring changing patterns of householder’s energy practices is also useful in this context as how everyday practices interact, overlap, and potentially change is also relevant in overall explorations of clothing repair. It is specifically in clothing consumption patterns and social norm aspects within the household that this research study is situated, as understanding everyday ‘clothing practices in a holistic and contextualised manner’ is considered vital in providing insights into sustainable consumption (Woodward, 2015, 131).

6.4 Methods

For some time now a turn towards Social Practice Theory has been recognised as useful in explorations of everyday sustainable consumption patterns, enabling a refocusing from individualistic or systemic paradigms and allowing ‘practices, instead of individuals, become the units of analysis’ (Spaargaren, 2011, 815). Shove et al. (2012) clarified that practices are comprised of a trio of elements (material, competence and meaning) facilitating a distinct lens through which to explore everyday life. Practice theories and practice-focused studies have been increasingly employed to explain how and why particular forms of everyday human behaviours are adopted, popularised, changed, and influenced (Reid & Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019) and have also been applied in repair specific investigations (Durrani, 2018). In focusing on practices as dynamic, socially constructed everyday actions encompassing meanings, competences and materials enlightening understandings may emerge (Shove et al., 2012). However, experience-centred, practice-centred inquiry can present considerable methodological challenges, many of which relate to operationalising a practice-theoretical frame (Greene & Fahy, 2020). Such challenges are particularly intensified by the fact that the practices being explored are typically so routine and ingrained in the user’s subconscious that full consideration needs to be given to selecting methods that are appropriately adroit, inventive, and entirely embedded in the milieu/locale of participants.

In this research a practice-based, wardrobe approach was selected to investigate clothing repair within households. Employing innovative, multifaceted, quantitative wardrobe
methods (influenced by Fletcher & Kleep, 2017; McLaren et al., 2016; Whitson-Smith, 2018) the study generated an extensive and richly layered intergenerational dataset on repair practices as part of the active use phase of clothing. Gregson and Beale (2004, 690) explain wardrobe studies as ‘pivotally positioned in the practices of clothing consumption’ valuing the approach to unpack consumption practices. The methodologies employed here involved in-depth wardrobe interviews comprising a partial wardrobe audit undertaken in participants' homes, self-reported clothing diaries of a selected garment, and participant narrated household tours. The interview data was further supplemented with still photographs taken during the tour and of garments identified by the participant as having been previously repaired or altered (either personally or via a professional repair service). The diaries, photo-elicitation, and household tours, while providing valuable data (cf. Maguire & Fahy, 2021), were also vital to encourage and prompt participants to fully narrate their practice. This range of engaging, multi-sensory, and reflection stimulating wardrobe methodologies combined to motivate participants to uncover and thoughtfully review normally hidden and taken-for-granted everyday clothing repair practices.

Non-probability, purposive sampling was employed to engage five participants for each intergenerational group from across the population, and participants were recruited via college student unions and local community groups. Importantly, selection criteria were based on targeting participants of the three selected age and life-stages across the generational spectrum (following McLaren et al., 2016) rather than centered on user repair capacity, activity or sustainability inclinations. Thirteen female and two male participants were recruited in total, the overall cohort therefore, was not gender balanced and gender was not an investigative focus. As illustrated in Table 1 below, which details the sample group, each participant was allocated an identifier to protect anonymity.
Table 1: Profile of study participants across three selected generational/life-stage groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Adult (18-24 years)</td>
<td>YA1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Hospitality Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YA5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time College Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents with Young Children (25-49 years)</td>
<td>PwYC1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Homemaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PwYC5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Full-time Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adult (50+ years)</td>
<td>OA1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Self-Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Retired Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Donegal Urban</td>
<td>Full-time Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OA5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Sligo Rural</td>
<td>Part-time Farmer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We acknowledge that the findings of this study are qualitative, local, and limited; they are not representative of the wider Irish population yet do provide rich data about user clothing repair practices across a spectrum of life-stages, of which relatively little is known to date. Further, due to the selected approach, findings here are a snapshot, providing a lens into given life-stage moments, rather than a life course approach as biographic interviews were not undertaken and therefore, this research cannot ascertain whether the practice of clothing repair in Ireland has changed or indeed lessened over time. Ethical approval for this study was detailed and robust, particularly due to the intimate location of the research in participant’s bedrooms and wardrobes (Maguire & Fahy, 2021).
The overall study analysis of primary data relating to participant’s individual cases involved vertical analysis, exploring each specific case followed by an examination of the themes of wear, care, and repair across cases (horizontal analysis), within the life-stage groupings. Following transcription of all interview material and collation of still photographs and researcher reflections, a comprehensive three-phase strategy was adopted for analysing data generated by Problem-Centred Interviews, in line with Witzel & Reiter (2012, 102). For the purposes of this paper, data analysed is drawn from each of two interviews undertaken with the fifteen participants (an initial Problem-Centred Interview and a second in-depth wardrobe interview, n=30 interviews) when discussion focused on repair practices together with the partial wardrobe audit of various garments in their wardrobes.

6.5 Findings and Discussion: Insights into Clothing Repair Practices in Ireland

The participants involved in this research directly and indirectly discussed three significant emergent themes: Repair know-how, Procurement of professional repair services, and Repair decision-making. Repair know-how ranged from minor hand-sewn repairs to more advanced adjustments to garment fit, style changes and in some cases, machine worked garment upcycling or alterations, comparable to earlier research (Gwilt, 2021; Gregson et al., 2009; Barker, 2007). Know-how here relates solely to practices undertaken by participants personally and denotes possession or lack of clothing repair skills and competencies. The procurement theme describes access to, and use of, professional sewing services for garment repair and alteration; professional repair/alteration services (hereafter PRS) include all commercial repair or alteration services paid for by participants including local tailors, dressmakers, the nationwide Zip Yard franchise and clothing remodelling services. The final theme emerging across responses, Repair decision-making, denotes participants' underlying beliefs and values surrounding their decisions and actions to repair a clothing item as well as barriers cited to extending a garment's everyday active use lifespan.

6.5.1 Repair know-how

In the sample explored here, personal clothing repair competency ranged from a basic capacity to assume simple garment repairs using hand sewing and basic tools to very competent technical capacity to undertake advanced garment repairs, alterations, and style detailing utilising a sewing machine. Further, the spectrum of practices from ‘quick
fix mask’ to ‘restoration’ (Gregson et al., 2009, 248) were observed in use across the cohort. Such variations in repair know-how in the group are reflective of previous studies (Fisher et al., 2008). Most participants in this research (11 out of 15) possessed sufficient skills to enable them to undertake, at a minimum, rudimentary hand-sewn garment repair practices (as defined by Barker, 2007) and expressed the confidence to do so. The level of skill of these participants can most accurately be identified as equivalent to ‘novice’ status, as delineated by Gwilt (2021), with two of the eleven possessing more proficient ‘amateur’ repair competencies. Four participants admitted to possessing no sewing skills (one YA and three PwYC), of whom one was a male participant and three were female.

All but one participant identified having learned their sewing competency skills in school and the post-primary subject Home Economics was predominantly mentioned as the direct curricular source, reflecting Norum (2013; 2015). Only one male participant in the YA group (YA5) did not attribute skills development to school and instead explained learning basic sewing skills from his mother; however, there was no opportunity to further explore curriculum subject uptake and choice within the research scope. Additionally, several participants (7 in total) attributed close family members to further contributing to their sewing skills development non-formally, within the family unit (mentioned by all participants in this regard were their mothers, plus in one instance a grandmother). Interestingly, all the OA participants identified learning to sew in school, reflecting the prevalence of sewing as a core component part of earlier education curricula (NCCA, 2016).

While possessing repair skills and capacity is important, practising such skills to undertake clothing repair was a key focus of this research. Congruent with earlier studies (Fisher et al., 2008) findings indicated that day-to-day implementation of repair skills was scant amongst some participants. OA participants were most likely to engage in everyday repairs while the other two groups (YA, PwYC) were inclined often to turn to close family members, particularly mothers, when an everyday clothing repair was required. This reflects a networking practice also recognised and favoured in earlier research, labelled ‘private repair’ (Laitala et al., 2021) or ‘unpaid repair’ (Jain, 2021). Uncovering a corresponding networking repair culture and practice amongst two of these groups in the North West of Ireland is remarkable, and within a sustainable consumption agenda it is important to consider how such networking practices may
evolve in the future as repair competencies of the wider population change, or potentially diminish. Participants in this study mainly reported striving to achieve repairs that were invisible or hidden and therefore, succeeded in returning a garment to its original aesthetic state, in so far as possible, comparable to Gwilt (2021). While, in the case of alterations both self-performed and outsourced, there was consensus among the participants in their expressed desire for the modification to improve overall garment wearability.

6.5.2. Procurement of professional repair services

Participants agreed that they highly valued PRS, both for convenience and for the professional level of finish achieved. Twelve out of fifteen participants who regularly, or occasionally, availed of PRS agreed that they considered such services provided good value for money. This finding contrasts with outcomes of previous research where the cost of PRS was viewed as prohibitive and was regarded as a barrier to repair (Cooper et al., 2019; Diddi & Yan, 2019; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). Moreover, there was a consensus amongst this cohort, that it was easily possible for participants to access PRS in their locale, perhaps indicative of a strong level of repair culture in the North West region which makes way for such services to exist and to remain viable businesses. This outcome conflicts with previous research in the UK which indicated that convenient access to PRS was challenging (Fisher et al., 2008) although several participants here acknowledged the lengthy timeframe needed for PRS repair work to be completed. PRS were employed by all but three participants in this cohort overall; PwYC3 and OA5 were both self-proficient in repair and did not need to outsource the task, while PwYC4 had access to unpaid repair via a competent relation. It must, however, be acknowledged that use of PRS among YA participants was frequently linked to alterations of occasion wear items e.g., debs or prom clothing, perhaps indicating that rates for PRS are more easily justified for high-cost garments and special events, and that such services are not used routinely for everyday repairs. Moreover, within the OA group some interesting insights emerged on the use of PRS, with participant opinions quite varied on the value for money provided by such services. OA1 believed PRS very reasonable and worthwhile in increasing a garment’s overall value and lifespan making it more wearable, unique and well-fitting. OA3 agreed musing that she often adds an extra tip when using PRS as she feels the fee for such a skilled service is low and wondered how PRS businesses can remain profitable. However, OA2 and
OA4 both disclosed avoiding PRS; OA2 explained specifically avoiding purchase of clothing that required adaption aiming to circumvent the cost of PRS and OA4, who acquired most of her clothing second-hand, deliberated: ‘it’s just never really worth my while… it might cost more than the item cost me to buy… they [clothes] would probably go if they needed repair…’.

6.5.3. Repair decision-making

Interview participants revealed a wide range of reasons that influenced whether they chose to repair a particular piece of clothing, many of which had already been identified in previous research. Some of the key reasons cited included their personal level of repair skill and confidence (Nazli, 2021; Jain, 2021; Gwilt, 2021, 2014; Cooper et al., 2019; Norum, 2017, 2013; Fisher et al., 2008); the time it would take for them to complete the repair (Laititalia & Kleep 2020; Diddi & Yan, 2019; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015); and what the garment meant to them (Nazli, 2021; Niinimaki & Armstrong, 2013). An important and unexpected reason for not repairing a garment, as articulated by participants in this study, was disinclination or laziness. When we explored this reason further, we found that it was linked to having a wide range of similar garments available to wear. This illustrates user detachment, a key consequence of fast fashion (McLaren & McLauchlan 2015; Bravo, 2020), and an important challenge to fostering more sustainable clothing practices. Probing further in relation to participants underlying beliefs around garment value, two elements emerged. Firstly, value for some participants related to the memories and emotional attachment they placed on the clothing item in need of repair. Secondly, in some instances, value was factored into participants decision to repair recalling the initial purchase price of the item and trying to balance this with either the potential cost of repair (PRS) or the time cost required to complete the repair (personal repair). In all cases, the emotional attachment to the garment involved swayed the choice to ultimately undertake the repair. Conversely, for several participants more detached, the value balance resulted in a particular garment not being repaired as it had been acquired for a low investment initially (e.g., a garment originally sourced in second-hand shop - OA4) or the garment was ultimately not sufficiently valuable enough to be considered suitable for repair (e.g., a low cost, fast-fashion clothing item - PwYC4). These insights on the underlying rationales driving user detachment across intergenerational groups, serve to further our understandings of repair cultures amongst contemporary Irish clothing users in this region and are very
useful in considering potential future sustainable policy approaches.

6.5.4 Repair practices viewed through an intergenerational lens: a discussion

Detailed within-case and cross-case analysis was undertaken with a focus on everyday clothing repair practices viewed through an intergenerational lens. Noteworthy insights which emerged amongst the three groups in this study are discussed below.

While repair was not a commonplace everyday practice amongst the YA (18-24 years) cohort, this study revealed that wearing clothing that has been repaired is an acceptable practice for this group. Four of the five YA participants possessed basic hand sewing skills sufficient to undertake minor repairs themselves, with only one of the five (YA3) having no sewing skills. The key reasons why repair skills were not often employed amongst this group were cited as lack of time; lack of confidence; and although identifying value in PRS, YA participants admitted to only using professional repair services occasionally. YA1 did not practice repair herself, despite having sewing and craft skills, but revealed instead often using a pin as a temporary ‘first-aid’ measure (reflective of Gregson et al., 2009, quick fix approach) until her mother can more permanently repair the item later. The same participant did, in contrast, report often engaging in simple garment restyling e.g., cutting off bows, ribbons etc. to simplify a garment or adding a premade collar. YA2 disclosed occasionally undertaking minor hand-sewn garment repairs however, stated that mainly she simply ‘does not have the time now to repair’, which she acknowledged as ‘really bad’. YA3 possessed no sewing skills but identified that she ‘will have to learn’. YA 4 disclosed that although she did learn sewing skills in school and still possesses basic skills, she does not have the confidence to repair ‘in case [she] would make a mistake’. This barrier of stress and uncertainty in a novice repairer reflects recent research by Nazli (2021) whereby the potential for reversibility was included in a repair motivation and barriers model created. Overall, these YA responses reflect earlier research (Laitalia & Kleep 2020; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Gwilt, 2021, 2014) regarding the barriers to repair which were dominated by cost and lack of time and skills.

When the influence of familial repair culture on practices was examined YA4 explained that there was little culture of clothing repair in her home environment and that while there was ‘a sewing box…it's not used too often around here!’ This contrasted with the other four young adults interviewed (YA1, YA2, YA3, YA5) whose parents (all
mothers) often undertook clothing repairs for them. For example, YA1’s mother resizes items she buys in charity shops and shortens her jeans/trousers. YA5 frequently gives items for repair to his mother who sews them by machine for larger repairs and by hand for minor mending mirroring Fisher et al. (2008) where parental and grandparent involvement in repair was evident.

A very positive finding emerging for future sustainability transitions was the overall acceptability amongst the YA group to wearing clothing that had been repaired. This tolerability aligns with earlier research (Collins, 2019) which concluded that garment repairs, (both visible/invisible) were not inherently undesirable to this age cohort. However of concern, and reflecting earlier studies whereby clothes are often discarded due to minor damage (Alevizou et al., 2021; Cooper et al., 2019), four of the five YAs in this study admitted not even considering repair, in some instances, and instead revealed using the bin to discard worn or damaged items: ‘clothing beyond repair would be binned’ (YA1); ‘if it’s ripped, I just throw it in the bin’ (YA2); ‘then those that aren’t in good condition just go in the bin’ (YA3); ‘It goes to the bin normally’ (YA5). These statements demonstrate the urgent need, as government reports have previously highlighted (EEA, 2022; WRAP, 2019), to continue to raise awareness amongst young consumers that textiles do not belong in regular mixed municipal waste streams and to ensure adequate infrastructure for appropriate textile recycling and material reuse. While it is not possible to scale up the approach across the entire population, we proffer that the innovative wardrobe studies and practice-based approaches employed here, has proven effective in uncovering hidden meanings and developing deep connections with household participants of all ages and has furthermore, enabled participants to reflect on their everyday clothing use and repair practices and to reconsider them. One example of interest is a disclosure made by YA 2, in interview 2:

When we last talked, you got me thinking, like why don’t I just mend my clothes instead of throwing them out and so I brought a [sewing] kit up from home…I mean, you don’t have to throw it out, just try to fix them...

Considering whether there is potential to positively leverage more sustainable user behaviour and to bridge the knowledge-behaviour gap, it was enlightening that by involvement in the study, YA2 had reconsidered her usual divestment approach and was now willing and prepared to engage in basic garment repair (although, her willingness had not actually been actioned to date at that point).
Amongst the PwYC group, only two of the five participants possessed competent sewing skills to enable them to undertake repair personally. PwYC1 often carried out minor hand-sewn repairs and adjustments to garments for herself and her children (as she did not own a sewing machine) and employed convenience repair aids e.g., wundaweb. She was taught to sew by her mother, as well as learning in school through Home Economics where she made basic garments. PwYC1 expressed that she would like to learn more sewing and crafting in future to be able to make keepsake items from her children’s baby clothes which have an emotional attachment. PRS were valued and regularly employed by PwYC1 for professional-looking jeans hems, more complex alterations and resizing. PwYC3 was also proficient at sewing, having learned in school and from her mother, and has now taught her two children basic hand and machine sewing skills, considering it a very useful life skill. PwYC2, PwYC4 and PWYC5 could not sew and thus, never repair garments personally. Reflecting on data collected from this group, it is evident that a lack of sewing competency, as well as the overall busyness of life for young parents can be seen to hamper decisions around garment longevity as reflected in the following comments: ‘if it’s got a rip in it, to me it’s broken’ (PwYC2); ‘even then it would need to be an item that is worth fixing…by the time I get around to it, life is just so busy’ (PwYC3); ‘I don’t have the skills to do that’ (PwYC4). ‘I wouldn’t buy something that needs altering, it’s too much hassle to get it done somewhere and to pay more for it too (PwYC5). Monetary value emerged in this group as an important factor in influencing PwYC decisions to perform repairs (echoing McLaren et al., 2016), as did social and emotional garment value. However, that research also found repair practices were more prevalent amongst parents and professionals rather than students, which was not borne out in findings of this study.

Although, admittedly, some of the OA cohort do not use repair skills on an everyday basis, all the group sew competently, and all identified having learned to sew in school. These findings correlate with reports of greater sewing skills among older adults (Norum, 2013; 2017) and skills levels contrast compared with other cohorts (YA and PwYC) in which four of the ten contributors had no sewing skills. Some potential reasons for this may include the presence of two male participants in those cohorts who traditionally may not have engaged in school subjects teaching sewing or because of revisions in school curricula that reduced exposure to sewing skills. Remarkably, even though she owned a sewing machine, OA1 mainly repaired valued clothing by hand as she enjoyed the hand-stitching process and could do the repair sitting in front of the TV:
‘If I really like them, I repair them, at the minute I have a little dress that I love…I’ll sew that by hand’ echoing the wider personal benefits of hand craft and sewing (Rodabaugh, 2018; Milburn, 2017). OA 2 and OA4 both also undertook hand sewn repair (OA 2 does not have a sewing machine anymore, having retired and moved house recently, while OA4 would like to own a machine in future). OA3 regularly repaired items both by hand and machine sewing and OA5 undertakes lots of machine repairs/alterations for herself, her family, and neighbours.

The difference between contemporary repair culture and that which existed in their earlier life was commented upon by several of the OA cohort. OA1 recalled a strong repair culture in her home of origin, whereby objects were only disposed of if completely beyond repair and she lamented how difficult it is nowadays to source parts/materials required to repair items. OA5 pondered the importance of knowing when a garment may be worth repairing versus one that was originally cheap or not good enough quality to repair. Several OAs vigorously and ardently linked diminishing repair culture to current availability of fast fashion; they reminisced on the acceptability and pervasiveness of making/repair culture in the past:

OA1: Everything’s become cheaper. It’s cheaper to buy a new one…everything in our house was repaired or fixed so it wasn’t in my mentality, it wasn’t in my mother and father’s mentality to throw it out until you had tried to repair it - really tried…and then what happened was you started not to be able to get pieces or materials and I think that’s a deliberate tactic…

OA5: I learned in school, in home economics, I used to make a lot of my own clothes, my sisters did too…I’d make something new for the weekend no problem. I made clothes for the children too, for occasions mostly. Clothes for children were so expensive then and only my husband was working but nowadays there is Pennys and it is just not worth it. I wouldn’t make for the grandchildren now, children grow so fast and you can access clothing so cheap now, some of it is so cheap it is hard to understand how it is possible.

As the above statements illustrate, there was a clear appreciation amongst OAs of the value in lengthening and extending product lifespans aligned to a ‘right to repair’ movement as a critical aspect of sustainable consumption (EEA, 2022; Shi et al., 2022; Paço et al., 2021; Van der Velden, 2021) although, this fervour was not evident in either
of the younger generational groups in this study.

6.6. Summary and Conclusion

This paper presented useful insights into garment repair and alteration practices and user-repair cultures as uncovered amongst an intergenerational sample of contemporary Irish participants applying wardrobe studies and practice theory approaches. This study, albeit limited in scale, has been useful in supporting a greater understanding of how, when, and why participants personally undertake garment repairs and/or employ PRS to prolong the lifecycle of garments. In extending clothing use via repair there is potential to reduce both consumption of new items and needless discard of worn but still usable garments. In the context of increasing pathways to more sustainable lifestyles, extension of clothing lifespans must be a key emphasis of any effective closed loop system, and an enhanced understanding of current everyday practices can provide valuable signposts for future sustainable policy, research, and practice. The priority and policy for textiles and clothing as set out by the EU (European Commission 2019a, 2019b, 2020) provides an overall supporting framework for accelerating transition from a linear to a more sustainable and circular economy. However, broadening the socio-cultural acceptability, implementation, and visibility of clothing repair everyday in households and in communities, amongst users of all generations, genders, and skill levels, is an integral aspect of the solution. Future scaling up of the level, and consequently the beneficial impact, of clothing repair requires involvement of a broad spectrum of intergenerational clothing users possessing competent repair skills, a keen desire to engage in everyday clothing maintenance and thereafter a willingness to wear repaired clothing proudly.

As with earlier research (Gwilt, 2021, Norum, 2015, 2013, Fisher et al., 2008) this study revealed a strong variation in repair know-how amongst the cohort, ranging from four participants with no sewing skills (all four were YA or PwYC) to eleven others who possessed a spectrum of skills extending from basic sewing competency to advanced proficiency. All but one participant with repair skills had learnt to sew in school, and some had additional familial support in skills development. Notwithstanding a good level of sewing competency overall, the day-to-day application of skills for clothing repair was inconsiderable amongst the two younger cohorts (YA, PwYC) who were more likely to enlist family members to undertake repairs required, while OA participants were seen to have more advanced sewing skills and to practice self-repair
more regularly (reflective of Jain, 2021). Procurement of professional repair services was evident amongst twelve of the fifteen participants, with all those believing such services good value for money and accessible, in contrast to previous studies (Cooper et al., 2019; Diddi & Yan, 2019; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). The overall acceptability of wearing repaired items was a positive finding, nonetheless reflecting Gwilt (2021) the preference was for hidden repair with minimal impact on garment aesthetic, rather than visible or creative repair (McCorkhill, 2021). To foster a viable repair model at scale in the fashion industry poses practical and business challenges, as recognised by Cernansky (2022) however, localised, shared, community repair approaches can still be worthwhile in advancing future clothing repair culture in Ireland, with valuable additional collaborative, social and creative benefits also a potential outcome (Gwilt, 2021; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). There is further possibility too for encouragement of visibility and support for pockets of right-to-repair activism or craft movements emerging (Durrani, 2018), but not yet visible in this sample group.

The new understandings of repair practices amongst intergenerational groups of Irish clothing users provided by this paper are important as there was heretofore a dearth of information on individual clothing repair activities. Examination of participants repair decision-making revealed a range of barriers and enablers for repair that were consistent with previous research, including, time involved, self-repair competency, perceived garment value as influenced by memories/emotional attachment, and initial monetary value. Noteworthy, a deterrent to repair emerging in this study was disinclination/laziness, which did not arise in previous research. These insights signal considerable potential for extending everyday implementation of clothing repair practices, particularly amongst younger generational groups. Possible future approaches include mainstreaming sewing skills in educational curricula, promoting repair how-to widely via virtual demonstration videos and blogs, and endorsing the socio-cultural acceptability of mending, not as a traditional, thrifty, or frugal activity but rather as a trendy, creative, revolutionary and political act of sustainability (de Castro, 2021; McCorkhill, 2021). Regularly experiencing and engaging in the intimate care and repair of valued garments, as evidenced by some of the participants here, has potential to also enhance user appreciation of broader clothing materiality, quality, and composition, with wider benefits possible for clothing longevity and for more sustainable garment selection in future.
While this study represents only a small-scale qualitative investigation of clothing repair practices, there is enormous potential for geographers to engage in future research avenues in the repair arena. For example, gathering information on the history, scale, and size of the repair sector in Ireland, would allow future improvement for users, practitioners, PRS etc. and would also provide a clearer picture of the performance of repair, which can then be contextualised fully within the sustainable consumption agenda considering overall material flows, consumption rates, and waste arisings in the clothing arena.
Chapter 7: Discussion

7.2 Review of the Research

In beginning the final chapter of this thesis, it is useful to circle back to the study’s opening remarks, where clothes were identified as fundamentally geographical items (Crewe, 2017). The arguments made in that seminal text, from the perspective of a geographer, were instrumental in informing and developing early perspectives on why clothing is a significant research area geographically and why geographers should consider exploring it. This being the case, Crewe (2017, 65) moreover, recognises the immense scale of sustainability impact caused by clothes, lamenting the ‘giddily accelerated cycles’ of clothing consumption ‘with long and often invisible production footprints and short (equally invisibly) consumption lifetimes’. Interestingly, this quote from the text, which was published in the early stages of this PhD process, closely connects with the incoming motivation of the researcher and with the key research questions underlying this study; to illuminate and explore those ‘often invisible’ everyday clothing consumption lifecycles referenced with a view to unlocking potentially useful insights to mitigate the climate impacts of clothing consumption. Fundamentally, a crucial research impetus was to further understand users’ real-life, everyday interactions with clothing already owned, and whether this could usefully facilitate a more comprehensive and holistic conception of wearer garment interactions, competencies, socio-cultural values and use practices with potential implications for sustainability.

This research study was designed to empirically investigate the clothing active use phase in Ireland from a sustainable consumption perspective. Everyday practices in clothing wear, care, and repair are examined in-depth amongst an intergenerational group of clothing users in the North West region. With cognisance to current and emerging discourses in clothing geographies and sustainable consumption research, the study employed a practice-theoretical lens to determine how everyday practices regarding clothing active use are currently constituted in Ireland? The culmination of the research endeavour is now presented in this thesis, including three recently published, peer-reviewed, journal articles, which critically explore the efforts and outcomes of this work.
to reveal insights in everyday clothing practices with a view to appreciating the potential for maximum clothing utilisation, improved circularity, and everyday sufficiency practices as vital pieces of the clothing sustainability puzzle and to support future sustainability transitions.

The innovative, multimethod, qualitative research design specifically devised for the study was documented in detail in Chapter 3. Effectively, it applied the theoretical perspective of social practices to investigate everyday clothing wear, care and repair amongst an intergenerational sample in the North West of Ireland. In sum, each of the fifteen participants involved, across three generational groups, undertook an initial Problem-Centred Interview, followed by an in-depth wardrobe interview (including wardrobe audit, household tour and clothing diary keeping with still photographs further augmenting the data collection) to generate a rich, and complex dataset for the study. Comprehensive analysis and consideration of this dataset, in line with the studies research and sub-research questions, led to the publication of the thesis’s three component journal articles, as presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. Two of the articles were published in traditional and popular Geography journals and one in a sustainable consumption focused publication (Article 2).

The decision to recruit an intergenerational sample for this research was influenced by the design and composition of two other largescale projects on related themes of clothing longevity and lifecycle extension (McLaren et al., 2016; Laitala et al., 2015). This decision, with reflectivity, was possibly also prompted by the incoming curiosity of the researcher about the patterns and variances in clothing practices across generations and anectodical assumptions arising from extended family observations, peer discussions and college student interactions. The selection of an intergenerational sample group may be appreciated as providing several clear benefits for the overall study and its outcomes.

Firstly, as valued by Vanderbeck (2019) and earlier by Bailey (2008), the geographical and analytical lens offered through the vertical analysis of data gathered, in terms of intergenerational agreements and divergences, unquestionably enabled a more profound perspective and a more robust exploration of patterns of continuity and change in everyday clothing practices across life stages, which would not have been possible with a more generally selected target population. Such generational insights were particularly significant in exploring clothing repair practices and competencies across life stage
groups, as discussed in detail in the third published article (see Article 3, Chapter 6).

Secondly, it is broadly understood now that evolution to a more sustainable, net-zero future, will necessitate an ambitious, holistic, and society-wide approach (Atalla et al., 2022). When considering future policy implications arising from this study, it is apparent that adopting a specifically tailored approach, targeted per generational group, or life stage, will prove more efficacious in accomplishing long-term sustainability transitions as opposed to more general measures.

Thirdly, while recognising that influential factors associated with generational difference can be exceedingly multifaceted and complex, taking account of the varying perspectives and ideological orientations across the three life groups targeted in this study was certainly useful in analysing and testing assumptions about everyday clothing consumption and care practices. The breadth of intergenerational perspectives as garnered here, prompts the potential for more value to be afforded in future educational curricula, programmes, and awareness campaigns on collaboration across generations which would allow for sharing of insights on sustainable prosumption, existing best practice in clothing lifecycle extension and related competencies (Wilson, 2022). Moreover, the large dataset gathered via the in-depth narrative interviews, materiality sensitive wardrobe studies and insightful household tours still offers further capacity for interesting generational insights on other perspectives, practices, and competencies, which it was not yet possible to analyse within the restricted scope of this thesis.

In striving for a holistic lens to examine the diversity, intricacies, and complexities of everyday clothing consumption amongst an intergenerational sample group, the overarching theoretical framing provided by Social Practice Theory was ultimately selected as useful and valuable (Reckwitz, 2002; Shove et al., 2012; Nicolini, 2012; Gherardi, 2012). The centrality in this approach of attentiveness to the concrete lived experiences of people as they navigate their day-to-day activities (Simpson and Ash, 2020) and the recognition of meaningfulness in the normalness, routine and mundane (Denscombe, 2021) can be acknowledged as particularly central to the affinity and alignment of the researcher with this selected theoretical perspective. Notwithstanding a theoretical affinity, some challenges were certainly experienced in practically and empirically applying and actioning the chosen approach. Specifically, arising from the fact that practice theories can be described to consist of a rather broad family of approaches (Nicolini, 2012) or a disparate pool of ideas (Simpson and Ash, 2020) and
furthermore, given that no unified or preferential step-by-step methodological application is detailed (Schatzki, 2022), the researcher was confronted with several quandaries and impasses along the journey. In such instances, since the practice-theoretical approach is ever more widely employed of late in sustainability focused research (Welch and Warde, 2015) the researcher resorted to such literature for guidance. In this fashion, useful insights in overcoming similar impasses and in navigating the diversity and ambiguity of methodological and analytical application of practice theories was obtained by drawing on experiences of contemporary studies to steer a forward course in this research process (Halkier et al., 2011; Welch and Warde, 2015; Strengers and Maller, 2015; Browne, 2016; Greene, 2017; Hui et al., 2017; Hoolohan et al., 2018; Welch and Yates, 2018; Reid and Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019; Watson et al., 2020; Laitala et al., 2020; Smagacz-Podziemska et al., 2020; Goggins et al., 2022 and others).

Respectful of the early assemblages of practice theory to explore social action (Bourdieu, Giddens, etc.) and appreciating the broad ‘umbrella concept of practice-based studies’ (Gherardi, 2012, 5), it was furthermore helpful that in this case the researcher was decisive at an early stage to select as most effective and to situate the analytical framing specifically in the second wave of practice turn (re-turn) employing the triplicate model (Shove et al., 2012) to scrutinising inherent meanings, materials and competencies interconnected within and across the fifteen cases. This approach was further clarified and augmented in the data analysis process by the application of refocusing or metaphorically zooming in and out for effective and in-depth exploration of given clothing use practices (Nicolini, 2010) and sage advice of Hui et al. (2107). As there is no specifically prescribed methodological or analytical sequences associated with effective and successful practice-theoretical application in empirical research, ongoing ontological and procedural re-evaluation and re-checking by the researcher was required throughout the course of the study which undoubtedly added another layer of consideration to the already complex interdisciplinary, intergenerational and multi-method approaches also being applied in the research. Irregardless, the selected practice-based lens and frame conclusively held excellent potentiality and effect in holistically exploring everyday clothing use practices at the intimate household micro-level. Perhaps even more critically, the practice-theoretical approach offered a shift in focus to examine socially collective clothing consumption practices rather than individual choices and behaviours stimulating new opportunities and targets for more effective
7.2 Research Implications and Contributions

7.2.1 Introduction to the implications of undertaking this interdisciplinary research

This research examining the clothing active use phase in Ireland from a sustainable consumption perspective is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature. Set in the discipline of Geography and enriched by synthesising together ideas, concepts, and approaches from Home Economics, as well as from diverse fields such as Fashion, Social Sciences, Design, and more; the approach is both solution-focused and futures-oriented. Such interdisciplinary engagement offered many benefits for the research, and its further impact. It more fully supported investigation of the complex, real-world clothing consumption research question in a holistic and informed manner, leading the researcher to consider aspects not initially obvious through a singular perspective hence supported the development of new understandings and competencies (Browne et al., 2019). The sheer breadth of approach, coupled with the practical-theoretical and Problem-Centred framing enabled appreciation not only of clothing everyday use practices but also of the innate socio-cultural and socio-technical influences on practice configuration and an improved understanding of the intergenerational implications of their performance. Therefore, the outcomes arising from this interdisciplinary endeavour now consequently have greater relevance and thus greater potential for impact, application, and communication across a diverse range of fields with resultant wider reach. The following parts of this section will trace some of the most significant implications and contributions of the research across, and beyond, the core compositional areas.

7.2.2 Implications for geography

Although wardrobe studies approaches are being increasingly employed in recent years across a variety of social science related disciplines, such investigations are still novel and innovative in geographical inquiry. Thus, the multifaceted wardrobe studies approach specifically designed and adopted in this study to examine everyday clothing consumption practices amongst an intergenerational sample in their real-life context, has contributed new knowledge, insights, and implications for Geography. This novelty was recognised and lauded by blind, peer-review comments from geography discipline experts, on initial manuscripts of the Area paper (Article 1) who commented that the future policy intervention (Spurling et al., 2013).
research was ‘timely’, ‘clearly of real interest and value’ and could obviously ‘contribute further insight to the employment of such innovative methods in geography and social sciences more broadly’. Such endorsements were certainly of great encouragement to an early-stage interdisciplinary researcher developing a methods-focused paper for publication in a renowned geographical journal. Hence, one of the most important contributions of Article 1, and following that of the overall study, is that it adds to theoretical and empirical geographical understandings by exploring how a customised and innovative application of wardrobe studies can provide a valuable addition to a geographer’s toolkit of methodological approaches. Article 1 demonstrates that wardrobe studies can effectively capture the types of norms, social expectations, complexities, and conventions that underlie everyday household practices (in this case clothing use practices) and explores how these can be challenged.

Relatedly, and still aligned to the novelty of the work, this study has contributed significant insights concerning the ethical clearance obligations of undertaking consumption-focused, geographical research via wardrobe studies at the intimate household scale. The research may be understood to provide two important contributions in this regard. Firstly, the researcher’s response to substantial queries posed by the University Research Ethics Committee, and the subsequent achievement of full ethical approval (Ref: 17-Sep-06, Appendix N), demonstrates that this research breaks new ground in this regard, and hence may potentially provide guidance for future empirical researchers undertaking intimate, household-scale studies. Secondly, the necessity to justify and explain the wardrobe studies approach so thoroughly from an ethical perspective serves to demonstrates that, even given the immense breath and extent of contemporary geographical research, the bedroom, and indeed the wardrobe, is still considered an usual, real-life research setting. Such new knowledge may prove useful in the future design and implementation of effective, household-scale, consumption-focused empirical research.

For geographers, the place-based, and spatiotemporal aspects of the research are particularly interesting. Indeed, expert reviewers of Article 2 and 3 encouraged the inclusion of further details in this regard. Outcomes of this work provide new, initial baseline understandings of everyday clothing use and care patterns, repair practices and repair cultures in Ireland and specifically in the North West region, albeit amongst a small sample group. Zooming in further, the household context employed here provides
additional interest as an explicit site of practice for clothing consumption and resource depletion. Given that an appreciable level of geographical research is consumption-focused (Reid et al., 2010; Foden et al., 2018; Evans, 2018, 2020), it is surprising that ‘households, household dynamics and their material settings, however, are mostly overlooked as a relevant scale, space or place in sustainability transitions’ (Raven et al., 2021, 87). Furthermore, where such research does exist it is often solely energy-consumption focused (ibid.). This materiality conscious research study on everyday clothing consumption is located at the micro-level, domestic sphere exploring intergenerational practices in clothing wear, care and repair with real-life users and has contributed new understandings from this intimate household scale in an Irish context with impact for future sustainability transitions.

Ultimately, Geography as a discipline is focused on fundamental interactions between people and the environment. Although the wider indirect impacts of this research are not measurable, the in-depth, and follow-up methodological approach undertaken, enabled constructive relationships to be built-up with each participant and provided space for reflection, bringing light to daily activities and potential for longer reaching positive impacts. While admittedly challenging to further scale-up, bringing normally mundane, everyday clothing practices to the fore in this manner as well as through participant engagement with the self-reflective aspects of the research design (such as clothing diary keeping) has the potential to encourage a re-evaluation of routines practices and actions, and can consequently enable wider diffusion-effect, spillover benefits to minimise household consumption practices in other areas and amongst wider social networks.

7.2.3 Implications for sustainable consumption

Outcomes of this research add voice to other contemporary researchers, across aligned disciplines, who have recognised the potentiality and value of research in the everyday to support increased sustainable consumption (Yates, 2022; Gibson et al., 2013; Pink, 2012, 2012b; Mc Gregor, 2012; Whalen, 2011). The interdisciplinary coalescing here of theoretical perspectives on everyday geographies, everyday use practices, and everyday resource management in households, with the additionality of an intergenerational perspective, alongside an emphasis on clothing use post-purchase contributes further depth and value to advance previous discussions. Both by valuing the routine and by revealing insights in the ordinary, the findings and sustainability
implications of this snapshot into everyday clothing wear, care, and repair practices in Ireland, as specifically shared in published articles 2 and 3, unlock new insights for sustainable consumption and sustainability transitions. The understandings generated here in relation to the real-life lived experiences of everyday clothing wear, care and repair are a fruitful empirical contribution where there previously existed a noteworthy gap in Irish-based research. Preceding largescale national consumption studies concentrated on other facets of household consumption rather than on clothing use (c.f. Davies et al., 2015; Fahy, 2022) while internationally significant practice-based empirical explorations of clothing sustainability remain largely clustered in Australia, Finland and UK (see for example, Maller and Strengers, 2013, 2017; Yates and Evans, 2016; Collins and Stanes, 2021).

Concentrating on the effectiveness of clothing labelling, this research revealed a widespread disregard of garment labels amongst users across the three generational groups involved, a substantially lower outcome than previous research findings (Cooper et al., 2019; GINTEX, 2017). This unexpected insight, which was highlighted as ‘really fascinating’ by peer-reviewers providing feedback on an initial draft of Article 2, may conceivably be suggestive of user detachment or apathy and has concerning implications for the appreciation of garment materiality, maximum use practices, and longevity appropriate clothing care. Furthermore, the finding could be considered indicative of contemporary consumer information overwhelm and may suggest potentiality for consideration of and experimentation with more accessible, convenient, collective, and effective modes for dissemination of crucial post-purchase clothing care and durability advice.

In relation to recently prominent efforts relative to clothing consumption practices to effect transition from a linear to a more circular economy (European Commission, 2019a, 2020) together with resolutions for achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015a), this research identified several positive outcomes. Emphatically, the acceptability of wearing repaired items was agreed amongst the fifteen intergenerational participants in this study, although the predominant preference was still for hidden repair with consequent minimal impact on garment aesthetic. Participants also demonstrated widespread acceptability for the acquisition and wear of second-hand clothing items, demonstrating an overall openness in consumer culture and beliefs towards clothing circularity. These positive findings lend hope and insight in
relation to the potentiality for encouraging and developing a more circular approach to contemporary clothing consumption and are more fully unpacked in Article 3 alongside consideration of repair cultures from an Irish perspective. Associated overarching concepts such as circularity and sufficiency as well as debates around ‘right to repair’, repair activism, planned obsolescence and necessary underpinning legislative and systemic policy support for repair are also explored (EEA, 2022). Profound involvement in this specific aspect of the data analysis and in-depth exploration of repair in the Irish context lead the researcher into contact with Repair Acts Ireland (Dillion and Calvin, 2022; Dillion, 2022), a funded project focused on nurturing vibrant and restorative repair cultures in conjunction with Westmeath County Council. The project, led by an artist and a geographer, is currently engaged in mapping repair histories and activities and in exploring repair services, community repair groups, voluntary repair collaborations and repair cafés, initially in one region of Ireland. Arising from this study, the researcher was invited to contribute by joining the advisory board for the Repair Acts Ireland project and to present in relation to clothing repair significant at a national seminar, Repair Acts Ireland Caring for Repairing Exhibition and Repair Féilte (See Appendix O). Another outcome of collaborative work with Repair Acts Ireland was the organisation of a student symposium to celebrate International Repair Day (October 2022) promoting the sustainable value and social significance of repair (for further details of both see Dissemination of Study Findings section).

### 7.2.4 Implications for home economics

In exploring the overall implications of this study in the round it is apparent that (albeit not an explicit primary goal or focus of the study) this research presents significant implications for a range of aligned areas, beyond the boundaries of geography and sustainable consumption. Whilst acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher’s position, it is nonetheless worthwhile that the implications pertinent for the discipline home economics are considered.

Given that the researcher undertook this study on a part-time basis, alongside maintaining a full academic role in a University setting, (initially as a Lecturer in Home Economics and latterly as Head of a School of Home Economics) it was inevitable that the on-going research would provide opportunities for reflexivity and intellectual development that could transcend and enrich her continuing academic and professional practice (Edge, 2011). By virtue of becoming more familiar with Social Practice Theory
and its applicability as an alternative lens to explore everyday practices and engaging to a substantial degree with literature on the application of practice-theoretical approaches across diverse fields, the researcher was prompted to evaluate the potentiality of the frame for the discipline home economics. The capacity of this theoretical perspective was fascinating to the researcher when synthesised alongside a deepening understanding of the everyday paradigm, both as a home economics area of practice (Vaines, 2004; IFHE, 2008; Tuomi-Gröhn, 2008; Turki, 2012b, 2015) and conceptualised within everyday geographies (Pred, 1981; Lefebvre, 1991; Scott, 2009; Pink, 2012; Gibson, *et al.*, 2013, Sullivan, 2017). Enacting the principles of constructivism and truly employing ‘reflective thought as part of action’ (Brown, 1985, 954 cited McGregor, 2014), two practical outcomes arose directly from this deep thinking. Firstly, was the initiation and collaborative development of a five-credit module entitled *Home Economics Practice in Everyday Life* (see Appendix P) which embraces the application of Social Practice Theory and the exploration of everyday practices as important perspectives within a home economics philosophical framework (NCCA, 2016). The newly designed module has been delivered annually in Stage 4 of several undergraduate home economics programmes, since the academic year 2018-2019. A second practical output was a joint State of the World book chapter (Maguire and McCloat, 2017) which debated the distinct qualities and progressive potential of the discipline home economics in rethinking education for a changing planet, with specific attention to considering future-oriented everyday actions.

Amidst recent calls for ‘more strongly coupling clothing production and consumption with environmental degradation and social injustice’ and a stated need for swift and absolute reductions in the purchase of new garments (Coscieme *et al.*, 2022, 48) true net-zero, sustainability transitions will undoubtedly require substantial and transformational societal change yet need not be costly to achieve. Schools are an ideal setting within which to integrate clothing sustainability and longevity focused skills at an early lifestage. Given its capacity, as an ideal curricular space for integration of sustainability themes (Maguire *et al.*, 2013; Maguire and Mc Cloat, 2017), there are clear opportunities for home economics to ably contribute to the move from a radically consumption focused clothing system towards the mainstreaming of alternative everyday practices of clothing acquisition, consumption, maintenance and care within appropriate consumption corridors and sustainable limits (De Castro, 2021; Fuchs, 2021; Vesterinen and SyrJälä, 2022). To successfully effect such a transition, users must
inevitably renege new clothing acquisition and instead, revert to their current wardrobes, realising therein the potential for increased lifespan extension and maximum utilisation (alongside opting for alternative acquisition models). Accordingly, as more fully considered in Article 2, clothing users’ competence as related to essential everyday practices of garment care and repair, will prove paramount in a post-consumerist culture.

Home economics has much to contribute towards a pro-usage transition; facilitating an existing curricular space for active, transformational learning about clothing wear, care, and repair practices which foster effective increases in garment use-time. Such a shift in curricular emphasis could potentially be considered as an element of the current Senior Cycle Reform in Ireland (NCCA, 2022a). Moreover, effecting such a recommendation could concurrently offer home economics the potential to transcend its traditionally associated everyday life-skills development narrative from one often coupled with thrift, lacking and necessity to a contemporary, revolutionary perspective of sufficiency, salutogenesis and creativity, all well aligned with disciplinary underpinnings.

7.2.5 Implications for policy development towards sustainability transitions

Improving sustainability and climate change are pressing, complex and wicked problems which have to date remained illusively beyond effective or straightforward solution with recent mitigation reports suggesting that the world is now nearing an irreversible tipping point (IPCC, 2022a). Consequently, as explored in Chapter 2, what are deemed sustainability transitions or significant, radical adjustments are now urgently needed to effect deep, transformational, systemic level change (Grin et al., 2010; Markard et al., 2020). International efforts to effect sustainability transitions have converged under the Sustainability Transitions Research Network (STRN) with collaborations focused on effectual, multimodal, transdisciplinary, system reconfiguration growing exponentially over the past decade (Köhler et al., 2019). Fundamentally, sustainability transitions target deeply entrenched and wicked problems through systems thinking and integrated, long-term or phased approaches (ibid.). Appreciative of such a challenging context, this study adds to current understandings of everyday clothing use practices in Ireland and goes some way towards providing baseline, qualitative, empirical data, and generational insights from site-specific case studies, albeit amongst a small, non-representative sample. Such an initial snapshot, into context specific patterns of clothing consumption and everyday resource use, may serve as a touchstone and as a springboard for much broader future investigations into the
topic and, continuing the metaphor, contribute at least an initial foundation from which to build a more informed and supportive future policy agenda. Accepting the outcomes of the latest IPCC report on climate change (2022a; 2022b) which acknowledges the need to look for answers beyond technological solutions to limit global warming levels and strongly calls for an urgent, coordinated, and transformative policy response, the implications suggested below draw on the leading insights from the findings of this study, they contribute voice to much broader efforts to develop a more contextual, tailored, and effectual future policy framework with attention to the true drivers of consumption in the spirit of genuine sustainability transitions.

Congruent with earlier research in the UK and Europe, findings here demonstrate that clothing users’ knowledge and awareness continues to present a barrier to improving clothing sustainability (Goworek et al., 2012; Cooper et al., 2019). Insights in this regard were manifest across all aspects of clothing wear and care examined, for example, lack of knowledge and discernment regarding clothing materiality which hampered initial selection to support wear longevity; limited awareness of the connection between prolonging garment wear and improved sustainability; widespread unfamiliarity regarding the detrimental impact of frequent washing on garment lifespans; overwhelming disinclination by participants to read clothing labels for care and materiality information. Articles 2 and 3 considered the implications of these findings for future policy development suggesting that with the support of contextually relevant evidence, informed by contemporary practice-based research such as this study, more dynamic and interdisciplinary approaches, based on actual users’ experiences, could prove more effective than outmoded linear knowledge to action models. Article 2 further considered the prominence of industry driven sustainable fashion messaging which may contribute to causing information inertia, overwhelm or confusion. Participants in this study demonstrated an appetite for locally relevant and non-biased information, which could be provided via short, non-formal public workshops, with opportunity for hands-on engagement, or through relevant information campaigns perhaps such as the UK Love your Clothes Campaign, which was developed in conjunction with industry partners and targeted to provide user friendly information on all aspects of clothing circularity (WRAP, 2014). While recognising the potentiality of these suggestions, it is apparent that a mix of transition focused strategies and policies will undoubtedly be needed as individualist targeted interventions such as widespread awareness campaigns have proven limited in impact, acknowledging previous literature critiquing an
overdependence on individualist approaches to behavioural change (see for example Davies et al., 2014; Wahlen and Dubuisson-Quellier, 2018). Moreover, understandings gleaned from the intergenerational component of this research further supports the necessity for a tailored and targeted policy agenda capable of effectively providing relevant, customised messaging to different age or life stage cohorts is needed rather than a one size fits all approach.

Gaining increasing impetus of late, circular economy policy approaches are perhaps now overtaking a previously more consumption focused policy narrative (Sahakian et al., 2021). Repair is a key phase of an effective circular economy. Insights from this research reveal that systemic and structural policy support is needed for professional clothing repair and alteration services (and similarly for other products) and that, suitably supported, this could make a viable, long-term contribution to fostering increased clothing longevity, sufficiency, and maximisation. Accepting that repair predominantly takes place locally, participants in this research undoubtedly demonstrated a keen demand for convenient and effortless access to repair services at a local level. Ensuring that such access this is possible for all clothing users on a national scale will require a level of infrastructural investment and will mean that professional repair services and associated business can be genuinely supported within a nurturing overarching policy agenda guaranteeing future service provision which is both locally accessible and affordable (c.f. Cernansky, 2022). Fully appreciating underlying user motivations for repair will further serve to ensure policy approaches are appropriately and contextually tailored. Such transition focused supporting policy must also acknowledge and encourage socially grounded, non-economically motivated or activist repair networks and movements, giving them space and capacity to concurrently flourish.

Findings in this research also revealed the positive acceptability of second-hand clothing wear amongst this intergenerational cohort, another effective element of a more circular approach to clothing consumption. Second clothing acquisition models correspondingly require a context specific and sector wide supporting policy frame capable of nourishing emerging alternative business types and facilitating local supply chains, alongside other non-economy driven clothing acquisition methods such as swapping, renting, and leasing hence enabling them to become a more typical, mainstream and available option (Coscieme et al., 2022). The clothing industry, has to date, had an inadequate record of sustainability and circularity, and will require greatly renewed effort to positively impact
its harmful trajectory (Global Fashion Agenda, 2019). In the presently challenging political and economic climate (IPCC, 2022a), innovative, research-informed and proficient targeted public policy is even more crucial than ever. To support sustainability transitions it is important that transformative policymaking includes an emphasis on bravely plotting transformational approaches which are explicitly targeted to value anti-consumption and pro-usage (Vesterinen and Syrjälä, 2022) as well as constructive and skilful decline policies (Markard, 2022) and nudges (Wahlen and Dubuisson-Quellier, 2018; Reid and Ellsworth-Krebs, 2019) which can manage to better steer both industry and public actors away from a consumption driven, fast-fashion focus. Moreover, within a strong sustainability paradigm (Bonnedahl et al., 2022; Morrissey and Heidkamp, 2022; Lorek and Fuchs, 2013) clothing acquisition of all kinds, whether the garment is comprised of virgin materials, recycled fibres, sustainably sourced fabric or is a second-hand or upcycled item, it must still all be considered as an ultimately consumption focused action and out of sync with supporting improved ecological balance.

It is possible that the insights on clothing consumption practices, as seeds of knowledge arising from this research, may be considered useful as an element of the new subject, Climate Action and Sustainable Development, being introduced as part of the redevelopment of senior cycle education at Leaving Certificate level in Irish Secondary Schools from September 2024 (NCCA, 2022b). The timing of this output is favourable as the formal curriculum specification remains under development currently (NCCA, 2022c). In the spirit of education to support effective sustainability transition, the introduction of a new interdisciplinary subject is broadly welcomed to empower students to more fully appreciate and to prepare them for positive action against significant climate and sustainable challenges currently facing society (NCCA, 2022d). Some notes of caution are expressed however, regarding the new subject’s boundaries with existing disciplines (e.g., particularly Geography); demarcating a firm knowledge base that is not easily outdated; and ensuring agreed best practice in treatment of sustainability themes in an interdisciplinary and integrated manner across all formal and non-formal curricula (ibid.). Any such sustainable focused specification must certainly address the core challenge of lessening everyday household consumption, of which clothing consumption practices are an integral component.

7.3 Limitations of the Research

Specific limitations to the methodological approaches undertaken were debated as an
element of the methods discussion in each of the three component journal articles presented in Chapters 4, 5 and 6. However, it is nonetheless useful here to consider the limitations of the research process in its entirety and to consider now with the benefit of hindsight and improved researcher enlightenment what might have been approached somewhat differently. Reflecting on the study overall, it is apparent that there are other valid and varied geographical approaches which could have been alternatively selected to effectively investigate how everyday practices regarding clothing active use (wear, care, and repair) are currently constituted in Ireland instead of the methods, theoretical frames and fieldwork approaches employed here. Furthermore, it is necessary to consider in a holistic manner, instances where different decisions could have been taken or different forward paths could have been chosen, some of which could potentially be perceived as limitations in this qualitative research process.

Firstly, the researcher is cognisant that the specific decisions made herein, and the explicit choices, taken during this research process undeniably reflect the unique positionality of the researcher and acknowledgement of this selective viewpoint is necessary. Several measures were assumed to mitigate prospective impacts of researcher bias on the research process and outcomes for example, the researcher’s positionality, identity and assumptions were transparently explored and negotiated throughout the process as is documented in detail in Chapter 3, with on-going and deep reflexivity a focus at each stage of the research. Furthermore, arising from the innovative and multi-method nature of the research design and data collection, systematic methodological triangulation was possible (Flick, 2018) thereby reducing the influence of the researcher and increasing validity of the overall study.

Secondly, this qualitative study is acknowledged as small-scale, local and limited and was therefore not intended to be representative of the wider national population, nor consequently are the outcomes arising generalisable as such. Despite this, the study does serve to provide a useful empirical snapshot of generational practices in clothing wear, care and repair at the micro-level social context in Ireland, which heretofore was not available. Explicitly, the approach was not designed or intended to quantify individual garment lifespans, be gender or nationally representative.

Thirdly, although this part-time PhD study took place over an apparently lengthy timeframe, it remains constrained in terms of scope and breadth, bounded primarily by the nature of the researchers on-going, full-time academic role and consequent senior
management responsibilities. Despite this, all the detailed narrative interviews, wardrobe studies and household tours (n=30) were fully transcribed, coded and analysed entirely by the individual researcher thereby maximising validity and consistency of approach and treatment. However, it remains the case that, qualitative coding is a reflexive and interpretative process which is inevitably imbued by the mark of the individual researcher therefore, different coders may have extracted other perspectives, outcomes or focuses (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The multi-method nature of the research design resulted in an enormous breadth of data, which undeniably, it has not been possible to fully analysis within the confines of this PhD study. On the one hand, this could conceivably be perceived as a limiting factor. However, given the article-based approach selected for this thesis, it is conversely proposed that, on the other hand, it has provided some valuable benefits. One advantage provided for an early-stage researcher by such a breadth of already gathered data is in presenting a range of other avenues for rich exploration and a variety of potential audiences and avenues for reach. Several ideas already exist, for example, a publication explicitly dedicated to the interdisciplinary nature of the research undertaken and benefits arising from this, or a paper focused on the contributions of this empirical clothing consumption research to the discipline home economics, a concept of interest which it has only been possible to touch-on briefly within this thesis and to debate fleetingly during various oral conference presentations to date.

7.4 Future Research

This research has provided a substantial contribution towards a clearer understanding of current clothing consumption practices in Ireland. The study has explored clothing wear and care routines and practices and added to current knowledge regarding everyday clothing active use amongst the intergenerational participants involved. Furthermore, the research generated a greater insight into how, when, and why participants personally undertake garment repairs or are prompted to employ professional repair services to prolong and maximise the life of a garment. Throughout the presentation and interpretation of findings, within each published article and in this final discussion section, the emphasis has been on highlight existing good practice in clothing sufficiency and circularity (be it consciously or unconsciously practiced). It is hoped that the insights documented, along with the issues raised will serve to stimulate further investigations into these important everyday household consumption themes.
Consequent to the experience of undertaking this research and of becoming familiar with the breath of literature reviewed to support the study it is possible to offer now some suggestions for valuable follow-on research.

Interesting findings emerged across all three generational groups targeted in this research on the factors which influenced or constrained repeat garment wear. In an environment where clothing acquisition must reduce dramatically to support meeting the 1.5-degree carbon dioxide equivalent of the Paris Agreement (IPCC, 2022a), it would be most interesting to further examine and explore this aspect of garment wear in-depth. Some of the crucial questions being: what factors could support the normalisation of repeat wear? Are different influencing factors at play amongst different generational groups? How are the socio-cultural norms which discourage repeat garment wear perpetuated? And how could these norms be shifted/ altered to better facilitate maximum clothing utilisation? In this research one of the main initiating factors cited as influential in decisions regarding repeat garment wear was garment comfort – it would be insightful to further explore the drivers for wearing a garment that is comfortable and the potential for this preference to override hesitancy for repeat garment wear. Aligned to this, if there is potential to leverage improved clothing circularity through increased and prolonged garment wear then, a better understanding of the influence of social media must be developed (Hasbullah et al., 2020); social media posting was linked as a deterrent to outfit repeating in analysis of data collected for this study (see Article 2). Increasing and encouraging the practice of repeat wear is furthermore inherently enmeshed with lately emerging conversations on appropriate overall wardrobe size and the exact extent, nature, or confines of a sufficiency wardrobe or a so called ‘1.5-degree wardrobe’ (Coescieme et al., 2022, 42) which would be very interesting for follow-on exploration and mapping in an Irish context.

The fieldwork element of this empirical study on everyday clothing use practices was conducted in the North West of Ireland between July 2018 and May 2019. Effectively, therefore, the data gathered does not, and could not, bear reference to the consequent impact of the subsequently prevailing Covid-19 Pandemic, which brought about unprecedented disruption to everyday life and accordingly to clothing use and wear practices (Liu et al., 2021; Vladimirova et al., 2022). During the data analysis and write-up period for this research the researcher was often reflexive of the potential changes that the pandemic could have influenced for the everyday clothing consumption.
practices of the participants who had engaged in this study. Given the agreement of the original participants, and taking account of other lifestyle changes which may also have impacted, a follow-up data collection cycle could be undertaken, involving in-depth interview or wardrobe studies with the same cohort of participants in order to appreciate any fundamental changes in practices, and to explore whether the changes initiated were short-lived for the pandemic period or continue into the present and to compare data to that collected pre-pandemic.

The element of repair practices and repair cultures, as explored in detail in Article 3, could provide another very fruitful avenue for further geographical research. Repair as a social phenomenon remains an under-researcher topic in Ireland, however, the level of interest and discussion generated at recent Repair Acts Ireland events and associated media coverage indicates that there is an appetite for further investigation and consideration of the topic (Dillon and Calvin, 2022). Acknowledging the rich tradition of fashion, clothing, and textile craft industries which historically operated in the North West of Ireland (De Cléir, 2011), and within a current EU policy framework focus on circular economy (European Commission, 2019a, 2020, 2022, EEA, 2022), a historical geography focused study would have much potential. Such follow-on research could be targeted to examine geographies of repair in the region, past and present, and to map the changes and variances in skills and competencies over time. Repair stories and community repair could form interesting sub-element of such research examining changes in attitudes to disposability from past to present as well as prevailing repair economics. Additionally, there is potential for collaboration with a professional historian or archivist interested in such research who could perhaps lend additional specific supporting research skills.

Furthermore, still linked to the motivation of developing and enhancing a circular clothing economy, during this research the researcher’s interest was particularly piqued by narratives regarding strong emotional attachments with clothing items, the often-varying rationales disclosed for such attachments and the frequent implications of attachment for product lifecycle extension and prolonging use. It was particularly interesting that in some cases, emotional attachment led to continued and lengthy wear, even after replacement items had been acquired whereas in other cases garments were retained for sentimental reasons but remained unworn (see Article 1). In agreement with Fletcher (2016, 197) that ‘making a garment last is very different to making a long
lasting garment’, a further study could potentially assess more fully the impact of emotional attachment on clothing use phase. More information would help to establish if emotional attachment may provide an effective leverage point for moving away from fast-fashion cycles and achieving more circular, maximum sustainable use of clothing (and other products). Considering the work already undertaken with mobile phones (c.f. Hobson et al., 2018) such interesting research could also examine practices of change and novelty and the potential creation of Sustainable Product Service Systems for clothing items.

It has been acknowledged previously that this research was context specific to a small region in Ireland. There are great variances in clothing consumption practices globally with socio-cultural factors playing a significant role. Recently, largescale inequalities in clothing consumption within and across countries have been revealed (Coscieme et al., 2022). Consequently, the researcher has reflected that in this study there was no attempt to stratify the sample population with regard to income levels or socio-economic status and in fact only basic demographical details were sourced from participants herein. A natural progression of this work could be to explore whether different everyday practices clothing consumption would emerge across a stratified sample and how this information might be impactful for future policy decisions.

7.5 Reflexivity of the Researcher

In electing to undertaking this PhD in an article-based approach, I selected a path that is still quite uncommon in contemporary geographical scholarship. It is insightful thus, in the latter section of this thesis, to give brief voice to this journey and to offer some reflexivity on the merits and challenges of this process as experienced.

Firstly, and most acutely, engagement in the customary journal publication process whereby at least two discipline-expert, blind, peer-reviewers engage in an in-depth manner with submitted draft manuscripts can now, with reflexivity and hindsight, be acknowledged and welcomed as an extremely useful, enriching, and beneficial process both in terms of supporting the research progression and for the quality of study outcomes overall. In the case of each of the three published articles, the feedback arising from the review process was unfailingly constructive; often specifically insightful in relation to pivotal aspects of the research process undertaken/ahead or on particular arguments presented; in some instances, it was especially helpful in directing me
towards additional significant existing research or related literature and was always delivered in the context of the reviewers expert understanding of the latent impact of the research to a given field or target audience. The latter element was especially valuable for me as an early-stage interdisciplinary researcher, not always surefooted in approach and often questioning a clear pathway forward. Furthermore, being a full-time academic and undertaking this PhD on a part-time basis enabled many opportunities, over the course of the study, to communicate aspects of the research or to present early-stage findings receiving consequent feedback on various emerging perspectives and arguments (for details see Dissemination of Study Findings section). Such worthwhile interaction with research contemporaries at academic conferences, workshops, and symposia, both within the discipline of Geography and beyond, was continuously developmental, academically advantageous and admittedly, became more and more enjoyable as the study progressed. Notwithstanding occasional unfortunate lags in progressing swiftly through journal peer-review stages for various external reasons (for example, Covid-19 pandemic, reviewer non-engagement), not to mention congruent personal and professional commitments throughout the period, the study is concluding within the specified time limit for part-time registration. Ultimately, in the perspective of Attia and Edge (2016, 33), selecting and engaging in this PhD study, and in engaging in an article-based approach has been enriching beyond measure; as well as being developmentally constructive it enabled me in ‘be(com)ing’ a more truly reflexive practitioner. Simultaneously, the selection of an article-based pathway can be attributed as having positively enhanced the research direction and indeed the integrity of the final research outcomes by contributing new expert perspectives and providing fresh eyes at crucial stages of the research journey. Moreover, at a fundamental level, and with reflexivity on the ‘whole-person’ development of the researcher, the article-based PhD process has emphatically cultivated my core academic skills, research competency and interdisciplinary confidence (ibid.).

As the completion of this PhD journey draws nearer, with the benefit of some degree of increased enlightenment and as the pieces of the puzzle begin to concatenate, I can venture to offer a connection in alignment of epistemological and ontological perspectives across the disciplines of Geography and Home Economics. This bridge is perceived as emergent from the unified philosophical standpoint of Husserl and the permutations of phenomenological approach branching thereof. This is, I suggest, particularly evident when one explores the distinct perspective and standpoint of
European home economists, with their emphasis on everyday life and authentic meaning-making within the lifeworld, a perspective shift from the broader conventional professional viewpoint on quality of life and well-being for individuals and families in the world (McGregor, 2008). Concordantly, the Seamon (2016) delves into the interface between experiences of human body and the everyday geographical world focusing on bodily perceptions and interactions between the human and the environment in a specific time and space from a phenomenological perspective. Seamon’s earlier work with Buttner (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980) provides a further and rich interdisciplinary connection, from a humanistic geography perspective, giving emphasis to ordinary human lived experiences and the integration between humans, community, and environment with far reaching potential. Engagement in this study has offered unimagined benefits for the researcher in stepping outside of my incoming field of experience, to carry out empirical research in the disciplines of Geography thereby building and contributing new and worthwhile knowledge, a small step towards more sustainable maximum use, circularity and sufficiency of clothing use in the future.

7.6 Concluding remarks

I have come to appreciate now that this project is but a beginning, both in terms of its outcomes in uncovering everyday clothing consumption practices in the Irish context with consequent insights for sustainability transitions, and in terms of its reflexive contribution to the researcher’s professional development and knowledge base. As answers to the initial research inquiry for this study have become clearer in the kaleidoscope; perhaps the questions themselves have changed. In the words of de Castro (2021, XVII):

The actions required are simple, not sweeping. And they give us infinitely more than they take away. The point is to start now at your own pace, in your own way, and explore what it feels like to drape yourself in new ideas and old clothes.
Chapter 7: Discussion

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Appendix A: Overview map of philosophy and contextualising the general principles of philosophical thinking within a social science research context (Mood and Blackman, 2014).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.0 ONTOLOGY: What exists in the human world that we can acquire knowledge about?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Naïve realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality can be understood using appropriate methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Structural realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality is described by scientific theory, but its underlying nature remains uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Critical realism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reality is captured by broad critical examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Bounded relativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental constructions of reality are equal in space &amp; time within boundaries (e.g., cultural, moral, cognitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Relativism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realities exist as multiple, interrelated mental constructions, no reality beyond subjects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2.0 EPISTEMOLOGY: How do we create knowledge?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Objectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning exists within an object: an objective reality exists in an object independent of the subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Constructionism*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning created from interplay between the subject &amp; object: subject constructs reality of object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Subjectivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning exists within the subject: subject imposes meaning on an object</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.0 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: What is the philosophical orientation of the researcher that guides their action/research?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge acquisition isuctive, value-laden, contextually unique</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Application: to predict

| 3.1 Positivism |
| Natural science methods (pose, observe, derive logical truths) can be applied to the social sciences |

| 3.2 Post-positivism |
| Multiple methods are necessary to identify a valid belief because all methods are imperfect |

| 3.3 Structuralism |
| The source of meaning comes from the formal structure found in language & can apply to all aspects of human culture |

### Application: to understand

| 3.4 (Social) Constructivism |
| Meaning making of reality is an activity of the individual mind |

| 3.5 Interpretivism |
| Natural science methods cannot apply to social science; interpretations of reality are culturally distanced & historically situated |

| 3.5a Hermeneutics |
| Hidden meaning (of language) exists in texts, practices, events & situations, beneath apparent signs |

| 3.5b Phenomenology |
| The essence of human experience of phenomena is only understood when the researcher separates their own experiences |

| 3.5c Symbolic Interactionism |
| The researcher must take the position of those researched (interaction) by sharing language & other tools (symbols) |

### Application: to emancipate or liberate

| 3.6 Critical theory |
| Research & theory should be used to change situations (focuses on power relations, critiques assumptions & evolves) |

| 3.6a Emancipatory |
| The subjects of social inquiry should be empowered |

| 3.6b Advocacy or participatory |
| Politics & political agendas should be accounted for |

| 3.6c Feminism |
| The world is patriarchal & the culture it inherits is masculine |

### Application: to deconstruct

| 3.7 Post-structuralism |
| Different languages & discourses divide the world & give it meaning |

| 3.8 Post-modernism |
| Truth claims are socially constructed to serve interests of particular groups; methods are equally distrusted; might not be possible to arrive at any conclusive definition of reality |

### Application: any or all

| 3.9 Pragmatism |
| All necessary approaches should be used to understand research problem |
Appendix B: Sample Recruitment Letters

St. Angela’s College, Sligo
Coláiste San Aingeal, Sligeach
A College of NUI Galway

Students Union,

University / College name,

Town name.

Home Economics Department,

St. Angela’s College,

Lough Gill, Sligo.

Re: Research Study: An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland.

Dear Student Union President,

I am contacting you to invite you and the wider student body in your University / College (insert full name) to take part in the above PhD research study. I am very interested in everyday practices in clothing use and care in Ireland and I am hoping to speak with people from a number of generational groups to help me find out more. The aim of this study is to explore how participants use and care for the clothes which they already own everyday. In particular I am interested in how people decide what to wear and when to wear it, how and when clothes are laundered and how and why repairs are made to some items.

I am contacting you in the hope that you can help me to find participants for this study from one of the groups I am interested to speak to - young adults. The full details about the study are outlined in the attached Participant Information sheet. I would be
grateful if you could make this information available to the students in your University / college union.

I intend to interview approximately 20 people in their homes regarding their experiences surrounding this topic. It is anticipated that voluntary involvement would require a total of 3 hours’ time commitment for interviews along with written / video diary keeping. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Through the use of pseudonyms and appropriate secure data storage, I can assure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

I hope by carrying out this study it will lead to increased knowledge about clothing use and care practices which will subsequently result in ideas about how to improve clothing use practices in Ireland.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for your consideration. If you / students from your union are willing to take part in this study please ask them to please contact me directly at 087XXXXXXXX or email me at xxxxxxxx@stangelas.nuigalway.ie Please do not hesitate to contact me also if you have any further questions or require any additional information.

Yours Sincerely,

Principal Researcher.
Parent and Toddler Group,

Building address,

Town name.

Home Economics Department,

St. Angela’s College,

Lough Gill, Sligo.

Re: Research Study: An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland.

Dear Parent and Toddler Group organiser (insert full name)

I am contacting you to invite members of your Parent and Toddler group (insert full name) to take part in the above PhD research study. I am very interested in everyday practices in clothing use and care in Ireland and I am hoping to speak with people from a number of generational groups to help me find out more. The aim of this study is to explore how participants use and care for the clothes which they already own everyday. In particular I am interested in how people decide what to wear and when to wear it, how and when clothes are laundered and how and why repairs are made to some items.

I am contacting you in the hope that you can help me to find participants for this study from one of the groups I am interested to speak to – parents with young children. The full details about the study are outlined in the attached Participant Information sheet. I would be grateful if you could make this information available to the members of your Parent and Toddler Group at an upcoming meeting.
I intend to interview approximately 20 people in their homes regarding their experiences surrounding this topic. It is anticipated that voluntary involvement would require a total of 3 hours’ time commitment for interviews along with written / video diary keeping. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Through the use of pseudonyms and appropriate secure data storage, I can assure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

I hope by carrying out this study it will lead to increased knowledge about clothing use and care practices which will subsequently result in ideas about how to improve clothing use practices in Ireland.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for your consideration. If you / members from your Parent and Toddler Group willing to take part in this study please ask them to please contact me directly at 087XXXXXXX or email me at xxxxxxxx@stangelas.nuigalway.ie Please do not hesitate to contact me also if you have any further questions or require any additional information.

Yours Sincerely,

[Signature]

Principal Researcher.
Active Retirement Group,

Building address,

Town name.

Home Economics Department,

St. Angela’s College,

Lough Gill, Sligo.

Re: Research Study: An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland.

Dear Active Retirement Group organiser (insert full name)

I am contacting you to invite members of your Active Retirement Group (insert full name) to take part in the above PhD research study. I am very interested in everyday practices in clothing use and care in Ireland and I am hoping to speak with people from a number of generational groups to help me find out more. The aim of this study is to explore how participants use and care for the clothes which they already own everyday. In particular I am interested in how people decide what to wear and when to wear it, how and when clothes are laundered and how and why repairs are made to some items.

I am contacting you in the hope that you can help me to find participants for this study from one of the groups I am interested to speak to – older adults. The full details about the study are outlined in the attached Participant Information sheet. I would be grateful if you could make this information available to the members of your Active Retirement Group at an upcoming meeting.
I intend to interview approximately 20 people in their homes regarding their experiences surrounding this topic. It is anticipated that voluntary involvement would require a total of 3 hours’ time commitment for interviews along with written / video diary keeping. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw at any time without consequences. Through the use of pseudonyms and appropriate secure data storage, I can assure confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

I hope by carrying out this study it will lead to increased knowledge about clothing use and care practices which will subsequently result in ideas about how to improve clothing use practices in Ireland. The results of this study may be published in scientific research journals or presented at professional conferences. However, your name and identity will not be revealed and your record will remain confidential.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and for your consideration. If you / members of your Active Retirement Group are willing to take part in this study please ask them to please contact me directly at 087XXXXXXX or email me at XXXXXXXX@stangelas.nuigalway.ie Please do not hesitate to contact me also if you have any further questions or require any additional information.

Yours Sincerely,

Principal Researcher.
An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland.

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<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Contact Number:</th>
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<th>Address / location for interview Please note most suitable day/time etc.</th>
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Appendix D: Schedule Interview 1

**Interview 1**

**Everyday wear, care, and repair practices in clothing use in Ireland**

Thank you for giving your time for this interview. Please be aware that everything you say will be treated in confidence and that all your responses will remain anonymous.

As we agreed in our initial discussion I would like to audio record our discussion purely so that I have an accurate record of what was discussed. Please be assured that you will not be identifiable from any report / articles published from this research. Your participation is of course entirely voluntary and you can always refuse to answer any questions or cease the discussion and recording at any time.

I really value all of your perspectives – there are no right or wrong answers. I am really interested to hear about your ordinary everyday routines and choices regarding clothing so I would like you to feel comfortable to say what you really think and how you feel. I encourage you to be open and honest with your responses.

Are you happy to proceed?*

(*Note for Researcher: At this point ask the participant to read the *Clothing Use Study Information Letter* and sign the *Consent Form* if they are satisfied to do so. Remind participant that they have the option to decline / withdraw at any point.)

Initially I would like to talk to you about the clothes that you have in your wardrobe, the clothes which you currently own and how you use and care for them. Let us begin by talking about choosing and wearing clothes everyday:
Wear:

1. Please describe a typical workday for you – As part of your daily routine how do you select what clothes to wear and get dressed for the day?*
   Prompt – Do you have a work uniform? Would you typically change your clothes during the workday – if so why? What about when you come home in the evening - do you change clothes then / remove shoes / wear slippers? Please tell me about any clothing planning or preparation you do ahead of the working week?
2. Please tell me about a typical weekend day / day off and how you select what clothes to wear and get dressed?*
   Prompt – please describe how weekend / day off morning routines differ to workday morning practices? What are the differences regarding clothing choice & dress on a day off? On a day off describe how you generally get dressed - on waking / later? So what about when you are going out for the night – please tell me about how you select clothing for a night out?
   *question will be rephrased for older adult group if participant has already retired.
3. Thinking about the clothes that you currently own please tell me about where these clothes are stored in your home?
4. Please explain if you have a particular system for storage of the items in your wardrobe?
   Prompt – by season? by colour? by type? Is there a system used to organise?
5. Thinking about your wardrobe would you say most of the clothing items are:
   a. 6 months old
   b. 1 year old
   c. 2-5 years old
   d. More than 5 years old
6. Approximately how many garments are in your entire wardrobe?
7. Give an estimate please for the percentage of these garments which you currently wear?
   Prompt – Perhaps think about what you have chosen and worn in that last 2 months.
8. How often do you add garments to your wardrobe?
9. Please tell me about any clothes that you have acquired second hand?
   Prompt – Are there second hand shops locally? Do you own garments which have perhaps being given as new from friends or family?
10. Please describe times when you share / swap clothing with friends or family?
11. How do you think fashion trends influence your style?
12. What influences how long you keep a garment?
   Prompt – If the fabric still looks good? Type of clothing item (leisure / special occasion)? Fit? Style – in or out of fashion? Space available? Initial cost of purchase? Cost of replacement? Emotional connection?
13. How often do you discard / dispose of clothes?
   Promot - For what reason do you discard clothing? How do you do so?
14. Please describe for me any clothes that you own which are made from organic or Fairtrade materials?
15. How important do you consider the type of fabric of which the garment is made when choosing or wearing clothing?

Next I would like to talk to you about looking after your clothes everyday, washing, drying and laundry routines:

Care:

1. What are the usual elements in your everyday laundry routine?
   Promot - Collect? Separate items by type? Read garment labels? Type of washing? Dry cleaning?
2. How do you generally decide if an item of clothing needs to be washed or not?
   Promot - Visual inspection? Sniff? Once worn?
3. Thinking about various garment types that you may need to wash – how do you feel that garment type impacts on the decision about when you need to wash?
4. Please describe methods which you may use on garments to extend the length of time between washes?
   Promot - Airing? Spot or partial cleaning? Ironing?
5. In your everyday clothing care practices is the cost of carrying out laundry ever a factor in your decision to launder or to wear an item again before washing?
6. When undertaking everyday machine washing what is the cycle that you use most often?
7. Which wash temperature do you usually choose? Why?
8. As part of your everyday laundry routine, how do you normally dry the clothes?
9. Please describe for me how/when you use a tumble dryer?
10. How did you learn the skills that you use in your everyday laundry routines?
11. Please tell me about times when you previously used or considered using a shared laundry facility?
   Promot - a laundrette, large shared washing machine / dryer located locally.
12. In your home how long would items normally be in the laundry process for?
   Promot - number of days from the decision to wash before wearing again until ready to wear again?
Repair:

1. If a garment becomes damaged or worn do you ever make repairs to your clothes? Why? Why not?
2. Can you describe for me please if you ever modified or reworked an item of clothing?
   Prompt – To change items use? To restyle?
3. If you have repaired / altered garments where did you learn the skills to undertake this?
4. What do you know about professional alteration services available locally?
5. Please tell me about times when you have used a professional alteration service?
6. What type of garments have you had professionally repaired / altered and what work was completed?
   Prompt – if possible I would be really interested to see that garment next time we meet.
7. Please explain if you consider this type of work / service good value for money?
Appendix E: Schedule Interview 2

Interview 2 – Wardrobe Study

Everyday wear, care, and repair practices in clothing use in Ireland

Thank you very much for giving your time for this second interview. Please be aware that as for our initial meeting everything you say today will be treated in confidence and all your responses will remain anonymous.

As explained in the Study Information Letter and Consent Form I would like to video record our discussion today purely so that I have an accurate record of what was said and to record any items of clothing or artefacts you may use to illustrate a point. This will also be helpful when we discuss your everyday laundry practices. Please be assured that you will not be identifiable from any report / articles published from this research. Your participation is of course entirely voluntary and you can always refuse to answer any questions or cease the discussion at any time.

Are you happy to proceed?*

(*Note for Researcher: Refer to the Clothing Use Study Information Letter and the previously signed Consent Form. clarify if the participant has any reservations regarding the use of video recording and if so offer the facility to revert to use of audio recording and photographs instead as used in the first interview. Remind participant that they have the option to decline / withdraw at any point.)

I would like to continue to talk to you about the clothes that you currently own and to specifically to explore the items you selected from your wardrobe to show and discuss today.

Participants were asked to select 6 items of clothing from their wardrobe. The interview will be based around the 6 garments.
i. A garment you have worn for a long time
   1. Please describe this garment to me?
   2. Why was this garment selected for discussion?
   3. Why do you think that you have owned this garment for such length of time?
      i. Prompt: Initial cost? Type of garment e.g. Occasion wear?
   4. If it is often worn – why has the garment lasted in wear over a long period of time?
   5. If it is not well worn – why do you think you have not chosen to wear more often?

ii. A garment that you are emotionally attached to
   1. Please describe this garment to me?
   2. Why was this garment selected for discussion?
   3. Do you care for this garment any differently to other items you own as a result of this attachment?

iii. A garment that you never wear
    1. Please describe this garment to me?
    2. Can you elaborate on the reasons why this item is not worn very often?
    3. Why do you still keep this garment in your wardrobe even though it is not worn?
    4. Are there any circumstances in which you could anticipate wearing this garment more often?

iv. A garment that you wear frequently
    1. Please describe this garment to me?
    2. Why was this garment selected for discussion?
    3. Do you care for this garment any differently to other items you own as a result of this frequent wear?
    4. Are there any particular reasons why this garment is worn more often than other items in your wardrobe?
       Prompt – link to everyday life / workday? Is it the fabric composition?
    5. How much longer do you anticipate wearing this garment?
    6. Why might you decide to discontinue wearing this garment?

v. A garment that you are likely to dispose of soon
    1. Please describe this garment to me?
    2. Why was this garment selected for discussion? Why do you feel it will be disposed of soon?
    3. How is this garment likely to be disposed of?
    4. Are there any circumstances in which you would considering wearing this garment into the future?

vi. A garment that you have personally repaired or had repaired or altered
1. Please describe this garment to me – including a description of the work that was carried out to repair it?
2. Did you personally do this repair work?
3. If so, how did you have the skills required to repair this clothing item?
4. If so, how did you have the equipment required to repair this clothing item?
5. If you paid to have this clothing item repaired or altered, why did you feel that this item was worth paying to repair or alter?

Can you please describe how participation in this study may have changed your relationship with the clothes that you already own?

Prompt – What did involvement in the study mean to you? Can you tell me if you have changed your clothing practices in any way during this study?

For the remainder of our time today I would like to review and discuss the entries to your Garment Diary which you have completed since we last met. If possible it would also be helpful to see some of the locations in your home where you carry out daily clothing care, laundry and repair – would that be ok with you?

Build discussion around Garment and Wash diary sheets completed.

Video record household tour focusing on everyday laundry practices undertaken.

Thank you so much for your involvement in this study and for your openness to share your valuable experiences. This will be so useful in my study.

Interview protocol questions adapted from:


Appendix F: Clothing Diary

To:

Thank you for taking part in this research to help me learn more about the everyday life of clothes!

Please choose one garment - a top, dress, trousers, shirt, t-shirt or blouse - that you currently wear frequently, to record over the following 4 weeks.

On the opposite side, please fill in your garment’s story and keep it handy to record how often you wash and wear it in the table below.

Also enclosed is a washing diary to keep next to your washing machine and record the details of each wash your chosen garment is included in.

Many thanks for taking part, please return your diary in the enclosed envelope once completed!

ABOUT YOU!

Age: 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-64 65+

Ethnic Background:
- White Irish
- Any other white background
- Mixed background
- Asian / Asian Irish
- Black / Black Irish
- Chinese / Chinese Irish
- Other

Work Status:
- Working full time
- Working part time (8-29 hours)
- Working less than 8 hours
- Non working
- Student
Occupation / University course:

How often do you buy clothing for yourself?

☐ More than once a month  ☐ Once a month
☐ At least 6 times a year  ☐ At least 4 times a year
☐ Only once or twice a year  ☐ Less than once a year
☐ Someone normally buys for me  ☐ Never

Please list three clothing shops, brands or websites that you buy the majority of your clothing from:
1.
2.
3.

Name:
Email address:
Phone Number:

Many thanks!

[Adapted with kind permission McLaran, A. Nottingham Trent University]
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Any other comments on how you feel about this garment?</th>
<th>Sketch the garment:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Sketch of a human figure]</td>
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OR

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<tr>
<th>Any other comments on how you feel about this garment?</th>
<th>Sketch the garment:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Sketch of a human figure]</td>
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</table>
It All Comes Out in the Wash...

I would like to learn all about how you do your laundry! What you wash, when and how, so please air your dirty laundry here and help me understand everyday practices of washing, one load at a time!

INSTRUCTIONS:
Please fill out one card every time your chosen garment is washed, whether in a washing machine, hand-wash, laundrette, dry cleaning, spot-cleaning or any other washing methods you may use.

PHOTOS:
Please document each stage of your washing process - look out for the photo symbol prompts on the instruction cards to guide you and please feel free to include images of anything else you feel is relevant!

![Image](image.png)

**DATE:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roughly what is in this wash load and approximately how long have they been worn for before washing? Please fill in the table opposite and photograph:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garment type:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall, how dirty is this wash load (please circle):</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>LOW</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIUM</strong></td>
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<td><strong>HIGH</strong></td>
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<td>Comments:</td>
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Generally speaking, is this a ‘normal’ wash for you or is there anything unusual about it? (please describe below)

- Normal
- Unusual

Comments:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How are they being washed?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Washing machine in the home</td>
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<td>□ Washing machine at laundrette</td>
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<td>□ Hand wash</td>
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<td>□ Dry clean</td>
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<td>□ Other:</td>
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<td><strong>What does this wash contain?</strong></td>
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<td>□ Whites</td>
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<td>□ Lights</td>
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<td>□ Bright colours</td>
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<td>□ Dark colours</td>
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<td>□ Mixed colours</td>
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<td>□ Delicates</td>
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<td>□ Other / Comments</td>
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<td><strong>If washing in a machine, how full is it?</strong></td>
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<td>□ Full</td>
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<td>□ 3/4</td>
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<td>□ 1/4</td>
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<td><strong>After washing, how is this load dried?</strong></td>
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<td>□ Drying rack indoors</td>
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<td>□ Clothes line outdoors</td>
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<td>□ Radiator</td>
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<td>□ Tumble dryer</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Other/ Comments (e.g. if separated to dry in different ways?)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What is the wash cycle setting?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMPERATURE:</td>
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<td>WASH CYCLE (e.g. Cottons/ Synthetics):</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPIN SPEED SETTING</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Did you check any care labels while doing this wash? Why / why not?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>What laundry products are you using?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>DETERGENT BRAND &amp; TYPE (e.g. non-bio, 2-in-one, powder):</td>
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<tr>
<td>FABRIC CONDITIONER BRAND &amp; TYPE (e.g. liquid, sheet, ball):</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>In the process of doing this wash, did you do anything specifically to preserve the life of your clothes / make them last longer?</strong></td>
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Hi Helen,

It was great to speak to you earlier and hear about your interest in this area of research, I can share some of the research tools we used with you on the understanding that you would be willing to discuss working on collaborative outcomes from the results e.g., a co-authored comparative study – it would be great to write something up together.

Attached are:

- Focus group schedule / activities
- Wash diary (pdfs of front cover, back for male and female, and the accompanying wash cards plus instructions). These were provided in a transparent plastic sleeve for participants to keep next to their washing machine and fill out for each wash
- An image of some of the completed wash diaries, to show how they looked / were used

Also, here’s a link to the previous Defra project I mentioned and the accompanying annex, which includes details of the focus group schedules and wardrobe studies they conducted – may also be interesting.


Hope that helps and good luck with your studies, please do keep in touch!

All the best,

Angharad
Appendix H: Sample of data collection from one participant

Considering the breadth of the overall dataset generated for this study by the multimethod approaches employed, across fifteen participants in three generational groups i.e., Young Adult (YA), Parents with Young Children (PwYC), Older Adults 1 (OA), only one sample transcript and associated material is included in this appendix for reference purposes. Additional details regarding the data that supports the findings of this study are available on request from the researcher, if required.

As an example of what was gathered for each participants the transcript for this sample participant case (participant code/identify undisclosed) comprises:

- Full transcript of Interview 1 (Problem-Centred Interview)
- Full transcript of Interview 2 (Wardrobe Interview)
- Self-completed Clothing Diary
- Still Photographs (i.e., photographs of selected garments and clothing storage taken by the researcher during the wardrobe interview / household tour or self-documented by the participant to supplement the clothing diary)
Firstly, thank you very much for agreeing to undertake this interview today. It is much appreciated and your thoughts and input is very valuable for this research.

So just to confirm that you have already read the study information sheet or that I’ve explained it to you and you know, you were in agreement to participate.

[reads details from sheet]

Yes, I am happy to be involved.

June 2018, that was when we first met.

Oh yes, that’s right.

I know, time is going so fast. Please feel free to answer openly today, your answers related to your own everyday clothing use practices and decisions. It is all you own perspective so there is no wrong answer. None of this information will be used anywhere else other than for this study.

That’s ok, thank you.

And you have confirmed your agreement that we’re going to record today. That’s perfect, great so then we’ll be able to get going.

Brilliant.

So initially we’re just going to talk to you about the clothes that you have in your wardrobe, the ones that you own now and about choosing and picking clothes for
every day. So on a typical day when you wake up, how do you decide what you’re going to wear for the day? Is there a difference if it is a work day or a day off? Is there any kind of routine or do you plan it the night before?

Well for example, I would go out to the garden a lot so sometimes I put on really rough clothes in the morning, working boots, working trousers, if I was going out for appointments, I would wear trousers that are practical because I want pockets, particularly if I’m going to be out all day, I want pockets to put change in, pockets to put keys in, so I wear, that influences right away what I choose that morning. Whereas if I’m coming in to socialise, I do a totally different thing. My handbag is where my money is and if I come in to socialise or meet somebody for lunch, I dress up and if I come in to go for a walk anywhere, I come in maybe walking boots, something comfortable that I can stay in for hours to walk. So it depends on what I’m doing that day, what I choose, yeah.

Yeah, and so thinking about that, that’s just in the morning you decide.

I decide in the morning yes.

And then if it’s outside gear for a bit or the gardening gear for a bit then you would change later if you’re doing something else or whatever, yeah?

I would but I don’t always decide in the morning. Sometimes if I was going away or travelling or anything like that, I would leave it out the night before.

You’d have it ready?

Especially if I was short of time in the morning, I’d leave it out the night before.

Yes.

When you come home then in the evening, would you change or would that be your outfit for the day let’s say or you know what I mean, are you comfortable in it?
Often, I would change. Often, I would get out, like if you had a tight waist and you feel it a wee bit restricted, I always get into something more loose and more comfortable for the evening at home.

Yeah for around the house in the evening. So on a typical weekend day or a day off or just you know around the house kind of a day, it would be different then?

Yes often it would be kind of loose, flowy, comfortable, something that doesn’t restrict say your waistline or your thighs too much or even your sleeves, there’s a lot of fashion now it’s very tight arms. I would wear something with more space.

**Just for comfort.**

For comfort, yeah.

Yeah, and what about going out for the night or going out you know for dinner or something?

Yes well, I would dress up then. I would dress up, I would nearly always go into maybe P’s and nearly always go in a dressy trousers or skirt and something kind of, now saying that I would still, comfort is very important to me.

**Yeah.**

You know, so

**Absolutely.**
So often I might go out in the evening with something a wee bit more flowy or something, just so that if you’re eating you have a wee bit of space in it maybe.

**So that you are not uncomfortable sitting around?**

You’re not restricted. I’m a very practical person. I like comfort.

**Yeah, so you would think about that as an aspect when you are shopping for clothes? And trying on garments?**

I would...I would, to look at fashion and comfort and practicality. For example, things that would maybe have a wee pocket or something like that, tailored to be out in the evening but to still have something to put a tissue or something.

**So and then if you think about your clothes at home at the moment, where are they stored around the house? Is it just in a bedroom wardrobe or are there other places?**

Just a bedroom wardrobe and my work clothes would be kind of put into like a wee cupboard so my mucky work clothes, things that I do gardening in is in one space. They’re kept separate from my dressy clothes. Yes, yes.

**Ok and if you think about your clothes in your wardrobe then, is there kind of a system of storing them? What way do you do that?**

Well, I would always store my summer clothes and my winter clothes in a space and then when it comes into the autumn I bring the winter stuff down and put the summer stuff away because I’m very limited in space. The other thing is, now and again, I go into my wardrobe to clear out and when I do that, often I would start kind of putting all the whites together, all the blacks together, all that and I would try and put like colours together, dresses together, trousers together so that when I’m in a hurry.
I can put my hand on something so yes I do kind of organise them but I think it’s probably because I have, I’m at home so I think I have a wee bit more time to do that. I’m not sure whether other people have time to do that.

I find that I take them out of one place and when I’m putting them back, I’m putting them back on the right, I’m right handed and I keep stuffing them back on the right and they accumulate all on the side, the right hand side of the wardrobe and I have to kind of tidy it again although saying that, don’t get me wrong, this is only a, you’re only talking a couple of times during the summer, a couple of times, not over the top about organising them, you know.

I know, whenever you feel you have an afternoon free perhaps?

Yes or when you’re looking for something and you can’t find it and you’re so frustrated.

You’re pulling out and you think take 10 minutes to tidy it.

I know, we all do that! So, I suppose within your wardrobe then and the clothes you currently own, what is the age profile of the garments - would you say most of them are maybe a year old or 5 years old or more than 5 years old or less than a year old for example...?

I would say my clothes are between 5 and 10 years old. Now most of them. I might buy something once every couple of months but it might be something for the winter or some wee dress but I’m very, like I’ve bought trousers and they’re hanging there and I’ve bought them in France like 8, 9, 10 years ago and like I wore them last week, you know. So like that’s because they’re summer items and I don’t wear them a lot in the summer so you don’t wear them out the same.

So you’re happy to hold onto them?

Yes, I am. I tend not to follow trends very much. I just follow my own fashion, you know.
And overall do you have many garments in your whole wardrobe? Is it too many to count?

It’s probably about 100, you know.

Ok and out of those 100 would you say...I know you have them divided into winter and summer...but how many of those approximately are you actively wearing at the minute?

That 100 estimate, that’s only my summer ones....I might have another 100 or more in the attic space for the winter.

So out of those ones for the summer what percentage of those do you wear currently?

I’d say about half of those because I know that half of the wardrobe constantly changes. I move things out of half of the wardrobe. Yes so, I’d say about 50% I would use continually over the summer, yeah. So maybe about 50% I would say. I am careful as I live in a small house so I do go through them and when I am putting them away for the season I do a cull, if needed. The ones then that I take out for the season are all wearable, I think so...

They amongst that I know that there would be differences – some are different to some of the other ones...they would be more what I would wear in the evening or more dressy, so more occasional wear.

mm...I know what you mean...

Maybe a nice dress or so I would have a few nice dresses and a few nice cardigans, and I would only wear those maybe for the evening or not round the house and not for going out having lunch or whatever so.
And so you were kind of saying how often you add to your wardrobe, maybe every couple of months or so, not very regularly?

No.

Not I suppose, would it be then just because you saw something, or would you look and say well I need a new t-shirt or pair of trousers or whatever. Would it be very purposeful or just because you saw something you admired?

Purposeful for me. I don’t buy unless I see a bargain that really attracts me and I really just fall for it like that and I will buy that. The other thing is I might go out thinking I’ve got like a pair of leggings and a top and a cardigan and something’s worn and I might think what would be nice, like a floral top to go with something and I would go out then with the purpose of looking for a floral top to go with an outfit.

So I do know what I’m searching for so I don’t do this kind of excuse me, ‘woman thing’ where I go through rails and rails and rails just searching endlessly. I don’t. The way I look at it is it’s just a waste of time and I really do have, like I went looking last week for a wedding outfit for October and I had a particular thing in mind and when I didn’t find it, I did pick up another few items and kind of was content with what I got. So I don’t, I don’t. I think that’s an awful waste of people’s time but each to their own.

Each to their own! I spend two hours in the garden rather than the shopping rail, you know going through rails.

So I suppose if you’re picking something to match something like those, for example, leggings and the floral number, is that normally then what you’d continue to wear it with or would you mix and match it otherwise or you’d kind of have that outfit there and you’d kind of know you’re going to wear those together?

Yeah, I would. Yes, once I would get that top, I would say that’s what I’ll wear with those trousers or whatever, cardigan…but that doesn’t mean that I’m not open to changing it up sometimes too. Some morning I might just get up...like for example, I
do like a little bit of colour coordination but like today I got up and I just put on black leggings, multi-coloured dress, white cardigan and I thought right, I feel comfortable and that’s it, you know. It wasn’t about mix and matching today for example.

Yeah, you’d kind of just decide what suits for that given day on the morning mainly?

Yes, in the morning, I think sometimes you can decide according to mood. Like I do think that lots, I think fashion can have an effect on your mood so I think when people get up and they want to lift their mood, it’s good that a colour or a bit of fresh or something makes you feel good but I do find that some days you just feel like wearing black. And it might not be anything to do with your mood. You just want something dark and maybe it is to do with mood but sure....

But that’s it. Maybe it’s just you couldn’t be bothered that day and it might be to do with your mood that you couldn’t be bothered actually thinking about your fashion. But anyway sure....

Would there be any other factors involved?

Perhaps it could be convenience based too...it can be yeah. Sometimes you don’t have much time, or you pick up something that is just there, that has been worn for a short time before and is already co-ordinated, it doesn’t require any thought...

Have you got any clothes in the wardrobe that you’ve acquired second hand? Would that be something that you would do or perhaps some that somebody has given you or passed on to you from family or...?

Let me see. Do I have? Probably very little. I have to say that I find, like the charity shop to me is just like the big shop. Its sometimes hard work and too much effort. Either I see something that I like and I pick up or that’s it, you know. So I would need to go through all the rails to find something but there may be something, the odd thing that I’ve picked up second hand or bought but I can’t think of it offhand.
Yes ok you spoke earlier about fashion trends not really influencing you at all, would you perhaps ever look at any of the fashion magazines or look at fashion, or find inspiration on TV?

I do, I look at it and I think what a waste of time. What a waste of your money. I think everybody has their own individual kind of taste and I think that when they see something that kind of suits them that they know and they kind of buy it. Not everybody does but I mean, Ask me the question again.

No I guess I don’t follow trends. I love to wear a bit of colour in the winter and I get really frustrated if I go shopping in the autumn and it’s all those muted, dull colours and I think I don’t suit them. Why would I buy them, you know.

So is that a challenge?

Yeah. I want something bright or something colourful all year round. I don’t just want it in the summer. I want it in the autumn and when they change the colours and they do all those deep colours, I don’t buy very rarely around autumn time.

What factors influences how long you’ll keep a garment? or when would you decide I’ve had enough of that, that’s got to go?

Two things, one would be if it wears so thin that I have to get rid of it, that it’s fraying or shredding at the seams or worn somewhere. That’s one thing. And the other thing that would influence, if I kind of fall out of love with it because it really does get dated looking. You know, so if it kind of, you know I mean maybe I put on a bit of weight or I lose a bit of weight and it looks like it hangs on me or it’s too tight on me, then I’ll get rid of it. So if it’s too tight or too shabby or it gets bally or ripped or torn but particularly if it kind of doesn’t suit me fashion wise any more. If it’s a bit on the tight side and it looks like it’s straining under a bit of strain or something, I’ll get rid of it.

Mmm,
So yes, I would pick out, when I am perhaps changing seasons around, I would often look before I put the summer stuff away, I go to fold it up and I put away lots of stuff that I’ve worn and then I’ll look at the stuff that I’m left with that I haven’t worn and then I’ll say realistically are you going to wear that next year if you haven’t worn it this year and I’ll fold it up and put it away. That’s a point when I’d really be quite critical in considering items...Yes, so I would fold it up and put it away or if it’s a pair of leggings that are very worn I’ll think, right sure you’ll get a pair next year or when the season comes back or so.

Then I’d put the storage boxes in the attic space and then the culled clothes will go to charity or if they were really bad, I would either burn them or shred them or something like that...I would dispose of clothes every season. So every year knowing that I’ve bought maybe a couple of items during that summer that are going to replace something, I would get rid of a couple of items then when I’m packing them away.

So that’s a good opportunity to go through them and check them rather than just letting items build up and build up?

Yes definitely. I don’t have the space for that anyway so it has to be done regularly

I’m just thinking about eh clothes you’re putting away, do you get excited to see them then when you bring them down?

I do, I do. You know, it’s kind of like having another, a new wardrobe...It is like having a new wardrobe next year again especially if you buy clothes when you’re on holiday or abroad.

Yes, and you haven’t seen them for a few months...Exactly, and that’s exactly what the intention is too, to make you, for me, we always did that when we were young. You always put your winter or your summer stuff away according to the season and for me, there’s an excitement. Oh I forgot about those. Oh those new leggings from last year or whatever and then you’re delighted to get into them.

But that’s also down to like, I lived in a large house, my previous house and even though I had the space to have them in a wardrobe somewhere else, I always put them away. Yeah because there was no point them lying about. It’s just my generation.
I know because you’re not going to wear them in the winter anyway.

You’re not so you’re just taking up wardrobe space with them hanging there so it works very well anyway for me.

Ok. does the type of fabric that the garment is made from influence your either choosing to wear it on a particular day or choosing to buy it in the beginning or do you know, for example would you think about the fabric type very much or is it more the garment fit and the colour?

I do actually. I detest…I love stretchy fabrics on leggings but I hate them on tops so I hate anything that clings and sticks to your arms, makes you over sweat so I’ll leave stretchy fabrics that they make evening tops. I prefer cotton or silk or you know. Something more natural. I detest going out for the night and something sticking to me and making me sweat so I’m very particular and it’s just my age, you know. I’m in my 50s and you kind of sweat a lot and you want...comfort is much more important to you than fashion actually most times.

It’s a priority?

Yeah. There are fabrics that I don’t like. Like I love stretchy leggings but I wouldn’t want the same material in a top. It would drive me crazy.

So I suppose layering up things as well then is good or having, being able to...That’s exactly what I find...I find you put on maybe a nice cotton t-shirt and then you put something else over it and maybe in the autumn, come winter, to give you a wee bit of heat but without all the sweatable kind of...

Thank you for all of that, Perhaps if we move on then to how you usually care for clothes, you know the laundry and washing and drying and so on that you do.

What are the usual elements of how you organise your laundry?
If it’s those sweaty materials, anything that’s stretchy you can only wear the one day and then I find they need to go to the wash whereas something cotton and cool, I might get a morning out of it and then another day I’d go out, I’d get another morning out of it and wouldn’t wash. Like I’ve a sister, not that it’s anything to do with this, but I’ve a sister who washes everything all the time, every day and I don’t do that. I wash something when it needs washing, when you’ve stained it, when you’ve marked it or when it smell I think it needs washing. I mean I wore this dress on Monday and I just came back, I was wearing it in the evening for an event and I came back and it smelled ok and it was clean and I hung it up and I wore it again today. So now it needs to get washed like but there was a time I didn’t have time to wash so I don’t wash everything every day or every time I wear it. It’s important to me that just I don’t believe in putting the machine on just for you know, just willy nilly just for two items or whatever so that’s the way, if it smells or it’s dirty or it’s stained or it’s marked, I’ll wash it immediately.

Does it go into a washing basket then and then you sort your washing from there?

Yes.

Can you talk about how does that happen?

It goes into the wash basket and I wait until I have an accumulation of either whites or darks I don’t just put it in the wash. No I don’t do a small load or whatever.. I always wait until I have a full load of coloureds to put coloureds on the same. I might, for example. If I had a nice cotton blouse and I needed it for the weekend or something, I might search in the house for other washing like maybe sheets or something to be able to put in with it so that I can get it washed if I need it but normally I just wait on it coming back out of the wash.

I would occasionally also just handwash that one item..say if I spilled something on a garment and I wanted it again for the weekend, I might...I would handwash.

So we’ve kind of talked about how you decide if something needs to be washed and you’d look at it or sniff it or whatever and decide how long you wore it. What about the various types of garments, would that influence when it is washed?
Various types. Well like often you find a t-shirt will only last you a day because it smells of sweat and it smells of your body being in it whereas leggings and trousers and things...Would last longer surely.

between washing I would, I would still hang them up if I knew I was going to wear it again...

then that helps them to last longer between washes?

If you were going to wear it again?

If I was going to wear it that day or I wore it that day, I would hang it up.

And let’s say like if there was a small stain on something?

If I got a stain on something and I thought that it was going to stain permanently, I would handwash or I would very quickly rub it with soap and a wee nail brush and try and get it out and then I might rinse it and still put it in the wash basket....To tackle the stain really quickly.

So you have referred to this..my next question was around is the cost of laundry ever a factor in your decision to launder it or wear it again?

Well, I see that as a cost. I see that people are putting the machines on and using gallons and gallons and gallons of water just for two items and yes, so the cost is important to me. Not financially, not that I notice it but the environmental cost for me would be important that it kind of, that I wouldn’t be wasting water just willy nilly and in fact, you know I would have said I’m alone with my husband now and I wait until the weekend to accumulate to see what his washing is and then I would put the washes on, quite a load of washing on all at once.

Ok and what kind of cycle or temperature would you commonly use for those washes?
It’s either 60 or 40. I mostly use 40 and with shirts and sheets I just use 60.

You know, you’re not changing your sheets every week but for his shirts I might put a, I put them in a 40 maybe 3 weeks in a row and then maybe give them a hot wash when I’m doing the sheets to get the collars and things off them especially if you have white shirts or whatever.

**And then those gardening and work shirts, they wouldn’t be washed very often or just put away for use again?**

No, my…I came out of my garden last night and I just dropped them on the floor because I go back today and I put it back on and I’ll stuff that in kind of like it’s a wee dirty cupboard and I put that in the cupboard for the next 3 or 4 days and then eventually when my husband has maybe cement or work clothes or maybe a boiler suit, I’ll put them all on together and I’ll do one wash for all the gardening dirty clothes.

**Ok, that all makes sense. How would you normally dry the clothes then once they’re washed...ordinarily?**

In Xxxxxxx here obviously with the weather, you’re very limited. I would dry all summer on the line and on a rack, just on a rack in the house if the weather’s bad. I’ve seriously considered buying a tumble dryer and I thought just for the winter months like because it’s so bad up here. Things hang around your house all month. Like November, December, January, February, March and you’re washing and things are hanging around so

It’s so hard to get them dry but my preferred option is on the line so even if I got an hour’s sunshine some day, I’d rather put it out on the line than anywhere else.

**So you don’t have a tumble dryer at all at the moment?**
I don’t, no.

Did you ever use, the publicly available ones for example at the filling station locally?

Yes, I’ve used those just for washing quilts and things.

But not for the dryers... No

And the skills that you’re using in your laundry routine, how would you say you’ve picked those up? Where did you learn them or why are you doing them or have you thought about them?

No, I haven’t actually thought. Well just when you’re young, your parents, my mother taught us you know to hang things out and to dry things and I suppose even when you’re just newly married and you’re in your twenties or whatever, I remember my mother coming and correcting the way that you hung things on the line or correcting, oh no you shouldn’t – like I remember having my children and putting on a wash and ruining a whole wash load of clothes from the children’s so I obviously in my twenties hadn’t learned then how to divide the colours and the wools and you know the hots and I remember I ruined a couple of loads of children’s clothes just by having a hot wash on something that...

So from experience then?

Exactly. As soon as you ruin 25 items of a child’s like and you think of the expense, you don’t be long learning very quickly that you’ve made a boob and you need to rectify it.

Yeah, and is dry cleaning something that you would do often or rarely or...

Very rarely. Maybe a wedding outfit or maybe a fancy coat or something that needed
specialist cleaning but very rarely, yeah.

And would you look at the label to see if something specifics dry clean?

No, I never look at the label to see so I never look at the label to see can you wash it or dry clean it. If it needs dry cleaned, I would just dry clean it once I bought it but very rarely. Like you know wedding dresses, bridesmaid dresses and something specialist like that.

All right and then in terms of clothing repair, is that something that you would ever do? say if something becomes worn or ripped or...?

Yes, I do repair things. If I really like them, I repair them. At the minute I have a little dress that I love that’s got flowers on it and the zip and the dress are separating at the side and it’s kind of like fraying and I’ve got it over the settee for me to stitch and to sew it.

And those skills, where did you learn those skills to undertake that? Is it mostly machine or hand sewn repair or...?

Yes, I’ll sew them by hand. The machine to me would be too much hassle maybe to take out the machine just to sew...

I’d rather watch TV and sew maybe like a 6 inch, a wee zip on by hand rather than take out the machine but saying that, I learned, we learned to sew at school. They taught us to sew in primary school so we were, I remember making a big, that we all had to make something out of felt and they made us stitch it and they made us stitch really evenly all around so the stitching was part of the decoration and I remember just doing like a big fish and the whole outside was done with the stitching and the more careful you were with the stitching so it turned out, it was something like for to put pyjamas in, you know.

A case or whatever, and we all did that in primary school and I remember it being really tricky when we learned, I remember very early in primary school trying to learn to stitch and it was kind of awkward but by the time you got to primary 7 you kind of got the knack and there’s something very kind of mindful when you talk about
stitching so I really enjoy sitting and I remember stitching on like a week Holly Hobby
and I’d done it by hand. I didn’t even do a pattern. I just done like a thing that looked
like a hat and I turned it in and stitched it and then had a wee head coming out of it
and a wee dress and I have that still. I still have that and I done that in primary school
so I put that on to a cushion cover for myself, not a cushion, a pillow for a bed and it’s
only, eventually the pillow cover wore away and recently, rather than, I cut it out.

You kept it?

I couldn’t get rid of it because I’d done it as a child, you know.

Do you enjoy other kind of needlework or crafts now?

Yes like I have a new grandchild and I knitted a few jumpers last year and wee
cardigans and I’ve lots and lots of material and I’m threatening to kind of pull out a
machine and try and do some sort of quilt or something like that you know but it’s
just getting the time.

I enjoy it, yeah.

And would you ever have an item of clothing professionally altered?

I do yeah. Often, I would spot something in fashion and I love the colours and I love
the shape say of the dress or maybe the arms or something, but I want the neck
altered or the arms altered or something. Like for example I bought a wee top
recently and I loved it but it was too tight on the arms. So I got it cut open so that
there was more space, so that you had more space just in the sleeves and I bought an
outfit that I thought I was going to get for a wedding and it had a round neck and I’ve
left it in the dress makers to get a wee heart shaped neck put in it just because I
know it looked gorgeous but they have this trend to, there’s like a fashion trend to
make like a curved neck and most women suit a square one or a heart shaped one or
one that delves a wee bit lower so I think it’s more flattering and therefore I would
pay something. I buy it in the sale and then even for €5 or whatever, €5, 6, 7 get
something altered, it’s still really worth it and you’ve got a really individual dress, or
get things turned up so yes is the answer. A couple of times a year I would leave an
item in to get turned up or sewn or altered or changed like that.
Yeah, so do you consider that it’s worth it?

Yes because it would infuriate me to keep it the way it is but it’s the colours I would be in for originally or something about the style and of course it’s maybe in the sale. Yes it is worth it when you’re going to wear it more. You’re going to get more use out of it and be happier with it.

I know. I think we’re nearly there. I think that’s it, the thing that I had for this morning. We’ve kind of talked about the wear and the care and the repair and I know like you haven’t had a breath.

It’s ok.

No, I love to talk you see.

That’s great. That’s what I’m looking for. So I’ll show you this clothing diary template then and you can ask me anything you want to about it and hopefully it makes sense. It’s just for one garment that you have chosen to trace so you only fill this part here in once.

Ok. That’s fair enough.

Then whatever item you pick, you’re going to fill this in a little bit about it. What’s it made of. Where did I get it. How often do I wear it, just for that one thing so it could be one blouse or one top or whatever and to just do a little sketch of it. We’re at the 10th so say in the next 4 weeks, if you wear it let’s say next Monday, you wear it and you say you wear it for the morning so you can write in 4 hours I’ve worn it for and then you might wear it again on the Thursday for whatever length of time and then just put a tick when you wash it.

Ok. Ok, fully understood.
Then this is a little wash diary so whenever you wash it to just record a little bit about you know, what did you put in the wash with it.

Yeah. Alright. That’s perfect.

Following one garment, ok. That’s great.

So that’s brilliant and then I’ll check in with you maybe in a week or so and see how you’re getting on and if you have any questions for me or if you have anything you need to ask me about and we’ll kind of maybe arrange some time to meet in about a month or so?

Yeah, that’s alright. And we will arrange then for the follow up meeting time with the wardrobe exploration?

Yes please, that would be great if that suits you and you’re happy with that?

End of week suits me better.

And I will absolutely work around whatever works with you.

That’s alright. That’s ok, there’s plenty of information there.

...My sister got married, it was 20 years ago now and we had all done Home Economics and there was times I made, like I made myself an outfit for a wedding one time because it was economical because my husband was on a very low income and I got this big whacking lump of material and I made a suit and I know my mother-in-law was always shocked with the idea. Nobody else knew it was homemade and I done a lovely lining on a grey suit. Now what happened was, my sister got married then and she asked me to do a wee dress and I made a wee dress for the wedding party at the time and you know, we just constructed it. I think we got a wee pattern of a child’s wee dress...

And the top was blue and the bottom was gold and it kind of went with the
bridesmaid was in blue and gold or whatever and it turned out wonderful and it was lovely. But that, I never saw myself as a dressmaker. I never saw myself as a stitcher or anything. I always thought I kind of struggled with it but when it turned out well, I thought yeah.

There’s a sense of satisfaction?

Yeah there is when you made it yourself, yeah, but I was very shocked one time at a friend of mine. She said to me, no I’m leaving that in to get the zip done or something or I’m leaving that in to get a button on it and I went, what? What? Now she had an excuse. She had MS.

So she found it difficult to do small needle stuff but I kind of thought could have done it for you no bother but there’s an example where, I don’t know whether it was the disease or just the fact that...perhaps she didn’t think of doing it herself. She just thought of giving it to somebody else to do and I found that really shocking.

It’s interesting to see...

Because I had never came across people who wouldn’t, I kind of thought ...Everybody just does simple repairs themselves...everyone does that.

I have always thought that it was normal for people to repair things and that was the first, now this was 20 years ago, and that was the first time I heard of somebody paying somebody else to repair, to put a button on it. It was like what?

But that’s where we are. Perhaps they don’t consider it worth it?

Yeah, but I wonder as you lose the ability to be able to do it yourself, my own personal opinion would be that you can abrogate your responsibility for things and therefore you have to look to someone else to do it and that’s, I think, that happens a lot, not just in clothes.
I think if somebody feels that they can’t try it, like say I was checking out my lawnmower or something. My generation might think about taking out the plugs

**Try a few things? ...attempt basic maintenance?**

Yes, and making sure there was no dirt or something.

You might think try these before I leave it with somebody, but if you don’t have that knowledge you just straight away give it to somebody else and you hand it over and it may well be for every talent or everything that we lose, we kind of hand over responsibility and we allow someone else to do it for us and do the thinking for us and do the fixing for us so if you do lose some sort of wee talent at something, or young people who aren’t taught it means that they can’t do it. Like I believe I can’t crochet because nobody has sever taught me to crochet and I just need a few hours...

**Absolutely, when you can knit...**

So I believe I can’t crochet so if I wanted a lovely crochet blanket that I might say to somebody could you crochet it for me whereas a few hours if I took the time might teach me to do it and I could do it myself.

It’s interesting....maybe it is the time factor too....and I believe too then that you know, part of the theory is if you keep everybody as busy as possible, as much as possible, then we all will hand over, we’ll all hand out the money to someone to do something else and that will keep business going, you know big business. It sounds paranoid but it’s not.

When you get them cheaper, everything’s become cheaper you know. It’s cheaper to buy a new one.

**Yes, around the cultural acceptance of it as well isn’t it?**

You want a new one just to make it look better, like I can repair a lawnmower. My father was an electrical engineer so everything in our house was repaired or fixed so
it wasn’t in my mentality, it wasn’t in my mother and father’s mentality to throw it out until you repaired it… and it only went to the bin eventually if it was just not repairable and then what happened was things, you started not to be able to get, you see things are moving so fast you can’t get the part for the thing that you bought 5 years ago. Maybe the string has changed.

**There’s a new model or whatever?**

The case has changed or whatever it is and something has changed in it and I think that’s a deliberate tactic because you don’t have an endless market unless you change it… I-phones are an example but I’m thinking of lawnmowers and things like that.

**They want you to buy the newest, the best, the most recent model.**

Like if you’ve got a lawnmower and it’s broken and you can’t get parts and you can’t get wheels, what do you do, you have to buy another one. So that’s a £400 sale say for something that you might have been able 20 years ago to replace a wheel or replace an oil tank.

Or get someone local to help even… That’s why I believe you have to still support anybody that’s repairing. I think you have to support them and throw your money at them because you’re keeping that talent the same as your dressmaking, stitching talent. You’re keeping that in the community. It’s a complicated and long winded subject but I mean I think it’s a way of producing a market for the companies that make money to be made and if you keep changing something then you make more money.

**Mmm**

It stops people being able to do it themselves so they’re making us all… ,

**But I think the more you see that happening, you say you saw it from your parents, or I saw it from my parents but children mightn’t necessarily see that now so that**
they don’t even, it’s not even, it doesn’t even come into consideration do you know that kind of way.

It doesn’t even filter down as an idea. They just think I’ll buy this.

It’s a very disposable society. It’s became very disposable. I mean bottles being an example. We’re not all still using the glass bottles that can be recycled. Why is everything plastic and all that and then there’s the environmental thing and all that.

I agree that’s really interesting….

It’s a big, big subject. You don’t need to pick a particular market; just pick any market and you realise that there’s bigger things going on beyond you and this idea that you have to modernise everything. Looking at their lovely refurbishment here, it’s lovely but this idea that you have to be up to date like and I know people who live in houses who change their settees, their furnishings, their painting, their wallpaper every one to two years just because they want to move with the trend and move with the time.

And I find that very difficult because I think, what are you doing like. You’re just getting another settee that cost you another £400 or £1000 and you’re just going with a trend. I don’t believe in trends. I believe that they’re there and people follow them but I don’t follow myself.

it’s about having a value on something as well, I’d want to wear that chair out until it becomes worn…even then you might bring the material in and repair it. I think we’re losing a lot more than our environment and our, we’re losing our minds.

And having the skills required?

It’s strange. Sure, people like me never saw spinning and wheel spinning and carding and all that and yet I’m fascinated about it because it’s like something…I love to see people carding wool and kind of putting it in because I’m fascinated by how did you come out with the length of wool that somebody was able to knit with or whatever. Then that was never, when I was young it was about the big weaving machines and things like that but not the carding and the things. I know it happened a lot in this region but I didn’t see it....
That was really interesting. That was very useful and thanks so much for giving me the time this morning.

That’s alright. I hope that you get lots of other participants. Its really interesting...
So, thank you for making time for this interview today and I am so very appreciative that you have allowed me to visit your home and your wardrobe for this chat. Thank you very much.

You are most welcome.

So, if we can begin by looking at your clothing diary that you have been keeping, please. So you picked something that you were going to keep track of for me?

Yes, well it started it was going to be this but I actually bought this vest top at the beginning of the summer so that’s what the thing ended up being followed.

That’s why I wanted to, because I wore that all the time as if nearly like a vest under tops, under you know, so pretty often.

So you wore it lots I can see...you’ve got loads of hours of wear filled in and you’ve washed it often too.

The reason I picked it was, I bought this in Italy. This has got cotton in it, about 5 years ago and I’ve been doing the same with it and what happened was this summer, at the beginning of the summer, I was in I think it was [named clothing store] which is very unusual... it wouldn’t be my favourite but that’s where I, so I picked that up and I thought right I’m going to do that and see how it washes and how it wears. You know, because I’ve had a similar one for years.

Yeah, and how did you find it?

Well, it has washed really well. It’s got more elastane in it than this one that I sued to have. That one’s just got faded here with washing. So that’s a lot of washing over the summer and it hasn’t lost any of it’s colour yet but then this is since about 5 years
Normally when you were washing it, if you look at your little wash diaries, you would put it in with other dark things?

Always. Always with dark colours. It could be with trousers, and I would put dark, if I had more than that, that would have been in with it except I haven’t been wearing it there recently. just in the washing machine in the house.

And then usually then for drying? I see you have your drying rack.

Yes, I don’t have a tumble dryer and I’ve an outside line for the summer and during the winter this alcove drying rack. happens.

So they just go there just out of the machine when they’re still wet because this room is very well insulated and gets a lot of heat and they can be, like I hung that up yesterday.

It’s bone dry now.

I’ve no tumble dryer so that is

I’m going to take a little photo of your clothes horse if you don’t mind. Any photographs I take, you won’t be identified in them. It will just be of the actual items themselves ... 

Yeah that’s no problem at all...Yeah.

That’s so slimming. You know, no matter what you wear over the top of it, because that’s kind of fitted and hugs you in. I suppose it’s like a body thing and so therefore,
keeps you kind of your curves when you’re wearing something else.

So I can often wear it as a vest, it gives me an extra layer.

So, is that how you would normally dry items then?

Yes, but I’d also run the iron over it particularly like this cotton one probably wrinkles less and this one probably needs the iron on it for more, you know, but I would run the iron over it.

This is where you normally iron is it. You’ve everything all set up this morning?

I’ve quite a tight wee house here so I’m limited in space but it’s lovely and bright in here to work.

It is.

And what I do is I would do my ironing, like I ironed yesterday and I will iron today to complete these and try and get everything away and then I’ll normally it would be 4 or 5 or 6 days before I would have a load of washing because there’s only me and my husband. Then I would put a dark wash on and I went to put shirts and a white wash on and I hadn’t enough, I might strip a sheet off a bed just to bulk up what I’m putting in the wash.

Would you try to wait for that or something else to put in?

Exactly, so if I can’t find anything, I don’t put it on. I’ll leave it a few days and then put it on.

especially with the whites you’re usually looking for things where you probably have loads of darks the way we are in Ireland. Loads of darks.

You always want to try and get all of the ironing done and then put away your ironing board and not have to iron for a bit. Yeah, and not to have to look at that because
that clutters my house when it’s out...

The funny thing is, I’ve an ironing basket in there and a wash basket in there and I would if I had visitors coming or something, I wouldn’t have the ironing board out. I would just say, it’s only because I’m going away I’m trying to get on top of these so say I thought oh it was going to be here next week, I would just fold those when they’re dry and drop them into my ironing basket and then the following week when I get time then put up the ironing board and iron them en masse. I’d rather do a good lot together than put on the iron and turn it off or leave the board up for 3 or 4 days.

And how do you decide what goes into that basket and waits to be ironed or what can get away without being ironed?

Well, most things because of our lifestyle, my husband wears a shirt every day so as long as I know I’ve got like 5 shirts for the week, everything can wait until next week. Towels, things like that, mostly if they’re out of the washing machine quite quickly, they aren’t too wrinkly and I would just fold them and put them away so I only iron them if I haven’t much ironing to do and I would use my sheets and my quilt covers as the base on my ironing board so that they’re kind of getting ironed while I’m ironing other things so it’s just a wee thing that I do.

Yeah, and the time I go to iron my quilts, it’s mostly the middle of it’s ironed. I turn it and iron it again. It’s quick to do just the edges. I know lots of women my age don’t iron quilt covers and sheets or anything unless they have visitors coming, they take the iron out and put the iron across the bed. But I would normally...

You like them ironed? I suppose it depends then what your own preference is?

Yeah, exactly, well I love the air getting at them in the summer and I love the sunshine getting at them and my mother in law would believe like years ago, I’m not sure whether you know this but years ago, my mother in law’s from Co Louth and when they did whites years ago, they put them on hedges and they reckoned that the green chlorophyll of the hedge whitened the whites. And they would put them deliberately out on a green hedge, their sheets.

Just sitting over it, drying and they reckoned between the sunshine and the
chlorophyll of the hedge, maybe blue white I think she called it, like a blue white off it. And it stayed whiter, so that is what she thought so I like my stuff air dried outside too.

in fact because we obviously have a very wet climate here, my husband was trying to give me a lean-to at the side of the house with a wash line underneath so I can get things out in the air on a blowy day or a wet day and get a bit of drying...it’s not hygienic really to have clothes drying in an environment where you’re sitting and the moisture goes into the air and things but this room is particularly hot and it dries particularly well.

These racks get the sun here so I have an outdoor and I don’t need, you know.

You have written in mainly 40 degrees, that would be the setting that you wash at mainly?

Always 40 degrees. I done a 30 the other day, it could be a year since I did the last 30, maybe 18 months. The only reason I done it was they were mucky kind of dirty, dusty clothes from doing windows and things and I wanted to rinse them through and then I was going to put them on a 40 degree wash because I wanted most of the dirt and dust and things before I put them in with other stuff.

That’s a quicker wash?

Yeah, it’s 30 degrees for 60 minutes. The water up here is very soft and I noticed when I put on very short washes, my washing powder was still all over my clothes so I started using the longer 40 degree wash which is about 2, 10 or 2, 40

So it’s quite a long one. I had to do that because I had washing powder on everything. Yeah, I was starting to iron things and there was washing powder residue and lines of washing powder so the water’s so soft here and the other thing is I lived in a hard water area where I put like a whole scoop of washing powder in and when I came here I realised I need half of that. Because it’s soft water, it breaks it down to bubbles very quickly and it’s a completely different wash result. So I’ve moved from hard water where you need a big scoop of powder and it washes well and it creates very little bubbles and you need lots of washing powder. Now I’m in a soft water area and it’s half the washing powder.
So it's a washing powder that you're using then?

Yeah, I always use powder. The same brand for years. I intentionally buy the same brand.

Yeah, because...do you want to know the brand?

I see it on your sheet here.

Because I’m an asthmatic and I used to get itchy with the modern brands and the only thing that suited me was XXXX and it seems to not give me that kind of itchy skin thing that other brands do. I don’t like lots of scent and I don’t like these modern ones that you put into the machine that have the conditioner in it.

The tablets.

Yean, and I have tried XXXX tablets and I found they work but again up here I was getting a residue from the tablets and I thought I better because it seems to take so long for the tablet to break down so I started going back to the powder so I tried both up here and the powder is kind of more successful. And powder gives you more control I suppose over how much. How much I put in, exactly. A tablet is a certain size.

So no conditioner or anything else then?

I don’t like the residue of anything. I often find that if you touch things with the conditioner, there’s a residue of like, there’s a sense, like an oiliness on the surface of towels and things. I never liked that...

Yeah. Ok, that’s brilliant and thanks so much for filling those in, that’s great to have. You’ve done it all with so much detail. Thanks so much, that’s great.
I got that top at the beginning of the summer. I still wear it. It might be longer than 5 years I have them. I bought that in Italy and that’s why I remember but I would say I wore that until the seams ripped. If the seam rips or something happens it and I just keep looking for the same thing again and if I find the same thing again and that’s in bad shape, I can get rid of that and use the new one.

So it’s kind of a functional garment that you want to have one all the time to wear, to use. Kind of a staple thing you wear with lots of things?

Yeah, and I would have white of those too. I would have white versions. So I would have black for under different clothes and I would have white ones too.

Yeah, that I wore pretty regular now.

So we might perhaps see where your washing machine is and see where the line is if you don’t mind? And would you please be ok to talk me through your procedure when you’re going to do a wash, what your routine is or just show me how you manage that. Say if this morning you decide you’re going to put on a wash.

So I would go to my wash basket here. Which is in this wee cupboard and I would take out anything that’s say, I would say I wash maybe for every white wash I do, I would wash maybe 3 dark washes. So I would go in there and look at all the dark stuff and then I would go around the house and see, my husband carries a wee bag to the North to work and I would check that wee bag. See if there’s anything for washing. I would check in the bedroom and I don’t have a terribly big house so it doesn’t take very long, just do a quick look around to see if there’s anything else to add.

Maybe a dressing gown for somebody, maybe I had a visitor and maybe a dark dressing gown hanging on the door and maybe I know it’s been used recently or something and then I would just gather them all up and put them in the washing machine.

And for drying?
If it’s wet outside I wouldn’t put them on the line, I would put them on this here rack and just put it out here so they were, because I know maybe it’s going to shower later.

They can get a little while outside but then it’s easy to move them.

And I have a little sock holder...I have a sock holder in there too and the thing is, that’s like a wee cupboard for everything. It’s out of the way. It gets the same heat as in here and they’re dry like in 24 hours. Then it keeps all the smalls, now the odd time I would have knickers and things and I would put those on a radiator and especially if it was cold and I had the heating on anyway. They’d get dried quickly.

**Great, Ok many thanks. For the next part of our chat would it please be ok to have a look at your wardrobe and some of the items you are currently wearing from it?**

Yes. I remember you saying we would so no problem.... Right, ok.

**So can you perhaps show me something that you’ve worn for a long time and that you’re still wearing. You know, that you’ve had for a long time but that you still wear sometimes. It’s not just sitting in there but it’s something that you do pull out and wear.**

Yeah, Ok.

**...and then maybe something that you’ve either repaired yourself or had repaired or had altered to talk about if there’s anything like that.**

I have something that was altered for a wedding. It was just too long.

**We might just look at where things are stored and then talk about those.**

You’re in for a shock. I’m sure it’s nothing you haven’t seen.
That’s it, we all are the same! My daughter was sorting clothes before I came today...

I think my daughter used to be bought everything and she’s such a, Granny would buy two piece outfits and all and they would hang and they would hang and they would hang and they were never worn and I folded them and put them away in a bag and gave them away.

She had a limited, she wasn’t a fashion girl. She wasn’t interested in what was going on around her and all the fashion things. She just wanted to get into a pair of leggings.

**Something comfortable?**

She ignored most of the stuff in the wardrobe from about 5 to about whatever, 14. She just.

She’s was trying to get through them.

My washing machine is in the kitchen. It’s very handy.

Yeah, so I keep washing powder and so on then in the plastic box there. That’s not what’s in it. Because it’s handy because I keep the powder out there.

Then the clothesline is outside.

**The front or the back? We can see that afterwards.**

Well it’s not raining at the minute, sure it’s not. Sure we’ll go out while it’s not raining.

Yeah. It used to be up the garden and now. [showing line outside].

[Re-enter house]
Great, thank you for that? So I see that you also have some clothing items stored here near the door? This is like outerwear?

Yeah, coats and hats and things like that. Then shoes and so on. Things to slip into quickly to go outside. We mostly change our shoes when we come in and wear slippers in the house.

Well, we do mostly. I would normally take these off or take them off here or whatever and get into a pair of these. We would sometimes change our shoes there. Just for practicality.

So I was saying....I’m packing for holidays so that’s why there are these bits....

Very nice?

Yes we are going to Lanzarote for a week.

Lovely and warm!

Yeah, somewhere to the heat

So I was saying I’m packing for holidays so that’s why I took those down last night so they would be my summer clothes.

So this is what you put away at the end of the summer and put upstairs?

Yeah. Out of the way. Because shortage of space means, so I always pack summer stuff to go away and we would put them up there.

We’ll just take a little photo of where things are stored. I’ll just take your little chest
of drawers here and then you can tell me what goes where or how you organise it.

So that’s where I would keep that t-shirt that I’ve been washing. And I’ve been going through those recently from the swimsuits and all. They would normally be fairly tidy. That’s where I would keep that wee t-shirt...Mainly clothes, long clothes I would keep here. So this would be leggings and these outdoor kind of trousers. Then this would be most of my fashion.

Yeah. So you’re storing them by type, the folded trousers and the bottoms and the tops?

Anything that you can throw on in a hurry that doesn’t need pressed or ironed or is stretchy or that’s kind of unfussy stuff.

The hanging stuff would be if I wanted to go out for the night or during the day or somewhere special. Most of the stuff that’s hanging up would be what I would wear so.

Then you’ve got some outerwear coats and things on the wall at the side. I actually do...this because this house we’re limited for space. Hooks are useful though.

...and so that’s all my scarves. Lots of scarves and things like that.

I’ll just take a photo of that overall. Then I won’t need anything else for a bit and I can let you pull out the items that you’re going to talk about.

Ok.

So would you say the items here are items that you’ve had...?
For a long time. There’s only about 2 items in there that are actually new this year.

So that was bought in the summer and that was bought recently. This is this year as well because it was for a wedding but the rest of that stuff has been there for a year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years.

And I would shift a lot of it into those boxes and up to the roof space then in the winter and then put summer dresses in there and summer trousers in there and things like that.

Yeah. So that would be the oldest thing I have is the long denim and that’s actually from XXXXXX. That could be 10/15 years old and I still wear that.

You’re still wearing it so that would kind of be something you’ve worn for a long time?

Yeah.

Do you want to just take it out and we’ll take a little photo of it, not of you but just of the bottom part. So it doesn’t date really?

It doesn’t date. You can put it with a pair of boots in the winter and then in the summer you can have wee sandals on and a wee top, yeah. It’s easy to care for and you can wear it half a dozen times and as long as you don’t spill something on it, it doesn’t need washed.

It makes it very practical.

I’d wear that maybe 3 or 4 times a year.

Can then can you please shoe me a garment that hold value for you? Perhaps there are some memories attached to?
I don’t get emotionally attached to clothes really. Not emotionally attached to any. Wait until I see. No, I don’t think there’s anything that I couldn’t kind of part with.

...I’m just looking to see. I suppose, no it’s not that one. Now you’ll see a similarity actually between that and the thing that I’m going to show you. It’s very similar. So that.

...So really I think it’s very feminine and soft so I kind of don’t wear it all the time but when I want to feel kind of fresh and feminine, I will wear that. Obviously, it’s inside out.

That’s ok. Is that intentionally because you are minding it, you’ve hung it inside out?

No. It’s just the way it’s turned out. Yeah, so I’m very fond of it and it’s kind of soft and feminine and it looks nice and it’s got a nice neckline and everything. I suppose in the summer you don’t want to wear them out all the time.

I wonder does it remind you of a certain, you know, when you bought it or certain times you’ve worn it or?

No, it’s how it makes me...It makes you feel. Like a pretty girl.

Great! Much needed! And do you have an item in there that you never wear but you haven’t thrown out yet?

Yeah. This. So I really like this but every time I go to put it on, I always find that it’s kind of probably is too pale for me.

I like colour and so therefore, I think when I put that on, that just drains me so I bought that to go with a nice skirt and kind of autumn so it was not too hot and not too cool and I don’t think I’ve really ever worn it even if I’ve put it on, it’s been like for an hour or two and then I took it back off. So it’s something? and yet it’s so pretty and you know what I should be doing. I should just dye it... I could just dye it.
Would that be something that you might do sometimes?

Yes. I do that. If something really like quilt covers or something or even what did I do last, a lovely pair of stretchy trousers. They were like got faded and faded and I just put them in the machine with a white blouse and the trousers and I gave them a wash and then I coloured them all and wore them again.

In the machine with the machine dye?

In the machine, so I had them like this, that lovely turquoise something like this so that’s years ago, just to get more wear out of them because they were so nice but the stretchy trousers, I was so keen on them. They had embroidery up the leg so I just dyed them.

They did, they took it alright.

And you wore them then more afterwards?

Yeah. I could, so there’s an example.

Can you also show me something that you wear frequently now, all the time?

These.

So I wear these lots, so much so that I bought a new pair again recently because I had a pair and I downgraded them to like a gardening pair and then bought myself another new pair, I found the company and the other day, I went and got another pair. The exact same and it cost me €40 before Christmas and they were down to €26. So they’re the same and I know that I’ll wear them lots and lots.

So that’s why I wanted to get those because I know I’ll wear these out and I want to have another pair.
A good pair now so it’s kind of you’re putting them in circulation then going from good wear down to?

Yes, so I like leggings. I like the comfort of leggings.

Then when you wash or care for those? Are you for example minding the newer ones the same as the others or do you treat them separately?

Just the same. 40 degrees with the dark wash. It’s the wrong kind to go bally which they haven’t yet. I would maybe turn them inside out just to kind of protect them a bit because I think they’d go bally against other things.

They’re for kind of good wear and I can wear these around the house.

Yeah. So is there a garment in the wardrobe that you probably will get rid of soon or describe to me how you decide when something’s going to go, when you’ve just had enough of it or when do you do that. Do you do that when you’re doing the change of season or would you do it?

Yeah, I do that when I’m putting summer stuff in there. I’ll look at something that I know I haven’t pulled out of the wardrobe in the last 3 to 6 months and if I haven’t pulled it out, then I give it away.

That one, I really liked that and I bought to go with black and white skirt to show it off and what happened was, so it was really nice and then what happened was, it hasn’t kept its shape. It didn’t wear and it didn’t wash well so...so what I’ll do is I’ll look out for something similar that will still go with the skirt and I can get rid of it.

I think it was just maybe what it was made of. So that Semco, it’s a company I use for a lot of these tops. There’s only two of them in Northern Ireland, these kind of things they do a lot. This is where I bought this recently.
So you know the company and you know you’ve had other tops that have had better longevity?

Exactly, so I think it might just be I try to give it a bit of style and didn’t do and so the material just hasn’t held it’s kind of shape like that. That’s ok. I hate things that just go like that, like wide at the bottom. So something like that, I probably look out for something.

so it was really nice and then what happened was, it hasn’t kept its shape. It didn’t wear and it didn’t wash well so...That’s probably going to go in the next cull? ...but I like the neck and I like the wee cuffs but again, you could put an elastic in that and tighten it in or something. so the material just hasn’t held it’s kind of shape like that. That’s ok. I hate things that just go like that, like wide at the bottom.

And would you do those kinds of sewing tasks or would you get somebody to do it if you were?

I would give it to a dressmaker. Yeah.

Yeah, and you know when you’re shopping and you’re looking for something to replace the black vest or top or replace the black trousers, you seem to be very decisive about what you’re looking for to buy?

Yeah, I don’t particularly like shopping so if I looked in there and I thought I needed, say I bought those in the summer, and when I went out I kept finding that I hadn’t got anything to wear with those so when I was out, I was looking for something and I happened to be in Primark and I had in my head something red and I looked at all these different shades that suit different colourings and that one suited me so I took it. When I got back I was able to...

Something to match in, yeah. So I bought it to match. So yeah, I go out with a shopping list or don’t go into the shops at all.

Ok?
I think down the years I’ve spent money on things and then just seen them hanging in the wardrobe and it was because they didn’t match something I had if I bought something in the autumn so for example a lovely plum pair of leggings and if you didn’t buy the colour of something that they had in the shop that went with it at the same time, well then 6 months maybe you still hadn’t found something that matched the plum...so I didn’t want to do that anymore.

So I either buy an outfit or buy nothing at all.

So I go out looking for an outfit for a wedding or an outfit or a newer outfit for something special or for a christening or something like that.

**And just make sure to get it all together that you know you’re going to wear it?**

*Would you mix and match them then or would you always kind of?*

I’m going to wear the two pieces

Yeah, I would mainly wear the outfit...but I would mix them too.

I’ll give you an example. I have gorgeous pink linen trousers with a pink linen top and I’ve wore them for years and I’ve had like a lovely v-neck knitted top with them and last year, when I was in the shop I thought, oh that would go great with my pink trousers so I bought a top then with a bit of blue in it that will go with the pink so I was somewhere looking at something else to go with the pink linen trousers.

*Mmm*

That you know that you have and I’ve worn for like 10/12/14 years and they still fit me and they’re still gorgeous. They’re still comfortable, cool in the hot when you’re away in the summer or whatever so I’m looking for something that I could maybe wear with them and that’s what I got kind of thing. So that’s like 10-15 years after I’ve bought the pink trousers, I’m still looking for something else to match.

Ok?
You know.

Then you might swap it around and wear it with something else as well?

Yes. Or just black or jeans or? Because I’m practical, then I know it would go with the black and white you see, so. I’m trying not to buy things that don’t match something. I try and buy something that matches something I already have or can wear with it.

Great, can you pick out a garment then that you’ve either repaired or had repaired or altered?

Let me see. Right, so...so this is a lovely top I got and when I pulled it up, the sleeves were too tight so it would nearly cut off your circulation around your elbows. So I actually gave this to a friend of mine and got her to cut it. This was strangling me so I loved the shape of it. It goes with jeans. It’s nice and casual but it was cutting the circulation off my arm. So she adapted it. Yes, I gave it to her within 3 months of buying it because I couldn’t wear it because it was just far too tight.

Then do you consider that you got good wear out of it afterwards?

Yes, often and regular.

So when I said about the red, so then I seen this in the sale. So even though I bought the red blouse to go with the trousers, I saw this in the sale and bought it because I thought I can wear the red top with it.

Yeah?

So then I went looking for a skirt and that so I bought that originally and I like it.

So you’re always thinking what do I have that will work with that.
So if I’m going to buy one item….

**Making sure that you know what you might have that works with it?**

Let me see. So I’ve a lovely pair of navy trousers in here. They were adjusted…So they were for a wedding. I knew I was wearing high heels, and I’m really, really, really long in the leg. They would drown most people in the leg and I still got like about 2 inches taken off the bottom. And I still wore them with high heels and the other thing is, I wanted to show off the shoes that I was wearing. You didn’t want them too long but they are lovely. So they had to be turned up then, just shortened.

**Did the friend of yours you were talking about alter those for you?**

No, I left those at the dressmakers. There’s a dressmaker in XXXXX and when I’m down there, I would leave in,

I got a summer dress done and it was away down to her and it was all stretchy and I got her to make it all gathered so it made it shorter, above the knees so it looked all kind of gathered. Yeah, I bought it in the sale and then I thought, you know what, instead of it being away down to my ankles, I’ll just get it gathered.

Yeah. Especially it costs you maybe under a tenner and then another tenner gets it adjusted.

**Yeah?**

So this is, I bought this for a wedding in a sale, it looks amazing and I’ve never wore it yet. I’ve never wore it and I’ve a wedding coming up and the reason that, at my age it looks amazing is, all these zig zags take away from around your waist. Any wee bulges or anything so it looks great. And I’ve black and white shoes from previous black and white outfits and I’ve never wore it.

**Is there a reason that you haven’t or just you haven’t had a chance yet?**

I haven’t because I think black and white is a wee bit, lots of people go to weddings with black and white so I needed some other occasion.
Ok, yeah.

To wear it and I won’t part with that without wearing it you know because I know I have the shoes.

Would you perhaps bring it on holidays now?

Actually, well no because I would have to bring the shoes to go with it and then that’s more lugging things around so it’s gorgeous.

It’s fabric that would fold up well. You could travel with it. No ironing, exactly!

But I’d end up with flat shoes with me and everything is just beautiful and I’ve never worn it.

Hopefully you’ll have an occasion!

I have a wedding now and I’m thinking between it and another outfit that I already have.

I’ll decide. But I basically have everything to go with it as well which is great. That’s brilliant when you have it all hanging up and waiting for you.

Normally wedding outfits, I would keep in that cupboard where I have the washing. I would keep kind of like a long...occasion wear in there.

I have like a funeral coat in there and I would keep kind of formal stuff in there, like I have a wee stole in here and it matches a dress that I have out there and it’s out there and they’re all in. Its just longer, taller hanging than this. They’re too tall for this.

Very good, thank you for all of that. Having chatted to me the first time and done your clothing diary sheets, has it encouraged you to think about your clothes a little bit more or might it have changed anything for you do you think?
I think maybe if I had talked to you 15 years ago, it might have but I think I’m kind of set in what I do now.

And I don’t think that’s going to change. I showed you, I bought that and just like those trousers and these trousers, I went back and got a second one of those because when I wore it, just you know….I liked it….pretty around the neck, it’s a good shape around the neck, it’s comfortable and you can put it on with your jeans and it looks good, or your leggings so because it looks so good, but then a week I was away back and got a second one while it was in the sale, while they still had them.

In the same colour?

In the same colour. I didn’t even change the colour. Like they did probably have navy and white but I did already have a navy thing in there with white so I thought, I like colour.

Would you have the two of those on the go at the one time or wearing one first and holding on to the second one or?

I have the two of them on the go at the one time. That one can be washing while the other one is still getting worn. Or when I’m travelling, it’s fairly light travelling because it’s nice and it’s comfortable and you can move and breathe and eat and so. These are kind of winter things that have been worn for about, each of these, this, this and this are 3 things that I enjoy taking out in the winter.

Ok.

Because you get cold but you want comfort or fashion and in particular, I like this because it gives me…It gives me, I can wear brown boots and you go out kind of dressed and you’re fully comfortable then.

It looks like something your Granny would wear!

No, it’s lovely that’s one of my favourite colours actually!
So it’s very practical. I don’t know who would be the designer. I think it was just like one of these wee boutique shops and it was on offer and I just loved it so and pockets and you know, you just put it with a pair of brown boots and brown tights and it looks good.

when you put away your clothes then, it’s nice to see the different season clothes again and yeah, to remember, oh yeah. I have that or oh yeah, I forgot about that. it’s like Christmas that’s what it’s like,. It’s like oh, I forgot, oh yes. I’m looking forward to wearing that again, yeah.

So that’s the way and when I find this skirt, black and white went with this yellow top and then when I was out, this was in the sale I bought this skirt because this is a wee bit more young and a wee bit more and it’s lovely, you know, too. So it just shows you, I kind of bought this thing and I had this that went with this one so if it went with that one, it would go with this one but now I wear it with this one more than this one.

**The original one?**

The original one, yeah, but it all depends. You know, that’s more formal looking. It made me look professional.

Whereas this one is kind of cute. More fun. Then this I’ve had for about 20 years.

And I wear that nearly always just at funerals.

**Ok.**

So that’s, I’ve a long coat when I go to a funeral and I want to be respectful. Black boots and that and a black top or trousers. I love the embroidery on it. But it’s good as well to have something that you know- I know I have that, do you know what I mean, that you’re not having to think about it too much as well, you know. It’s kind of a go to, it’s a go to thing that, you know. That’s what it’s for mostly for me. Then of course, that skirt’s nearly like the dress that I said I wore. Now, if I was going to give
something away, it might be that.

And why is that?

Because the dress, it is hung somewhere after summer, after summer, after summer and I’ve put it away and sometimes that’s what’s here because it’s like, I went to put it away and I went, would you wear it in winter then for something, with something. Then in the end, I haven’t wore it at all because it’s too light and because I think black and white, I suppose I associate black and white with, you wear black and white when you’ve nothing else to wear.

I don’t know. I think it’s a bit down here. I associate it with age, I think and so therefore.

I’d associate it with kind of like a classic look?

You’re right but when I put it on it looks amazing. You’re right, it is classic but there’s something about it just. You know what it is, it’s see through. It’s quite light and quite see through. I think every time I went to put it on, I don’t have a slip and I’ve went, you have to get a slip and I haven’t bought one yet. Mmm so if I bought a slip it would just be easier.

Funny, I have a lot of white tops...That would be my summer look. Nice and comfy.

They’re French, you know.

Lovely.

Just so you’re out for the day and you’re hot and sticky and they’re fashionable.

I have those a long time. You might have talked me into taking them yeah.

It’s not too heavy. It can go in a case.
So that’s it for my wardrobe really?

All my boots and shoes are in there and I do the same with them as I do with clothes, they’re my winter boots in there mostly except for the odd pair of shoes or sandals in case I need them but mostly, now all my boots will go to the roof space and all my sandals and flip flops and all will come down. Again because I don’t have the space, you know.

Yeah, I can sort it out easily…it’s just a few hours some day

I’ve had these for about 20 years. And I wouldn’t part with them because at the time, they’re peppercorn which is like a, they’re quite a good range years ago and I’ve got a black one and a navy one.

Now that I am sentimental about, you asked about sentimental earlier...

I remember graduating a couple of times and I graduated and I wore them with a nice white shirt that was kind of out of the top and just with a coloured top or jumper or something underneath that would show it off.

Yes?

Or so I’ve got a red and navy one and when I wore it the last time, somebody said to me, that’s gorgeous, where did you get that. 20 like years I have it and it has a big split there.

So I kind of don’t part with those. Those 2 kind of come in and out and in and out of fashion and I just wear it.

Is that another one then that you went back and bought the exact same one, different colour that time but how did that come about?

I wonder did I. Yes, I might have. It might have been one of those ones that I picked at and liked it so much that I went back and got, but they maybe didn’t have that and I went and got just a different shade. So that’s it. So I wear it with something like that.
Very good. That’s brilliant, thanks so much for your time today and for explaining all of that and keeping the diary too.

That’s alright. That’s ok. Many thanks.
Thank you for taking part in this research to help me learn more about the everyday life of clothes!

Please choose one garment - a top, dress, trousers, shirt, t-shirt or blouse - that you currently wear frequently, to record over the following 4 weeks.

On the opposite side, please fill in your garment's story and keep it handy to record how often you wash and wear it in the table below.

Also enclosed is a washing diary to keep next to your washing machine and record the details of each wash your chosen garment is included in.

Many thanks for taking part, please return your diary in the enclosed envelope once completed!

ABOUT YOU!

Age: 18-29 30-39 40-49 [50-64] 65+

Ethnic Background:
- White Irish
- Any other white background
- Mixed background
- Asian / Asian Irish
- Black / Black Irish
- Chinese / Chinese Irish
- Other

Work Status:
- Working full time
- Working part time (8-29 hours)
- Working less than 8 hours
- Non working
- Student

Occupation / University course:
How often do you buy clothing for yourself?

- More than once a month
- At least 6 times a year
- Only once or twice a year
- Someone normally buys for me
- Once a month
- At least 4 times a year
- Less than once a year
- Never

Please list three clothing shops, brands or websites that you buy the majority of your clothing from:

1. M+Co
2. Quiz
3. Dunnes

Name:
Email address:
Phone Number:

Many thanks!

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### MY GARMENT STORY

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<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<td>What is it made of? Is it patterned, plain, colourful etc.?</td>
<td>99%+ Cotton 5% Elastane, <strong>Plain</strong></td>
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<td>Where did you get it? How much did it cost?</td>
<td>Dunnes, £7.99</td>
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<td>How long have you owned it? How long will you keep it for?</td>
<td>2 years, 5-6 years until worn out</td>
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<td>When do you wear it? How do you feel in it?</td>
<td>2-3 times a week, comfortable + slim</td>
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<td>How often do you wash it? Why?</td>
<td>2-3 times a week, it's a hot, comfortable 10 days, washed, dries on air, rack, folded back into my drawers</td>
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<td>Have you ever previously mended, repaired or altered it?</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any other comments on how you feel about this garment?</td>
<td>Practical, pulls tummy area inwards, and enhances the shape of my waist</td>
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Sketch the garment:
For each month, please enter the number of hours worn on the relevant date in the calendar. Enter a tick on each date when the product was washed.

**AUGUST RECORD OF HOURS WORN**

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**Total Hours** 28

For each month, please enter the number of hours worn on the relevant date in the calendar. Enter a tick on each date when the product was washed.

**SEPTEMBER RECORD OF HOURS WORN**

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<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours** 84

For each month, please enter the number of hours worn on the relevant date in the calendar. Enter a tick on each date when the product was washed.

**OCTOBER RECORD OF HOURS WORN**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Hours Worn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>16</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Hours** 78

For each month, please enter the number of hours worn on the relevant date in the calendar. Enter a tick on each date when the product was washed.

IN BETWEEN WASHES, DID YOU TAKE ANY MEASURES TO DELAY WASHING AND KEEP GARMENT IN ACTIVE USE?

For example, freshening it up by ironing or hanging up to air?

*Yes, as it isn't in contact with anal fats & sweat it lasts very long between washes, unless I spill something on it.*

DURING THIS TRIAL, DID YOU DO ANYTHING TO EXTEND THE ACTIVE LIFE OF THIS GARMENT?

For example, using a pilling remover, repairing or altering it?

*N*o

DURING THIS TRIAL, DID ANYTHING UNUSUAL HAPPEN TO THIS GARMENT THAT AFFECTED HOW OFTEN YOU WASH OR WEAR IT?

For example, did it get torn, damaged, borrowed, misplaced?

*N*o

Please continue on an extra page if you have more to share!
**DATE:** 9TH AUGUST 2018

Roughly what is in this wash load and approximately how long have they been worn for before washing? Please fill in the table opposite and photograph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garment type:</th>
<th>How many?</th>
<th>Material / Fibre: (e.g. Cotton, denim, synthetic, silk, wool, jersey etc.)</th>
<th>Hours of wear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T-SHIRT</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cotton, Elastane</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDERS +</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Synthetic</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNICKERS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PYJAMAS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCKS</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cotton, Wool</td>
<td>10-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-SHIRTS</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, how dirty is this wash load (please circle):
- **LOW**
- **MEDIUM**
- **HIGH**

Comments:

Generally speaking, is this a ‘normal’ wash for you or is there anything unusual about it? (please describe below)
- **✓** Normal
- **☐** Unusual

Comments:

---

**How are they being washed?**
- **✓** Washing machine in the home
- **☐** Washing machine at laundrette
- **☐** Hand wash
- **☐** Dry clean
- **☐** Other:

**What does this wash contain?**
- **☐** Whites
- **☐** Lights
- **☐** Bright colours
- **✓** Dark colours
- **☐** Mixed colours
- **☐** Delicates
- **☐** Other / Comments:

**If washing in a machine, how full is it?**
- **✓** Full
- **☐** 3/4
- **☐** 1/2
- **☐** 1/4

**After washing, how is this load dried?**
- **☐** Drying rack indoors
- **✓** Clothes line outdoors
- **☐** Radiator
- **☐** Tumble dryer
- **☐** Other / Comments (e.g. if separated to dry in different ways):

**What is the wash cycle setting?**
- **TEMPERATURE:** 40°C
- **WASH CYCLE (e.g. Cottons/ Synthetics):** 1000
- **SPIN SPEED SETTING:** 1000

**What laundry products are you using?**
- **Detergent BRAND & TYPE** (e.g. non-bio, 2-in-one, powder): **FAKE! NON BIO**
- **Fabric Conditioner BRAND & TYPE** (e.g. liquid, sheet, ball): **No**

**Did you check any care labels while doing this wash? Why / why not?**
- **No. It's 40C! MOST ITEMS CAN TAKE A 40C WASH.**

**In the process of doing this wash, did you do anything specifically to preserve the life of your clothes / make them last longer?**
- **No**
**DATE:** 12 AUGUST 2018

Roughly what is in this wash load and approximately how long have they been worn for before washing? Please fill in the table opposite and photograph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garment type:</th>
<th>How many?</th>
<th>Material / Fibre: (e.g. Cotton, denim, synthetic, silk, wool, jersey etc.)</th>
<th>Hours of wear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cotton top</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large towel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T-shirt (hand)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cotton /mix</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, how dirty is this wash load (please circle):
- **LOW**
- **MEDIUM**
- **HIGH**

Comments:

Generally speaking, is this a 'normal' wash for you or is there anything unusual about it? (please describe below)
- ✔ Normal
- ☐ Unusual

Comments:

---

**How are they being washed?**
- ✔ Washing machine in the home
- ☐ Washing machine at laundrette
- ☐ Hand wash
- ☐ Dry clean
- ☐ Other:

**What does this wash contain?**
- ✔ Whites
- ⬜ Lights
- ✔ Bright colours
- ✔ Dark colours
- ☐ Mixed colours
- ☐ Delicates
- ☐ Other / Comments:

**If washing in a machine, how full is it?**
- ✔ Full
- ☐ 3/4
- ☐ 1/2
- ☐ 1/4

**After washing, how is this load dried?**
- ✔ Drying rack indoors
- ✔ Clothes line outdoors
- ☐ Radiator
- ☐ Tumble dryer
- ☐ Other / Comments (e.g. if separated to dry in different ways?):

**What is the wash cycle setting?**
- TEMPERATURE: 60°C
- WASH CYCLE (e.g. Cottons, Synthetics):
- SPIN SPEED SETTING: 1000

**Did you check any care labels while doing this wash? Why / why not?**

- ☐

**What laundry products are you using?**
- DETERGENT BRAND & TYPE (e.g. non-bio, 2-in-one, powder):
- FABRIC CONDITIONER BRAND & TYPE (e.g. liquid, sheet, ball):
- ☐

**In the process of doing this wash, did you do anything specifically to preserve the life of your clothes / make them last longer?**
- ☐

---

291
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date: 24 Sept 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Roughly what is in this wash load and approximately how long have they been worn for before washing? Please fill in the table opposite and photograph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Garment type:</th>
<th>How many?</th>
<th>Material / Fibre: (e.g. Cotton, denim, synthetic, silk, wool, jersey etc.)</th>
<th>Hours of wear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Floor clothing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cotton, synthetic</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pants</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Cotton, elastane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressing gown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fleece</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My top</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cotton, elastane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trousers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand towel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, how dirty is this wash load (please circle):
- Low
- Medium
- High

Comments:

Generally speaking, is this a 'normal' wash for you or is there anything unusual about it? (please describe below)
- Normal
- Unusual

Comments:

---

How are they being washed?

- Washing machine in the home
- Washing machine at laundrette
- Hand wash
- Dry clean
- Other:

What does this wash contain?

- Whites
- Lights
- Bright colours
- Dark colours
- Mixed colours
- Delicates
- Other / Comments:

If washing in a machine, how full is it?

- Full
- 3/4
- 1/2
- 1/4

After washing, how is this load dried?

- Drying rack indoors
- Clothes line outdoors
- Radiator
- Tumble dryer
- Other / Comments (e.g. if separated to dry in different ways?)

What is the wash cycle setting?

- Temperature: 40°C
- Wash cycle (e.g. Cottons/Synthetics)
- Spin speed setting: 1000 RPM

Did you check any care labels while doing this wash? Why / why not?

- No, no need.

What laundry products are you using?

- Detergent brand & type (e.g. non-bio, 2-in-one, powder): Fabric softener, fabric conditioner
- Brand & type (e.g. liquid, sheet, ball):

In the process of doing this wash, did you do anything specifically to preserve the life of your clothes / make them last longer?

- No.
Appendix I: Consent Form

Participant identification number: __________

Consent Form

Study Title: An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland.

Name of Researcher: Helen Maguire.

1. I confirm that I have read the Participant Information Sheet dated __________ for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I am satisfied that I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information.

3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and my statutory rights will not be affected.

4. I understand that the data collected will be kept confidential and that the transcripts and digital recordings will only be seen by the researcher, and in some cases the supervisory team.
5. I am satisfied that my name and other identifying features will not be used anywhere in the PhD report or other publications.

6. I agree to the audio recording of Interview 1.

7. I agree to complete the Garment Diary for a period of 1 month.

8. I agree to the video recording of Interview 2 including the walkabout discussion in my home about where and how clothes are cared for. I understand that imagery recorded will be anonymised and used solely for the purpose of this PhD study.

9. I agree to take part in the above study.

Participant name: Date:
Signature:

Researcher name: Date:
Signature:
Appendix J: Participant Information Sheet

**Clothing Use Study Information Letter**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Introduction</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part. Thank you for reading this information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Study title:** An exploration of everyday practices in clothing use and care across generations in Ireland. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>You have been contacted as you are part of one of the groups I am interested to speak with for this study:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- young adults,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- parents with young children,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- older adults.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Here are details about the research study</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose of the study:</strong> The aim of this study is to explore how participants use and care for the clothes which they already own everyday. In particular I am interested in how people decide what to wear and when to wear it, how and when clothes are laundered and how and why repairs are</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

300
This study will be led by Helen Maguire, Lecturer in Home Economics at the Home Economics Department, St. Angela's College, Sligo and PhD candidate School of Geography, NUI Galway.

**Who can be in the study:** If you would like to be part of this research, you must be over eighteen years of age. You must have a good level of English language, be willing to talk about your everyday clothing use and to allow the researcher to meet you to talk about your everyday clothing use practices.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

**I am interested in taking part, what do I do next?**

Finish reading the details on the next page. If you would like to be involved email or telephone Helen!

**What you will be asked to do:** Taking part in this project is completely up to you. The study has three parts which will take place over one month in 2018/2019:

1) A talk we will have to discuss your everyday clothing use practices. This discussion will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded if you agree. This meeting can take place at a meeting location convenient for you.

2) Before we meet again, I will ask that you keep a diary of your everyday clothing use and care. This may include when and how you wash clothes, the number of items worn or if you had to for example replace a button. This diary can be written or video recorded.

3) I will meet you for a second time, at your home, if possible, or at another agreed location. During this discussion I will ask you to show me where and how you care for your clothes for example your utility room, washing machine or clothes line and we will view your wardrobe and discuss items from your wardrobe that you choose. If you agree this discussion will take approximately one hour and will be audio recorded.

**Keeping your story private** All of the things you tell me will be kept private. Your name and details will not be in anything that is written about this study. Any identifiable information you may give will be removed and anonymised. All information which is collected about you during the course of the study will be kept on a password protected database and is strictly confidential.
The recording of your discussion with me will be stored on my computer. It will be in a hidden password protected file in the computer. All files will be locked in an office at St. Angela’s College for 5 years after the study ends.

Your Rights

There are no right or wrong answers, I encourage your open discussion and honesty. You can ask me any questions you want to about the study. You can say that you do not want to answer any question asked and you can stop talking with me at any time you wish. Data collected up to that point will not be included in the research. To ensure what I record is correct you may review the recording of your interview or read the typed copy. If something comes up during our discussion which upsets you I can help you find someone to talk to who can help.

Will you get anything good out of being in the study?

There is no payment for being in this study. The study may not help you, but it could give me ideas about how to improve clothing use practices in Ireland. The results of this study may be published in scientific research journals or presented at professional conferences.

To Contact Helen:

Economics Department,
St. Angela’s College, Lough Gill, Sligo

Phone: (071) XXXXXX
Email: xxxxxxxx@stangelas.nuigalway.ie

This research study has received ethics approval from the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 17-Sep-06). If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent you may contact:

NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee,
Research Office, University Road, Galway.
Email: ethics@nuigalway.ie;
Phone: +353 (0)91 495312
Appendix K: NUIG REC Response, 2017 – Provisional Ethical Approval

13 September 2017
Ref: 17-Sep-16

Helen Maguire
St Angela’s College
Sligo

Dear Dr Lydon,

Re: ‘Sustaining and Sustainability – An exploration of everyday practices in clothing active use across generations in Ireland and the potential to impact extension of clothing lifecycle use phase’

I write to you regarding the above proposal which was submitted for ethical review. At a meeting of the Research Ethics Committee, held on 7 September 2017 it was a decision of the Committee to grant the project Provisional Approval with the below corrections/additions:

1. The researcher needs to clearly outline exactly what she plans to record on video. Is it just participants’ clothing or are the participants talking about their clothing etc?
   (This aspect of the study may cause difficulty for some participants who may refuse to be video-recorded and the researcher should plan for this).

2. The geography department fieldwork risk assessment form does not adequately meet the risks to the researcher in this study. It is highly likely that the researcher may have to enter more private areas of the participants’ homes (e.g. the bedroom) and the safety protocol provided is not detailed enough to address the risks this poses. The researcher should also include more specific actions upon entering participants’ homes.

3. The REC recommends that the researcher should be accompanied due to the sensitive nature of data collection (e.g. entering a participant’s bedroom).

4. Q. 40 Indemnity – please fill out relevant sections.

5. Participant information sheet (p.35) Your Rights states: “You can say that you do not want to answer any question asked and you can stop talking with me at any time you wish. Data collected up to that point will be retained by me.”
   However, if the participant withdraws from the research no data can be used. Please amend this text.

6. Proposed interview questions not included and need to be reviewed before full approval is granted.

O’Gaillimh
Dóthar na hOlóiscile
Gaillimh, Eire

NUI Galway
University Road,
Galway, Ireland

Tel: +353 91 495 312
Fax: +353 91 494 254

www.nuigalway.ie/research/ps.research
When the decision was taken I was chairing the meeting and the following members were also present:

Dr Kevin Davison
Dr Cormac Forkan
Dr Brian Hallahan

Dr Martina Kelly
Dr Kiran Sarma
Mr Patrick Towers

Please reply by email confirming the above **within 30 days** of the date of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Jane Walsh

Jane Walsh

Acting Chair, Research Ethics Committee
Appendix L: Email Communication re Ethics with Woodward (2017)

From: Sophie Woodward <sophie.woodward@xxxxxxxx.xx.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, October 24, 2017 1:20 p.m.
To: Maguire, Helen <hmaguire@xxxxxxxxxxxx.xxxxxxxx.ie>
Subject: Re: Query re ethic approval for wardrobe study research method.

Dear Helen,

Thanks for your email. I never had to be accompanied in the interviews and I am not sure that the rationale would be for this? If it is in relationship to your safety (I presume) then I would suggest that you include a lone researcher protocol (so including information on giving your number to someone else before you go, texting them when you arrive as well as giving the address to someone). In addition I would make the case to the ethics committee that being accompanied might be less ethical, as this may be intimidating to research participants.

I carried out my wardrobe studies before many of the current ethics committees came in and as such didn’t have to fill in as much paper work as this.

Best,

Sophie
Appenix M: Researcher response to NUIG Ethics Committee Queries, December 2017

20\textsuperscript{th} November 2017,

Re: Ref: 17-Sep-16 Sustainment and Sustainabilities – An exploration of everyday practices in clothing active use across generations in Ireland and the potential to impact extension of Clothing lifecycle use phase.

Dear Committee Chair, Ms. Walsh and members of the Research Ethics Committee,

Thank you sincerely for your response letter dated 13\textsuperscript{th} September 2017 and for the Provisional Approval granted by the committee in regard to proposal Ref: 17-Sep-16. Please now find below and attached clarification on each of the outstanding items highlighted and additional details as requested for further consideration by the committee. Changes made to the original REC application are differentiated in red font for your convenience. Additionally, the proposed data collection tools are now also attached as request.

1. The researcher needs to clearly outline exactly what she plans to record on video. Is it just participants’ clothing or are the participants talking about their clothing etc.? (This aspect of the study may cause difficulty for some participants who may refuse to be video-recorded and the researcher should plan for this).

It is planned that video recording will take place during the second interview, in place of audio voice recording, in order to not only record the interview data but also to document visual evidence of clothing items and artefacts discussed during this interview. This recording method is proposed for the second interview as an alternative to the use of both audio recording and photography which can be quite onerous and encumbering for the researcher to use daily while also conducting the interview. Stills from the video recording may be used later to evidence garments discussed. The video recording will also be most suitable for recording of information during the household tour aspect of this second interview when participants will be asked to discuss laundry practices and to show the researcher how and where they care for their clothes. The first interview will be audio recorded only. The researcher will undertake to ensure that each participant is comfortable with the use of video recording and if any participant is uncomfortable with the use of video recording the researcher will revert to using only audio recording and photographs as in the first interview.

Furthermore it is also anticipated that interviewees would be facilitated to have the option to video record themselves carrying out everyday clothing active use practices in the home, if desired, as an alternative to the written clothing diary record as planned. Participants who wish to record the diary in this manner will receive training in recording such segments and would have the right to withdraw their own footage / sections thereof at any point if decided. This method of participant data collection has become more common in contemporary research and it is anticipated that some of the generational groups targeted in the study would be more comfortable with this option than others and it may indeed be more convenient and appealing mode of participation for them in completing the clothing diary aspects of the research.

See amendment in this regard in the response to Question 39 page 21 of REC Application Form.

2. The geography department fieldwork risk assessment form does not adequately meet the risks to the researcher in this study. It is highly likely that the researcher may have to enter more private areas of the participants’ homes (e.g. the bedroom) and the safety protocol provided is not detailed enough to address the risks this poses. The researcher should also include more specific actions upon entering participants’ homes.

In addition to the items identified in Questions 11 part i) and part ii) on the original REC application the researcher will undertake to carry out the following precautions when conducting interviews at participants’ homes:

Upon arrival at the interview location:

- Park where to avoid being obstructed from leaving or being parked in:
• Be aware of potential slip/trip hazards;
• Ensure to have a fully charged phone which is left switched on at all times during the fieldwork;

Once inside the household the researcher will:
• Wear appropriate clothing and footwear;
• Not enter any area which poses a risk to either themselves or the participants;
• If appropriate check that pets are restrained or kept separate during the visit;
• Carry ID (without address or phone number);
• Check consent remains valid;
• Introduce the accompanying shadow researcher (if one is present);
• Clarify who else is at the premises;
• Identify exit routes;
• Keep doorways clearly in sight and the exit doors easily reachable;
• Before sitting, check it is safe to do so e.g. no needles or sharp objects left on/near the seat;
• Let the interviewee know that the researcher has a schedule and that others know location of the interview and schedule times.
• Keep personal documents, mobile, personal possessions secure at all times.

Procedures for maintaining contact during fieldwork:
In order to increase the security of the researcher strategies for maintaining contact between the researcher and the researcher supervisor or a nominated Geography Department representative during fieldwork will be agreed with the research supervisor prior to commencement of fieldwork including arrangements for making phone calls to confirm arrival and departure and arranging for check in calls to be made to the researcher. The research supervisor will designate a responsible person at the office-base fully briefed on the researchers schedule and clearly instructed on when and how to take action if contact is not maintained as planned. The main elements of this agreement are as follows:
• Details of the researcher’s itinerary and appointment times - including names, addresses and telephone numbers of people being interviewed will be supplied to the research supervisor / designated contact person in the Geography Department (with due consideration to interviewee confidentiality),
• The researcher will notify the contact of any changes which arise as soon as possible during fieldwork.
• The researcher will carry a mobile phone which is switched on at all times so that contact can be made.
• The researcher will contact the designated contact person upon arrival at the fieldwork location and also at the end of the interview upon departure. Additionally, a check in call can be arranged between the office and researcher during the fieldwork. A code to indicate concern for personal safety will be agreed prior to commencement of fieldwork e.g. ‘Did I leave the red ring binder on the desk in the office?’ (Meaning: ‘I am concerned for my safety and need you to send someone’).

Should there be any doubt about the researcher’s personal safety at any time this will be immediately reported to the research supervisor and any follow up meetings will be cancelled. If for safety reasons the researcher is not confident undertaking an interview alone she will arrange to be accompanied to the household/fieldwork site, the accompanying shadow person will be introduced to the interviewee and their capacity to shadow the interview but not take part will be explained and consented to by the interviewee otherwise the interview will not proceed.

(the above guidelines for researchers working alone were adapted from Loughborough University (nd) Guidance notes for investigators, Conducting Interviews Off-Campus and Working Alone available at: http://www.boro.ac.uk/media/wwwboroacuk/content/universitycommittees/ethicsapprovals/humanparticipantsub-committee/Conducting%20Interviews%20off%20campus%20and%20working%20alone.pdf
3. The REC recommends that the researcher should be accompanied due to the sensitive nature of data collection (e.g. entering a participant’s bedroom).

The researchers acknowledges and appreciates this recommendation and is certainly fully cognisant of the reasons for this stipulation from the Committee. However, the researcher contends that implementing this recommendation would be impractical and disadvantageous to the study and contends that the nature of what may be disclosed by participants would potentially be impacted by having an unfamiliar shadow interviewer present. The researcher respectfully requests that the committee consider the following in this regard:

- The wardrobe study fieldwork aspect of this research is planned to take place as part of the follow up second interview. Therefore it is anticipated that by this time the researcher will have built up a good level of rapport with the interviewee and will undertake to action the personal safety precautions and procedures for maintaining contact during fieldwork as outlined earlier immediately should any specific concerns arise. At this stage the researcher will also be familiar with the household in terms of location, access and exit points based on the earlier interview.

- The researcher is experienced in carrying out fieldwork and confident in communication and development of reliable interpersonal connections with study participants. It is contended that having an accompanying person present may impact on the researcher interviewee relationship and consequently on the level of disclosure, discussion and divulgation. The researcher has been a lecturer in the Home Economics Department at St. Angela’s College, Sligo since 2005 and has undertaken a range of lone and collaborative research projects over this time (see accompanying C.V.).

- Due to the planned geographical location of this study in the North West of Ireland in the counties of Sligo and Donegal in both rural and urban locations together with the potential length of the qualitative interviews planned the requirement to be accompanied during data collection would be logistically very constraining for up to 20 cases. The researcher supervisor is geographically removed from the fieldwork location and as the study is at PhD level and not in receipt of research funding payment of a research assistant would prove prohibitive. The researchers is willing to self-fund and to arrange an accompanying shadow researcher for any second interviews to be undertaken specifically with male participants.

- It is important to make the Committee aware of the innovative nature of wardrobe study methods and the benefits achieved by their use. One of the method pioneers academic and researcher Sophie Woodward, a sociologist at University of Manchester employed such methods as the basis for her seminal study Woodward, S. Nov 2007 Why Women Wear What They Wear. Oxford Berg. This text which includes a chapter titled ‘Hanging Out in the Home and the Bedroom’ presents an intimate ethnography of female clothing choice. The book uses real women’s lives and clothing decisions as observed and discussed at the moment of getting dressed to illustrate theories of clothing, the body and identity. In the preparation of this response to the Committee the researcher contacted Woodward for advice in this regard and was informed by Woodward that she “never had to be accompanied in the interviews” and indeed felt that “being accompanied might be less ethical, as this may be intimidating to research participants”.

- Moreover, the book Fletcher, K. and Klepp, I. G. (ed.) (2017) Opening up the Wardrobe, A Methods Book. Osle. Novus which was just published last month is timely in regard to this aspect of the proposed study. This valuable book outlines 50 methods, tools and approaches utilised by 50 researchers from four continents for enquiring into the ‘life world’ of garments or wardrobe studies. In the introduction to this text the editors contend that what goes on in the wardrobe is ‘critical to the future direction of knowledge and practice in fashion and clothing’ and that ‘the more attention given to wardrobe methods the better understood fashion and clothing will become’ (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017, p. 2). Upon examination of the 50 methods included it is clear to the researcher that over half of the data collection cited took place in homes with many taking place in the bedroom or vicinity of the physical wardrobe. This type of approach is certainly being employed more commonly in contemporary clothing research and internationally Research and Ethics Committees have approved permission to undertake such research.

- Notwithstanding all of the above points the researcher nonetheless notes that in the range of studies explored term ‘wardrobe is used in a broad sense and that rarely do the methods employ limit themselves to the actual physical container but rather they focus on ‘collections of clothes and the garment related world that takes place in the extended space of the wardrobe’ (Fletcher and Klepp, 2017,
p. 3. Therefore, should this recommendation of the Committee stand in the final approval granted the researcher deems that it will be possible to conduct a modified version of the proposed wardrobe study element of the second interview in a communal area of the home or other agreed public location. In this instance it would not be possible to conduct an entire wardrobe audit or study but to undertake a modified version similar to that employed by Whitson-Smith, 2013, 2017 whereby participants self-selected 5 garments from their wardrobes of specific interest in promoting environmentally sustainable behaviours while also competed a more detailed wardrobe audit sheet at home. The researcher is happy to offer this option to participants in this study and to select this modified method if any concerns whatsoever arise regarding home visits.


4. Q. 40 Indemnity – please fill out relevant sections.

Apologies for the earlier omission, Section 40 parts i), ii) and iii) on page 22 have now been completed on the attached REC Application Form.

5. Participant Information sheet (p.35) Your Rights states: “You can say that you do not want to answer any question asked and you can stop talking with me at any time you wish. Data collected up to that point will be retained by me.” However, if the participant withdraws from the research no data can be used. Please amend this text.

The researcher accepts this point and confirms that if a participant decides to withdraw, at any point during the research, data collected up to that point will not be used as part of the study. The attached Participant Information Sheet now has been amended and updated accordingly in this regard.

6. Proposed interview questions not included and need to be reviewed before full approval is granted.

See protocol for Interview 1 and Interview 2 and the Garment Diary as now attached for review by the Committee. Please note that the Clothing Diary proposed is a tool developed and utilised in a clothing longevity study funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. The researcher is grateful for permission obtained from the study’s Principal Investigator to use this tool. (see McLaren, A., Osbourn, L, Cooper, T, Hill, H, and Goworek, H. (2017) Clothing Longevity Perspectives: Exploring Consumer Expectations, Consumption and Use. Plate Conference 2017, Delft, NL. The final report for this DEFRA study is currently in press). The researcher proposes that this diary tool will be employed in its current form for the Pilot study phase of this project and thereafter adapted and tailored as most applicable.

I am very grateful to the Committee members for your time in reading and allowing due consideration to the responses made here within and I look forward to hearing from you after the upcoming meeting.

Kind regards,

Helen Maguire.
Appendix N: NUIG REC Response, 2017 – Full Ethical Approval Letter

Sent on behalf of Dr Jane Walsh, Acting REC Chair

20 December 2017,

Ref: 17-Sep-06,

Dear Helen,

Re: ‘Sustainment and Sustainabilities – An exploration of everyday practices in clothing active use across generations in Ireland and the potential to impact extension of clothing lifecycle use phase’.

I write to you regarding the above proposal which was submitted for Ethical review. Having reviewed your response to my letter, I am pleased to inform you that your proposal has been granted APPROVAL.

All NUI Galway Research Ethic Committee approval is given subject to the Principal Investigator submitting annual and final statements of compliance. The first statement is due on or before 19 December 2018. Please see section 7 of the REC’s Standard Operating Procedures for further details which includes other instances where you are required to report to the REC. Statement of compliance forms are attached here.

If you require a formal letter of approval, please email ethics@nuigalway.ie, quoting the reference number of your application.

Yours Sincerely

Jane Walsh

Acting Chair, Research Ethics Committee
Appendix O: Repair Acts Ireland Caring for Repairing Exhibition and Repair Féile Programme Frontispiece, November 2022. (Further details available at https://www.repairacts.ie/exhibition/)
Appendix P: Home Economics Practice in Everyday Life Module

Full Title: Home Economics Practice in Everyday Life

Transcript Title: Home Economics - Everyday Life

Status: B3 - Updated to Barrier

Module Code: HOEC08103

ECTS Credits: 60

Subject Area: HOEC - Home Economics

Attendance: N/A

Grading Mode: Numerical Percentage

Module Duration: Semester - 15 Weeks

Start Term: 2022 - Full Academic Year 2022-23

End Term: 2023 - The End of Term

Module Leader: 

Department: HOEC - Home Economics

Module Description

Everyday life in families & households is an important aspect in Home Economics practice (Vanne, 2006, Tuck, 2015, Frew, 2000). This Stage II module will facilitate the exploration and critique of a variety of micro-level daily practices related to Family Resource Management and textiles, Fashion and Design with cognizance to macro-level global influences and patterns. Students will gain an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the selection and management of household resources that are socially, economically and ecologically effective and supports optimal, healthy and sustainable living for individuals, households, families and society.

Module Aims:
- To present the students with learning opportunities involving both practical activities and critical appraisal of theoretical concepts, policies, strategies and contemporary issues related to the lifecycle stages and diversity of individuals and families both in their society and globally.
- To enable students to develop an ability to engage in professionally and critically thinking and reflective practice by challenging their values, beliefs and practices as Home Economists today further enabling them to cultivate their own philosophy of Home Economics.

Indicative Syllabus

Topic 1: Critical factors and conceptual approaches which impact on everyday routines, practices and choices of individuals and families explored within a Home Economics philosophical framework.

Topic 2: Global technological, environmental and societal changes impacting on individual and family practices related to home design, clothing selection and care and the management of household resources everyday e.g. heating, lighting, laundry.

Topic 3: Ethical and sustainable issues surrounding fast fashion, sustainable living, recycling and global consumer trends in textiles and clothing consumption and care.

Topic 4: Cultural identity, diversity and intercultural trends in fashion & clothing styles.

Topic 5: Evaluation of individual family housing needs and an exploration of systems, policies and strategies which govern housing provision nationally.

Topic 6: Sustainable common household strategies and practices for individuals and families in a global economy.