



Provided by the author(s) and University of Galway in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite the published version when available.

Title	Energy biographies: Exploring the intersections between lives, practices and contexts
Author(s)	Greene, Mary
Publication Date	2017-02
Item record	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6888">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/6888</a>

Downloaded 2024-04-18T01:49:16Z

Some rights reserved. For more information, please see the item record link above.



# **Energy Biographies:**

## **Exploring the intersections between lives, practices and contexts**

**Mary Greene**

Irish Research Council Scholar

School of Geography and Archaeology

National University of Ireland, Galway

**Co supervised by:** Dr. Frances Fahy and Prof. Thomas Scharf

**External Examiner:** Prof. Gordon Walker

**Internal Examiner:** Prof. Ulf Strohmayer

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

February, 2017

To Tony Duffy, for your unconditional love, academic curiosity and inspiring wonder for world.

To Mags Berry, for our dear friendship.

And for mankind, that we may find a sustainable pathway forward.

# Table of Contents

Abstract.....	viii
List of Figures .....	x
List of Tables .....	xi
Declaration.....	xii
Acknowledgements.....	xiii
Publications and Conference Paper/Presentations undertaken during the PhD process .....	xiv
1. Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Contextualising the study: The sustainable consumption policy and research landscape .....	3
1.2 Research aims and objectives .....	9
1.3 Research approach and scope of the study .....	12
1.4 Thesis structure .....	14
2. Chapter Two: The dynamics of consumption: Theoretical insights and research approaches.....	17
2.1 Introduction.....	17
2.2 Actor-centric perspectives: the search for psychological determinants of behaviour .....	18
2.2.1 Rational actors? The long pedigree of rational choice theory in consumption research .....	19
2.2.2 Research and models: Social psychological approaches and the search for cognitive determinants of behaviour .....	21
2.2.3 From deliberative action to habitual routines: Social psychological theories of habitual behaviour .....	28
2.2.4 Life events, moments of change and the habit discontinuity thesis.....	31

2.2.5	Implications of actor-centric perspectives for this research.....	35
2.3	Structural approaches: re-socialising the individual in consumption research.....	37
2.3.1	The social symbolic self and the cultural politics of consumption.....	38
2.3.2	Socio-technical transitions and the scripting of unsustainability.....	41
2.3.3	Steering action: The structuring of practice through socio-economic-political forces.....	44
2.3.4	Critical review of structural approaches and implications for this study.....	47
2.4	Social practice perspectives – transcending the agency-structure dualism in consumption research .....	52
2.4.1	The implications of a practice perspective for researching consumption dynamics .....	56
2.4.2	The individual in practice theory .....	62
2.4.3	Considering biography.....	65
2.5	Situating individuals in society: the lifecourse paradigm for researching continuity and change in lives.....	76
2.5.1	Four paradigmatic principles of the lifecourse paradigm.....	77
2.5.2	Temporal concepts for research continuity and change.....	79
2.6	Research exploring biographic dynamics in consumption.....	81
2.6.1	Sociological lifecourse approaches.....	81
2.6.2	Considering gender.....	84
2.6.3	Lifecourse practice-theoretical work.....	86
2.7	Chapter summary and research questions .....	93
Chapter 3: Development of the methodology: Approaches and techniques .....		100
3.1	Introduction.....	100
3.2	Criteria for the development of the methodology .....	101
3.2.1	A problem-centred, practice approach .....	101
3.2.2	A dynamic, retrospective-biographical approach .....	103

3.2.3	A contextual, holistic approach .....	104
3.2.4	An experiential approach .....	105
3.2.5	An Irish-based approach.....	107
3.3	Biographic research methods .....	108
3.3.1	Principles of biographic inquiry .....	109
3.3.2	Narrative inquiry.....	110
3.3.3	Problem-centred Interview (PCI) framework .....	115
3.3.4	Prior knowledge and researcher positionality .....	117
3.4	Chapter summary.....	121
4.	Chapter Four: Applying biographic-narrative methods.....	122
4.1	Introduction.....	122
4.2	Sample.....	122
4.3	Implementing the methodology .....	128
4.3.1	Pilot study .....	129
4.3.2	Generating primary data: Three phases.....	132
4.4	Analysis.....	151
4.4.1	Stage 1: Data Processing and Priming .....	152
4.4.2	Stage 2: Vertical Analysis .....	154
4.4.3	Stage 3: Horizontal analysis .....	158
4.5	Ethical and evaluative considerations.....	160
4.5.1	Ensuring participants' wellbeing throughout the research process .....	161
4.5.2	Managing relations throughout the research process .....	161
4.5.3	Guarding against participant fatigue .....	162
4.5.4	Consent and Confidentiality .....	163
4.5.5	Transparency of sampling, methods and conclusions .....	164
4.5.6	Evaluating narrative-biographic research .....	165

4.6	The benefits and limitations of the methodological approach .....	165
4.7	Chapter summary.....	173
5.	Chapter five: Temporalities and performances at the daily path .....	175
5.1	Introduction.....	175
5.2	Rhythms, sequences and tempo .....	176
5.3	Relationality: co-participation and other-orientation .....	188
5.3.1	Lifecourse and Age .....	189
5.3.2	Gender .....	194
5.4	Chapter summary.....	199
6.	Chapter Six: Careers of participation over the life path - patterns and contexts .....	201
6.1	Introduction.....	201
6.2	Gendered and age-structured practice careers.....	202
6.2.1	Gendered pattern of career development in food and laundry careers .....	203
6.2.2	Gendered patterns of career development in car driving careers:.....	217
6.3	Periods of stability and change: changing tempos and rhythms of daily life .....	222
6.3.1	Childhood.....	223
6.3.2	Emerging adulthood .....	225
6.3.3	Marriage and Parenthood .....	229
6.3.4	The transition to empty nest:.....	230
6.3.5	The work-retirement transition:.....	233
6.4	Transitions, tempos and contexts of change .....	234
6.4.1	Transitions in laundry practice .....	237
6.4.2	Transitions in car driving careers:.....	239
6.5	Summary .....	242
7.	Chapter Seven: “Doing Energy” - Mapping experiential processes through the micro-level lifecourse.....	244

7.1	Introduction.....	244
7.2	Energy, morality and identity:.....	246
7.3	Gender and energy.....	255
7.4	Socialisation.....	265
7.4.1	Experiential learning and the formation of dispositions and attachments .....	265
7.4.2	Socialising agents.....	272
7.5	Relationships .....	274
7.6	Resources, capitals and health.....	284
7.6.1	Material resources.....	284
7.6.2	Ageing and perceptions of quality of life .....	287
7.6.3	Ageing and health.....	289
7.7	Chapter summary.....	290
8.	Chapter Eight: Socio-technical contexts and dynamics in practice .....	292
8.1	Introduction.....	292
8.2	Energy infrastructures and technologies .....	293
8.2.1	The gradual technologisation of daily lives .....	293
8.2.2	Changing routines and relations between practices.....	299
8.2.3	Reconfiguring space and relations in the home.....	304
8.2.4	Shifting expectations and rising standards of living.....	305
8.3	Socio-economic landscapes and transitions .....	310
8.3.1	Evolving complexes of practice .....	310
8.3.2	Access to Finance.....	314
8.4.	Steering action: the role of Institutions and Policy.....	318
8.4.1	Invisible energy policy: the effect of key societal institutions.....	317
<u>8.4.2</u>	Visible Energy Policy .....	332
8.5	Chapter Summary.....	337

9.	Chapter Nine: Concluding Discussion .....	338
9.1	Introduction .....	338
9.2	Summary of key findings .....	339
9.2.1	Participation at daily and life paths – patterns and contexts.....	339
9.2.3	Explaining patterns of change - mapping processes and mechanisms.....	343
9.3	Policy implications and lessons .....	349
9.3.1	Challenging mainstream sustainable development and interventionist discourse .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
9.3.2	Specific policy suggestions .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
9.4	Contribution to knowledge .....	357
9.4.1	Theoretical contribution.....	357
9.4.2	Empirical contribution .....	360
9.4.3	Methodological contribution.....	361
9.5	Limitations and suggestions for future research .....	366
9.6	Conclusion .....	369

## Abstract

Individual consumption and behaviour change has become a key area of attention in European and Irish sustainable development policy. To date, policy approaches to consumption have been informed by individualised models of behaviour that fail to appreciate the situated nature of action and how it changes over time. In this context, understandings of how and why people develop and maintain environmentally significant domestic energy practices remain inadequate.

While practice-theoretical approaches have made significant progress in advancing dynamic, contextual approaches to consumption research, the question of how dynamics play out in the context of individuals' biographies has largely been overlooked. As a result, contextualised, biographic approaches to understanding energy practices have to date been under-theorised and under-researched. This thesis begins to address this lacuna. Drawing on practice-theoretical and socio-historic lifecourse concepts, it investigates how individuals' everyday energy practices, including food, mobility and laundry practices, intersect and interact with processes of biographic and socio-technical change. Following recent innovations in the field, it is argued that qualitative reconstructive-biographic methods offer a holistic, contextual and experiential means of analysing processes that have hitherto been overlooked by deductive or temporally limited research designs. To this end, a multi-modal biographic-narrative methodology, incorporating a suite of qualitative narrative and lifecourse tools, was developed and employed to explore patterns and processes of practice at daily and life paths.

The findings from this study highlight the importance of situating consumption contextually in biographic and socio-technical contexts. They reveal that, rather than being driven solely by individual choice and deliberation, an individual's action is strongly configured by context. Energy practices are patterned according to institutional and relational roles and commitments, with variance in modes and patterns of performance observed according to lifecourse circumstances, in particular, gender, age, employment status, and parenthood. The

processes shaping dynamics are complex, operating at a range of interacting scales, from an individual's emergence through the stages and phases of the gendered lifecourse, to the broader societal structures that frame this process. Engagement with energy is intricately bound up in continually evolving identities, roles, social contexts and relationships. Further, wider socio-technical developments, including technology, infrastructures, economic and policy advances, have intersected to steer individuals' energy practice careers towards increasing resource intensity. The thesis concludes that these findings have important implications for policy, suggesting sustainable consumption requires a much more fundamental challenge to social contexts than is recognised by current individualised approaches.

This thesis makes a number of key contributions to the field of sustainable consumption research. Methodologically, by designing, implementing and testing an innovative biographic-practice methodology, it has contributed to methodological developments in practice-theoretical approaches. Empirically, by providing an in-depth account of patterns and processes affecting the formation of domestic energy practices in Ireland, this research has begun to address the lacuna in Irish-based consumption research as well as contributing to a growing body of contextualised, biographic approaches to consumption more broadly. Further, in applying a novel combination of practice-theoretical and socio-historic lifecourse concepts to the study of energy practices, this thesis advances theoretical debates in the rapidly expanding field of consumption and demand research.

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Ajzen’s Theory of Planned Behaviour .....	25
Figure 2.2: Trandis’ Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour .....	31
Figure 2.3: Spaargaren’s model of social practice .....	55
Figure 2.4 Dynamic elements of social practice (Shove et al., 2012) .....	60
Figure 3.1: Interaction between researcher prior knowledge and respondent’s practical knowledge.....	119
Figure 4.1: Overview of the methodological process .....	123
Figure 4.2: Location of fieldwork .....	127
Figure 4.3: Participant Timeline .....	136
Figure 4.4: Female participant’s laundry career .....	139
Figure 4.5: Female participant’s car-driving career .....	140
Table 4.6: Female participant’s food practice career .....	142
Figure 4.7: Three-stage analytical process.....	151
Figure 5.1: Sara’s car practice at the daily path.....	179
Figure 5.2: James’ car practice at the daily path .....	180
Figure 5.3: Michael’s car practice at the daily path.....	181
Figure 6.1: Male laundry career.....	208
Figure 6.2: Female ‘bell curve’ laundry trajectory .....	216

## List of Tables

Table 4.1: Participant’s characteristics by age and gender .....	126
Table 4.2: Phases of research and data generated .....	130
Table 4.3: Structure of PCI 1 .....	134
Table 4.4: Structure of PCI 2 .....	149
Table 5.1: Mid-week diary entries .....	184
Table 5.2: Purpose of car trips by age group .....	186
Table 5.3: Food practice by age group.....	188
Table 5.4: Co-participation in mobility and food .....	190
Table 5.5: Other-orientation in weekly practices by age group .....	193
Table 5.6: Other-orientation in weekly food prep in > 65 years age group .....	194
Table 5.7: Other-orientation in weekly food prep in <65 years age group .....	194
Table 5.8: Domestic practice for one week by gender .....	198
Table 6.1: Men’s participation in Food and Laundry over the life path .....	205
Table 6.2: Women’s participation in food and laundry over the life path .....	213
Table 6.3: Age of driving recruitment and first car by gender .....	218
Table 6.4: Cars and driving licences per capita.....	219
Table 6.5: Transitions in laundry practice careers by gender.....	237
Table 6.6: Transitions in car practice careers by gender .....	240

## Declaration

I, the Candidate, certify that the Thesis is all my own work and that I have not obtained a degree in this University or elsewhere on the basis of any of this work.

Signed:----- Date: -----

## Acknowledgements

This PhD journey has been a long and winding road, along which I have drawn and lent inspiration, comradeship and support from many close friends, family members, research participants, colleagues and funding bodies.

I would first like to extend my huge gratitude to my supervisors Dr Frances Fahy and Professor Thomas Scharf, whose enthusiasm and support for this study and my long-term development as a researcher have been more than crucial in guiding me towards self-efficacy in times of doubt. Our meetings and discussions together were focused and light-hearted in just the right measures. I would like to thank them both for their role in making this journey an inspiring, memorable and enjoyable one.

Many thanks are also extended to my Graduate Research Committee members Professor Henrike Rau and Professor Ulf Strohmayer for their invaluable feedback and direction throughout the course of this project.

I am immensely grateful to the Irish Research Council for funding this research through the IRC Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme. In providing me with generous research support funds, this scheme has facilitated an enriching PhD experience, enabling me to travel, disseminate and develop an extensive network of colleagues throughout Europe, the USA, Australia and further afield. These experiences have without doubt contributed to the advancement and development of this study and my personal growth as a researcher.

I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to undertake five months international experience at the Centre for Technology and Society at Technical University Berlin. For this, I would like to extend my special thanks to Martina Schaefer and colleagues for an enriching experience.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to the participants who took part in this study, who very generously afforded me unguarded access to their life-worlds. Without these extra-‘ordinary’ individuals, this study would not have come to fruition. I would also like to acknowledge the Consensus project, funded by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) STRIVE Programme 2007-2013, from whom this sample of participants was drawn.

Further thanks to all the valued and supportive PhD peers, throughout Ireland and further afield, that I have been fortunate enough to befriend along the way, as well as to my colleagues at the Geography department in NUI Galway, a supportive, critical and enlightening space that has played a crucial role in facilitating my learning experience.

My family have always believed in my ability to achieve whatever I put my mind to. They have been there to celebrate with me during the achievements and offer support during those more testing times. A special thanks to Frank, Carol, Jill, Joe and Barry for withstanding the highs and the tribulations and to Carol for proofreading the thesis in its entirety. Thanks are also extended to Mary, Lynn, Sara and Norman Duffy for their support along the way.

And finally, but by no means least, to my dear friends, near and far, you know who you are, thank you for your comradeship throughout this research journey and my life.

## Publications and Conference Paper/Presentations undertaken during the PhD process

### **Publications**

Greene, M. (in press) 'Paths, projects and careers of domestic practice: exploring dynamics of demand over biographical time' in Day, R., Hui, A. and Walker, G. *Demanding energy: spaces, temporalities and change*, Palgrave Macmillan Publishers Ltd: Hampshire, UK.

Greene, M. and Rau, H. (2016) 'Moving across the life course: the potential of a biographic approach to researching dynamics in everyday mobility practices', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, (published online) 0, 0, 1-26.

Blue S, Greene M and Morosanu R. (2014) Time and practice. In: Foulds C and Jensen CL (eds) *Practices, the Built Environment & Sustainability – A Thinking Note Collection*. Cambridge, Copenhagen, London: GSI, DIST, BSA CCSG.

Greene M and Westerhoff L. (2014) Exploring the relationship between narrative and social practice. In: Foulds C and Jensen CL (eds) *Practices, the Built Environment & Sustainability – A Thinking Note Collection*. Cambridge, Copenhagen, London: GSI, DIST, BSA CCSG, 10-13.

Greene, M. (2014) Review of Innovations in Sustainable Consumption: New Economics, Socio-technical Transitions and Social Practices, *Irish Geography*, 46, 3, 263-265.

### **Conference paper presentations**

2016 Greene, M. 'Paths, Projects and Careers of Domestic Practice: dynamics of energy demand over biographical time', DEMAND International Conference, Lancaster, 13th -15th April.

2015 Greene, M. 'Researching stability & change in everyday energy practices', Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, Exeter, 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> Sept.

- 2015 Greene, M. 'Careers of domestic practice: a biographic, practice-based approach to studying dynamics in energy demand', *Centre for Technology & Society Seminar*, TU Berlin, June.
- 2015 Greene, M. 'Researching everyday practices in biographic contexts', *Consensus 2<sup>ND</sup> International Conference*, NUI Galway, 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> May.
- 2014 Greene, M. 'Mobilising Memories: measuring mobility practices across the life course', *SCORAI (Europe) Workshop*, Kingston University, London, 30 Sept- 1 Oct.
- 2014 Blue S, Greene M and Morosanu R. 'Time and Practice', *Practice, the Built Environment & Sustainability Research Network Workshop*, Cambridge, 15-16 September.
- 2014 Greene, M. and Westerhoff, L. 'Exploring the relation between narrative and practice', *Practice, the Built Environment & Sustainability Research Network Workshop*, Cambridge, 15-16 September.
- 2014 Greene, M. 'Energy Biographies: Domestic consumption practice throughout the life-course', *Behave Energy Conference*, Oxford University, 3-5 September.
- 2014 Greene, M. 'Tales of stability and change - investigating careers of domestic practice over biographical time', *Lifecourse Transitions - Opportunities for Sustainable Consumption? Workshop*, University of Surrey, 15-16 July.
- 2014 Greene, M. 'Energy Practices and the lifecourse', 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference for Cultural Gerontology: Meaning and Culture(s): Exploring the Life Course, NUI Galway, 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> April.
- 2013 Greene, M. 'Energy and the lifecourse', Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference, London, 27-30 August.
- 2013 Greene, M. 'Energy practices, lifestyle typologies and the lifecourse', RGS-IBG Postgraduate Forum Mid-Term Conference 2013, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, 25-26 March.

# 1. Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Humanity's impact on the natural environment is now a matter of global concern. Over the course of the past several centuries, the dynamic amalgamation of industrialisation and capitalism has culminated in unprecedented stress on the physical and biological systems that support life on Earth. The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen particularly astonishing transformations in how daily life is experienced and lived. Changes in technology, in industrialisation, in development and in globalisation, all made possible by the availability of inexpensive and abundant fossil fuels and consumption-driven capitalist growth (Stibbe and Luna, 2008), have radically transformed how people experience everyday living, from how we get around to the type of food we eat. Over the past century in particular, unsustainable trajectories of development have been associated with spiralling energy consumption and resource use, putting an ever-increasing demand on non-renewable resources and contributing to the destabilisation of our climate (Jansen, 2003, Rees, 2011, EC, 2011, UNEP, 2012).

Following these developments, concerns regarding climate change and rapid fossil fuel depletion have become a major focus of research and policy. In recent years, the transition to an affordable, sustainable and resilient low carbon society has become a key objective of European and Irish energy policy (DECLG, 2012). In recognising the limitations of focusing solely on technocratic solutions in realising this aim, there is now an emerging consensus that attention should not only be on the development of low carbon forms of energy production, but also innovative methods of reducing

## Chapter One

demand for, and consumption of, energy (cf. Shove and Walker, 2014, Walker 2014). Individuals' everyday practice and behaviour therefore constitute a significant area requiring attention in societal transitions towards sustainability (Jackson, 2004). However, our understanding of how and why people develop and maintain particular energy-intensive or sustainable lifestyles remains patchy and inadequate.

In essence, this thesis is concerned with understanding how social change has intersected with transformations in key energy consuming practices that comprise part of the fabric and experience of daily living and are of central relevance to questions of sustainable consumption. Focusing on identifiable practices such as food, mobility and laundry practices, it recognises that energy and resources are not consumed for their own sake 'but as part of, and in the course of accomplishing social practices' (Shove and Walker, 2014: 47). In this way, the thesis departs from individualistic, rationalistic approaches to understanding individuals' consumption to focus instead on situated social practice. In contrast to work which has largely extracted individuals from their social contexts, this thesis provides an ethnographic account of individuals' changing relation with energy over time as it is embedded in their daily conduct and practice.

In contextualising the thesis, this introduction briefly situates the study in the broader policy and research context on sustainable consumption. It then proceeds to outline the key research questions and aims of the study. Following this, the research approach and scope of the study are delineated. Finally, an overview of the thesis structure is provided.

### 1.2 Contextualising the study: The sustainable consumption policy and research landscape

Over the past several decades, 'sustainable development' has become the central organising principle for environmental politics and governance. A contested field, accommodating an array of perspectives ranging from light to deep green environmentalism, multiple opinions on how sustainable development can be realised, exists (Kreuger and Gibbs, 2007, Davidson, 2010). Following the Brundtland Commission's (1987) assertion that continued economic growth is compatible with sustainable societies, mainstream approaches to sustainable development have been increasingly divorced from more radical conceptions of what sustainability should entail (Keil, 2007). More recently, sustainable consumption has emerged as a key area of focus within the context of broader sustainable development policy (EEA, 2005, EEA, 2012a). The increasing emphasis on individual behaviour and consumption within policy arenas reflects a growing emphasis in western societies on individual behaviour as a site for change. As Tim Jackson, a leading scholar in the field has noted: 'Behavioural change is fast becoming the 'holy grail' of sustainable development policy' (Jackson, 2005: xi).

It is now recognised that reducing energy demand is pivotal for the realisation of multiple intersecting long-term national and international policy goals, including low carbon transitions, mitigation of environmental degradation and resource depletion and long-term energy security and affordability (EC, 2011, DCENR, 2015). Within developed societies, significant reductions in energy use and consumption across a wide range of lifestyle practices and settings are considered crucial if these aims are to be achieved (Jackson and Michaelis, 2003, Seyfang, 2005). Recent research indicates that lifestyle changes could potentially contribute to 30% carbon emission reductions by 2050 (UKERC, 2009). Indeed, the question of how to promote sustainable lifestyle practices and behaviour change is central to

## Chapter One

academic and policy discussions on sustainable consumption. Within this context, domestic consumption in particular has received considerable attention. At a European household scale, three key domains, that is, food and drink, mobility, and housing and infrastructure contribute to up to 74% of carbon emissions resulting from individual consumption, as well as other resource use impacts (EEA, 2012b).

Policy efforts in Ireland and abroad have, to date, focused on finding ways in which environmental transitions can be achieved through the dominant neo-liberal framework (Southerton et al., 2004, Jackson, 2006, Pape et al., 2011). Within this milieu, the predominant approaches taken by some governments to 'nudge' individuals towards more pro-environmental behaviour have, to date, focused predominantly on market-led initiatives. Policies for sustainable consumption have been developed and advanced through an ecologically modernised paradigm propagating 'green' globalised capitalism. Information campaigns, green fees and taxes and other market-led initiatives for dealing with the ecological crisis are the preferred modes of conduct in a post-Fordist world (Jackson and Michaelis, 2003, Pape et al., 2011). Situated within this neoliberal framework, pro-environmental behaviour change policies have largely followed an individualised, rational consumer type model rooted in a social-psychological paradigm of behaviour change (Shove, 2010).

In an Irish context, initiatives such as "The Power of One" governmental information campaign, the plastic bag levy and increased motor taxes for higher carbon-emitting vehicles exemplify this approach. The Irish Energy White paper (DCENR, 2015), although predominantly technocentric in its emphasis on rolling out new energy-efficient infrastructure and technology in Ireland, sets out ambitions for 'a new focus on citizens and communities as active participants, and agents of change in how we...conserve, and use

## Chapter One

our energy'. In this vision, it is stated that: 'Consumers will drive the (energy) transition by, for example, choosing to use less energy, adopting lower carbon options for transport and heating shifting energy use to off-peak time or investing in smart home technologies' (DCENR, 2015: 40).

However, the inadequacy of consumer-focused approaches for stimulating the necessary transitions in practice has been documented over time. To date, these efforts have not brought about the necessary transitions in behaviours and practices and energy demand continues to rise at unprecedented rates (Pape et al., 2011, Davies et al., 2014). Despite increases in efficiency and production, the environmental costs of consumption continue to rise. For example, meat and dairy consumption, key contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, has been steadily increasing in a European and global context (UNEP, 2011). Furthermore, the number of appliances in households in Europe has been progressively rising, alongside increasing energy consumption associated with water, electricity and waste (EEA, 2012b). In an Irish context, despite a dip in consumption following the recent economic recession, overall consumption rates per capita are steadily increasing (Davies et al., 2014a).

The increasing emphasis on demand and individual consumption as a site of change reflects the broader individualisation of responsibility around key societal issues in contemporary neoliberal societies (Barnett et al., 2010). Market-led policy responses have been informed by a particular model of human behaviour that posits individuals as rational actors, and cognitive processes, such as deliberation, intention and attitudes, as the key drivers of consumption. A central paradox of this paradigm is the persistent finding that a "value-action" gap exists between how people think they ought to act and how they actually behave (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, Davies et al., 2005, Borch et al, 2015). As consumption and resource use continues to rise,

## Chapter One

this model has been repeatedly shown, through experience and empirical research, to be flawed. While such findings cast serious doubt on the ability of rational deliberation processes to explain human behaviour, actor-centric approaches embedded in an individualistic-rationalistic paradigm continue to dominate sustainable consumption policy (Shove, 2010, Keller et al., 2016).

The individualistic-rationalistic model of human behaviour has been extensively criticised by sociologists and human geographers for espousing an overly simplified, de-contextualised and static view of behaviour that places undue emphasis on the role of self-interest and rational deliberation in decision making (cf. Shove et al., 2012). In offering an alternative conception of sociality, socio-geographical accounts have highlighted that, rather than existing in a social vacuum, consumption practice is intricately bound up with the social environments and contexts in which it is learned and performed. In this respect, individualised accounts have been criticised for neglecting the situated character of consumption, including how wider social, technical, infrastructural and institutional constraints work to delimit action and lock consumers into unsustainable patterns of resource use (Sanne, 2002, Shove, 2010, Shove et al., 2012). Furthermore, individualistic-rationalistic approaches have tended to advance a static conceptualisation of human behaviour, one in which individuals' attitudes and values are treated as stable constructs (Greene and Rau, 2016). Such an approach fails to recognise individuals as relational subjects whose actions are shaped by and reflect the social contexts in which they evolve over the course of their lives.

Currently there is a lack of concentrated attention to dynamism and temporality in sustainable consumption and demand research (Shove et al., 2009, Rau and Edmondson, 2013, Walker, 2014) particularly in relation to

## Chapter One

how and why consumption activities change across the scale of the biographical lifecourse (Greene and Rau, 2016). In both conceptual and methodological terms, many dominant approaches have endorsed a static and acontextual view of human behaviour. A review of the relevant literature reveals that even approaches focusing explicitly on behavioural change have tended to do so rather narrowly, with theoretical and methodological tools for conceptualising dynamics in routine, ordinary consumption in particular remaining deficient (Shove, 2010, Warde and Southerton, 2012). It has been suggested that these gaps can be attributed to key limitations associated with dominant ontological and methodological approaches employed in research on human consumption behavior (Courtenay-Hall and Rogers, 2002, Hards, 2012, Rau and Fahy, 2013). For example, within dominant, mainstream approaches, there has been a failure to adequately conceptualise the dynamics of behaviour change, while methodologically the predominance of cross-sectional research designs has done little to illuminate short- and long-term transitions in human behaviour. As a result, many mainstream models and studies focus on present attitudes, values and behaviour as static phenomena. Furthermore, when context is considered, it too is treated as a largely static and external variable that presents a barrier to individual behaviour.

More recent innovations, however, have sought to reconceptualise environmental behaviour as a dynamic process rather than a stable and perpetual trait. Within sociological and human geographical fields, the recent emergence of practice-theoretical work in the study of consumption has been fundamental in the movement away from acontextual and static views of human behaviour, to focus instead on the dynamic nature of social practices, including their socio-cultural and material dimensions (Warde, 2005, Shove et al., 2012). In contrast to rationalistic-individualist approaches, practice-theoretical work has been pivotal in directing away from individuals and their internal cognitive processes towards situated

## Chapter One

social practices. Emphasising the latter approach, this thesis builds on the assumption that people do not use energy per se, but rather consume and engage in the services and practices made possible by energy (Shove and Walker, 2014, Day et al., 2016). It therefore examines energy consumption by focusing on lives as they are lived out in the daily context, bringing into relief the practices and contexts in which energy is embedded.

In the context of these challenges, this study seeks to respond to recent calls for greater attention to time and temporality in sustainable consumption research (Southerton, 2006, Shove et al., 2009, Rau and Edmondson, 2013, Blue et al., 2014, Walker, 2014). In doing so, it stresses the importance of understanding dynamics of practice from the perspective of an individual's lifecourse. To date, there has been little investigation of the dynamics of practice from the perspective of individuals' biographic and lifecourse contexts (Greene and Rau, 2016). Rather, the predominant practice-theoretical approach to exploring dynamics in practice has been to investigate dynamics from the scale of practices themselves (cf. Shove et al., 2012). Through this work, researchers have made significant progress in advancing understandings of how 'energy systems have evolved to entangle together practices and sociotechnological infrastructure' (Henwood, 2016: 393). However, much less has been documented about the lived experience of such changes (Walker, 2013, Henwood, 2016). Key gaps exist, specifically in relation to understanding how biographic context and wider contextual landscapes interact to shape action over longer timescales. In Ireland and beyond, significant changes in socio-cultural and techno-material landscapes have fundamentally transformed the way everyday life is experienced and performed over the lifecourse, with major implications for how energy is demanded in the household. However, as yet our understanding of how and why patterns of domestic energy demand change over biographical time within the context of wider changes in Irish society remains poorly understood (Greene and Rau, 2016). How individuals'

## Chapter One

engagement with energy develops and changes over the course of their lifecourse is central to questions concerning sustainability transitions (Jaeger-Erben, 2013). Answering this question requires situating human behaviour in context to arrive at a better understanding of the complex interplay of factors shaping the evolution of energy practices including one's biographic experience, future aspirations, and the wider social and technical contexts in which individuals are embedded.

### 1.2 Research aims and objectives

Research and policy focusing on sustainable consumption in Ireland is still in its infancy, lagging far behind other developed countries (Davies et al., 2014a). Given that Ireland is one of the highest carbon emitters per capita in the world and the least resource efficient country per person in the European Union (DECLG, 2012), this lack of systematic research and informed policy is of serious concern. Building on the recent Consensus Project (cf. Davies et al., 2014a), this study aims to respond to current needs and priorities within Irish policy and international research on sustainable consumption, with the goal of cultivating rich, in-depth policy-relevant data to advance understanding of patterns and processes shaping the evolution of energy practices in the context of individuals' lives.

The primary aim of this study is to advance contextualised understandings of energy practices, including why they change, with the goal of cultivating policy-relevant data. The focus is on exploring, describing and analysing how and why an individual's participation within key household energy practices evolves and develops over time against the context of their particular lifecourse trajectories. Answering these questions from a social practice perspective embedded in a biographic approach involves examining the interconnections between an individual's practices, their biographical

## Chapter One

trajectory and the sets of wider socio-cultural contexts, institutions and structures within which his/her lifecourse has been embedded.

Responding to contemporary concerns and gaps within policy and research, as outlined above, this research is guided by several key objectives:

1. To improve understanding of everyday energy use as it is embedded in situated practice and lived experience;
2. To explore social differentiation in modes and meanings of energy practices;
3. To advance a dynamic, temporally-orientated approach to studying energy practices as they relate to personal biographies and socio-historical contexts;
4. To develop understanding of how practices develop, are maintained and change over biographic time;
5. To improve knowledge of how biographic and socio-technical contexts influence energy practices;
6. To contribute to Irish-based consumption research, knowledge and practice.

Several actions are required to achieve the stated goals of this research. Adopting an experience-centred approach, this study seeks to explore the ways in which energy is performed and understood as a lived experience. Thus, the first step involves accessing people's narratives and stories regarding their energy use as it is situated in the performance of social practices. A second key step involves describing patterns in the evolution of careers of participation across the lifecourse. To this end, a suite of visual-biographic and narrative methods facilitated an exploration of how careers develop and change overtime. Another key step entails explaining the

## Chapter One

patterns observed. Crucially, this study considers the vital role of context in change processes and how contextual processes and mechanisms shape and delimit action as they play out in the context of individuals' lives. The final step involves considering the implications of the findings for future research and policy in this area.

In light of these objectives, one key research question underpins this thesis, that is:

**How do the everyday energy practices of individuals interact and intersect with processes of biographic and socio-technical change?**

This key research question is comprised of three key sub-questions:

- 1. How does performance of energy practices develop throughout the individual lifecourse?**
- 2. What are the key processes that influence biographic dynamics in consumption?**
- 3. What lessons can be drawn for consumption policy from contextual, dynamic investigations?**

In seeking to answer these research questions, this study employs an innovative multi-modal biographic-practice methodology to investigate how and why energy practices develop and change over biographic time. Adopting an in-depth, phenomenological and contextual approach, the

## Chapter One

study aims for theoretical rather than representative generalisability by providing rich insights into patterns and processes shaping dynamics as they play out in the context of individuals' lives. Such information is of important policy relevance and is a useful addition to insights emerging from aggregate, quantitative studies.

### 1.3 Research approach and scope of the study

In this study, a historic socio-geographical approach is adopted in order to situate lives and practices in context and analyse patterns and processes shaping energy practices over biographic time. Drawing on concepts from the disciplines and fields of human geography, sociology and lifecourse studies, a novel fusion of social practice and lifecourse perspectives is advanced. To this end, an experience-centred, contextual and dynamic approach guides the investigation.

In departing from the mainstream, the approach adopted in this study contextualises consumption in lifecourse and socio-historical contexts. Taken together, these two contexts, individual time and social-historical time, combine to become biographic time. Drawing on biographic-practice concepts and theoretical understandings of the socio-historic lifecourse, individuals and their practices are firmly situated in context. The emphasis is placed on understanding energy as it is embedded in social practice from a lived experience perspective. A range of contexts come under consideration in this study, including biographic, social, material and institutional. By exploring how individuals' lives and their practice careers at the micro-level are shaped by broader political, social and material contexts at meso and macro scales, the methodology seeks to reveal the intersections between multiple scales, temporalities and contexts. In contrast to rationalist-individualistic approaches that largely extract individuals from their social context, a relational theory of the subject (Smart, 2007, Grove et al., 2016,

## Chapter One

Henwood, et al., 2016) underpins this study. This perspective recognises individuals as socially connected agents whose practice both shapes and reflects the social and material contexts in which it evolves.

In exploring dynamics at the scale of biographic time, the 'careers' of various energy consuming practices are examined from the context of both daily and life paths. In Time Geography the term 'path' has been used to refer to an individual's position and activities in time and space. The daily path refers to movements and practice throughout each day, while the life path relates to wider patterns that span the entire lifecourse (Pred, 1981, Holloway and Hubbard, 2001). Furthermore, in practice-theoretical research the concept of 'career' has recently been employed to consider biographic dynamics and to study the recursive interaction between individuals' lives, their practice and wider contexts (Greene and Rau, 2016). While this research will examine individuals' biographic experience in a holistic sense, detailed study of the careers of three exemplar domestic practices of environmental significance - that is mobility practices, food practices, and laundry practices - is conducted for the purpose of focusing methodological attention on energy practices and facilitating comparison among cases.

In investigating biographic processes shaping dynamics in energy demand, Ireland emerges as an interesting research context. Following its independence from the United Kingdom in 1922, Ireland remained a demographic and social outlier, marked by mass emigration and poverty, well into the late twentieth century. However, Ireland's entry to the European Communion in 1973 marked a decisive turning point for the trajectory of the nation, and, over the past fifty years, the country has witnessed rapid and dramatic socio-cultural, economic, institutional and infrastructural change. This change has been associated with rising living standards and increasing consumption, with this process intensifying during

## Chapter One

the period of economic expansion in the early twenty-first century known as the 'Celtic Tiger' (McDonald and Nix, 2005, EPA, 2006). Yet, to date, the ways in which these structural and lifecourse transformations have intersected with everyday energy practice has not been explored from a socio-geographical historical perspective. This research seeks to address this gap. In doing so, it contributes to a small but growing body of contextual, dynamic research exploring environmentally significant practices in biographic contexts (e.g. Hards, 2011, Hards, 2012, Henwood, et al., 2015). Building on this work, it advances an innovative practice-biographic-narrative methodology, incorporating a triangulation of dynamic concepts and tools, to investigate dynamics in consumption over biographic time. The timescale considered in this study includes a retrospective analysis of change in the context of approximately the past 90 years from the late 1920s to present.

### 1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis has nine chapters. Chapter Two proceeds to situate the study in the theoretical and research landscape. It outlines three key theoretical approaches to the study of consumption that reflect wider debates in the social sciences concerning the nature of human behaviour and social change. These comprise actor-centric, structural and social practice perspectives. The key argument underpinning this literature review is that contextualised, biographic approaches to consumption research have to date been under-theorised and under-researched. While the actor -centric framework (Heisserer and Rau, 2015) has been criticised for presenting an under-socialised account of human behaviour, structural approaches tend to be positioned at the other end of the spectrum, advancing a perhaps equally obstructive over-socialised position. This dualism reflects the long-standing structure-agency debate in the social sciences and represents a challenge to holistic approaches to consumption research.

## Chapter One

The chapter then situates this study in the context of sociological and human geographical approaches that have sought to overcome the structure-agency dualism. It suggests that while practice-theoretical approaches have made significant progress in advancing dynamic, contextual approaches to consumption, the question of how dynamics play out in the context of individuals' biographies has largely been overlooked. The chapter suggests that engagement with the work of an earlier wave of practice theorists who have drawn biography into questions of social reproduction and change, offers a valuable means of advancing the field. The work of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and geographer Allan Pred are discussed as particularly suitable in this respect. Building on this discussion, key concepts from the socio-historic lifecourse paradigm are outlined. It is argued that practice-theoretical and socio-historic lifecourse concepts can be usefully combined to explore the intersection between lives, practices and contexts. Finally, the chapter reviews an emerging body of socio-geographical consumption research that has engaged with the question of biography from a variety of temporal scales and vantage points. Key remaining gaps are identified to which this study seeks to build upon and address. This review closes with a reconsideration of the research questions outlined above.

The following two chapters focus on the methodology and methods. Chapter Three discusses the development of the methodological approach, including the key challenges in representation that needed to be addressed in the context of meeting the research aims and fulfilling the objectives. It introduces biographic-narrative approaches as particularly suitable for employment in this study. Following this, Chapter Four discusses the implementation of the distinctive methodological approach in the research context. It provides an overview of the innovative three-phased methodological process incorporating a suite of narrative and lifecourse methods as they were employed in the field. It further offers reflections on the strengths and limitations of the approach and discusses key ethical

## Chapter One

challenges and the way that these were addressed during the research process.

The remaining subsequent five chapters present and discuss the results of the investigation. Chapter Five and Six focus respectively on patterns of performance at the scales of daily and life paths. Chapter Five provides a descriptive picture of participants' current daily routines and the energy practices that comprise them, paying special attention to patterns of social differentiation. Extending this discussion, Chapter Six explores patterns, tempos and contexts of practice over the extended temporal scale of the life path. Chapters Seven and Eight then proceed to offer a more nuanced inferential exploration of processes and mechanisms shaping the patterns observed. Chapter Seven concentrates on micro-level dynamics operating in the context of an individual's biographic experience and development at the scale of the individual lifecourse. Chapter Eight moves beyond this to consider the broader socio-technical processes that shape and delimit action. Finally, Chapter Nine provides a concluding discussion that relates the results back to the first two research questions and outlines key policy implications emerging from the findings, addressing research question three.

## 2. Chapter Two: The dynamics of consumption: Theoretical insights and research approaches

### 2.1 Introduction

What drives everyday consumption? How is it determined and maintained? How might it be influenced to change? This thesis seeks to explore how individuals' energy consuming practices develop and change over biographic time. Therefore, a review of the literature on processes driving consumption is crucial to the investigation. A review of the literature reveals that there are three main theoretical approaches to understanding consumption – actor-centric, structural and social practice perspectives. These paradigms are characterised by fundamentally different ways of conceptualising human behaviour, human nature and social change. Given that this study aims to adopt a comprehensive and holistic approach to the study of consumption, all of these fields informed the development and framing of the research design and have been reviewed extensively.

The chapter begins with a review of actor-centric perspectives which for several decades have dominated the social scientific study of environmental behaviour. Here, work has been based on economic and social psychological research with a particular interest in the individual consumer and the cognitive processes influencing decision-making and behaviour. Structural perspectives represent a more recent wave of research that is drawing on cultural geography, sociology, anthropology as well as science and technology studies to understand and situate consumption and demand in its social and material context. Section 2.3 centres on research in this field and incorporates an exploration of the role of normative, socio-technical, political and economic contexts in shaping demand over time. This work highlights a serious limitation of the actor-centric perspective as that of

## Chapter Two

failing to appreciate the integral role of social and structural context in shaping everyday behaviour. However, a consequence of this has been a corresponding tendency for structural approaches to over-socialise the individual in discussions of consumption. Section 2.4 of this chapter reviews emerging social practice perspectives on consumption and demand. Social practice theories aim to find a middle level and address the structure-agency dichotomy reflected in these debates. Combining a focus on the centrality of human agency with the equivalently fundamental role of structure, social practice perspectives have recently been shown to be particularly suited for advancing dynamic and contextual approaches to the study of consumption. However, to date, there has been little attention given to attempting to understand dynamics of practice in the context of individuals' biographies. To this end, Sections 2.4 and 2.5 consider accounts that have drawn biography into questions of social reproduction and change, from both social practice and lifecourse perspectives. Finally, Section 2.6 gives an overview of extant sociological lifecourse research on consumption. In what follows, I examine each of these perspectives in succession, considering the suitability of each perspective for the purposes of this study. Section 2.7 then concludes the chapter with a discussion of some of the key gaps that remain to be addressed in this field.

### 2.2 Actor-centric perspectives: the search for psychological determinants of behaviour

The emergence of actor-centric perspectives on consumption behaviour can be traced back to the 1970s. It was during this decade that psychologists first sought to reconceptualise the environmental crisis not as a technological predicament but as a crisis emerging from 'maladaptive human behaviour' (Maloney and Ward, 1973: 583). Since this time, work within this area has been dominated by attempts to identify the psychological antecedents and determinants of environmental behaviour (Bamberg, 2003, Burgess et al., 2003). As the focus of this body of research has been on the micro-level of

## Chapter Two

the individual actor, the determinants identified have tended to centre on cognitive and motivational foundations of human conduct (Burgess et al., 2003). Consequently, actor-centric approaches have routinely focused on the development of workable conceptual models and frameworks to explain determinant-behaviour relations. Situated within a cognitive-rationalistic paradigm, such approaches tend to endorse a utilitarian conceptualisation of human nature and an understanding of behaviour as the outcome of rational deliberation by self-interested individuals.

To date, actor-centric perspectives have comprised the dominant approach to consumption research. Two broad disciplinary strands of work can be situated within this perspective – these comprise economic and social-psychological approaches to understanding consumption. Research emerging from these avenues has been overwhelmingly quantitative in nature tending to rely on large-scale, representative surveys. The proceeding discussion incorporates a critical review of these approaches, following the evolution from simpler rational choice models to more complex attitude-behaviour based models over the last several decades.

### 2.2.1 Rational actors? The long pedigree of rational choice theory in consumption research

The rational choice model of human behaviour is so pervasive and deeply ingrained in the institutions and structures of modern western societies that it is perhaps unsurprising that it has, to date, underpinned most of the policy-influential research on sustainable consumption. Three key assumptions underlie this model. First, individuals are conceptualised as rational actors who make rational choices. Second, the micro-level of the individual is posited as the appropriate unit of analysis for understanding social action. And finally, behavioural choices are assumed to be made in the pursuit of personal self-interest (Jackson, 2005).

## Chapter Two

Founded on rationalistic, utilitarian understandings of human nature, in which people are essentially conceptualised as ‘rational utility-maximisers’, human behaviour is understood as the outcome of a linear cognitive process of rational decision making. Within this frame, individuals internally calculate all of the available information to decide on the course of action which will deliver them the greatest utility (Seyfang, 2009). Accordingly, information is seen as the key factor in determining behaviour. In this respect, utilitarian models of consumption behaviour have traditionally emphasised a unidirectional relationship between information, intention and behaviour (Jackson, 2005).

Efforts to promote sustainable consumption emerging from this perspective have largely focused on the correction of market failures through means that aim to ensure that consumers have access to the greatest amount of information needed in order to enact their consumer sovereignty (Seyfang, 2009). Analysts have therefore proposed that providing individuals with information, for example on the negative impact of excessive consumption on the environment, will influence their behavioural intention which in turn will result in actual behaviour changes (Jackson, 2005). This ‘information-deficit’ model of public understanding and action (Burgess et al., 1998) has proved to be influential, informing the development of policy initiatives in Ireland and internationally. Such initiatives have, to date, centred primarily on the top-down provision of information to the public through communicative instruments, such as information-based campaigns and voluntary green labelling schemes, appealing to individuals’ sense of responsibility to act (Pape et al., 2011). However, a growing body of evidence is showing that policy responses emerging from this model have not brought about the necessary transitions in behaviours and practice. As has been extensively stated in sustainable consumption research, a ‘value-action’ gap exists between how people think they ought to act and how they

## Chapter Two

actually behave (Blake, 1999, Davies et al., 2005, Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002, Owens, 2000, Pape et al., 2011, Pelenur and Cruickshank, 2012). In this respect, the deficit model has been repeatedly shown, in empirical research and through experience, to be flawed. While such findings cast serious doubt on the ability of rational deliberation processes to explain human behaviour, cognitive approaches embedded in a rational choice paradigm continue to dominate sustainable consumption policy (Shove, 2010, Davies et al., 2010).

Rational choice approaches share a conceptualisation of human behaviour as one that is essentially based on the model of *homo economicus* (Gibson et al., 2011), and thus draw strongly from the intellectual assumptions of classical economics. This conceptualisation is based on the premise that individuals are, in essence, self-interested, rational actors who aim to maximise their own expected 'utility'. Although this model has had a pervasive influence on the direction of sustainable consumption policy initiatives in Ireland and internationally, an emerging body of evidence suggests that only a narrow proportion of consumption behaviour can be explained as resulting from fundamentally self-interested processes of rational deliberation. In response to these critiques, a number of efforts to formulate alternative cognitive models of consumer behaviour have ensued, many of which, however, retain implicit aspects of rational choice theory in their conceptualisations. These social-psychological models are discussed in the following section.

### 2.2.2 Research and models: Social psychological approaches and the search for cognitive determinants of behaviour

Over recent decades, a growing body of social psychological models have been developed in an attempt to explain human behaviour in a more nuanced way. Like rational choice theory, many of these approaches assume

## Chapter Two

that choices are made on the basis of expected outcomes and the value associated with those outcomes. However, a range of these psychological models of consumer behaviour are more correctly understood as 'adjusted' expectancy-value theories. In this respect, building on the core notion of rational choice theory, they go a step further to uncover the psychological antecedents of consumer preferences (Jackson, 2005). An examination of the genealogy of work in this domain reveals a gradual progression from simpler to more or less complex models over time. Today, a great variety of models of consumer behaviour circulate the literature, a full review of which is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Jackson 2005 for a comprehensive review). This subsection therefore limits its focus to social-psychological theories that have been most frequently applied in research examining environmentally significant behaviour.

Within sustainable consumption research, the attitude concept has received a considerable amount of attention. An attitude can be defined as a collection of beliefs, affect and behavioural intentions a person holds in relation to an issue (Schultz et al., 2004). Research exploring attitude-behaviour relations has dominated social-psychological research in this field (Hwang et al., 2000). Assuming a linear direction of influence, attitude-behaviour models are founded on the premise that attitude is the key determinant of behaviour and that behaviour is mediated by individual choice. As a result, these models are commonly referred to as attitude-behaviour-correspondence (Olli et al., 2001) or attitude-behaviour-choice (ABC) models (Shove, 2010).

Much of the early cognitive work in this field centred on predicting consumption behaviours from environmental attitudes and knowledge. Employing predominantly self-reported survey-based methods utilising psychological attitude and belief scales, this research has focused on

## Chapter Two

identifying environmentally significant attitudes and correlating these with a range of environmentally significant acts. Theoretically, ABC models are based on the assumption that a direct causal relationship exists between environmental attitudes and behaviours. However, empirical findings have not consistently supported this assumption. In fact, a number of meta-analytical reviews of studies examining the direct empirical relationship between environmental attitudes and environmentally significant behaviour all report the relation to be low to moderate (e.g. Hines et al., 1987, Bamberg and Moser, 2007). Findings such as these indicate that environmental attitudes are not significant predictors of environmentally significant behaviours.

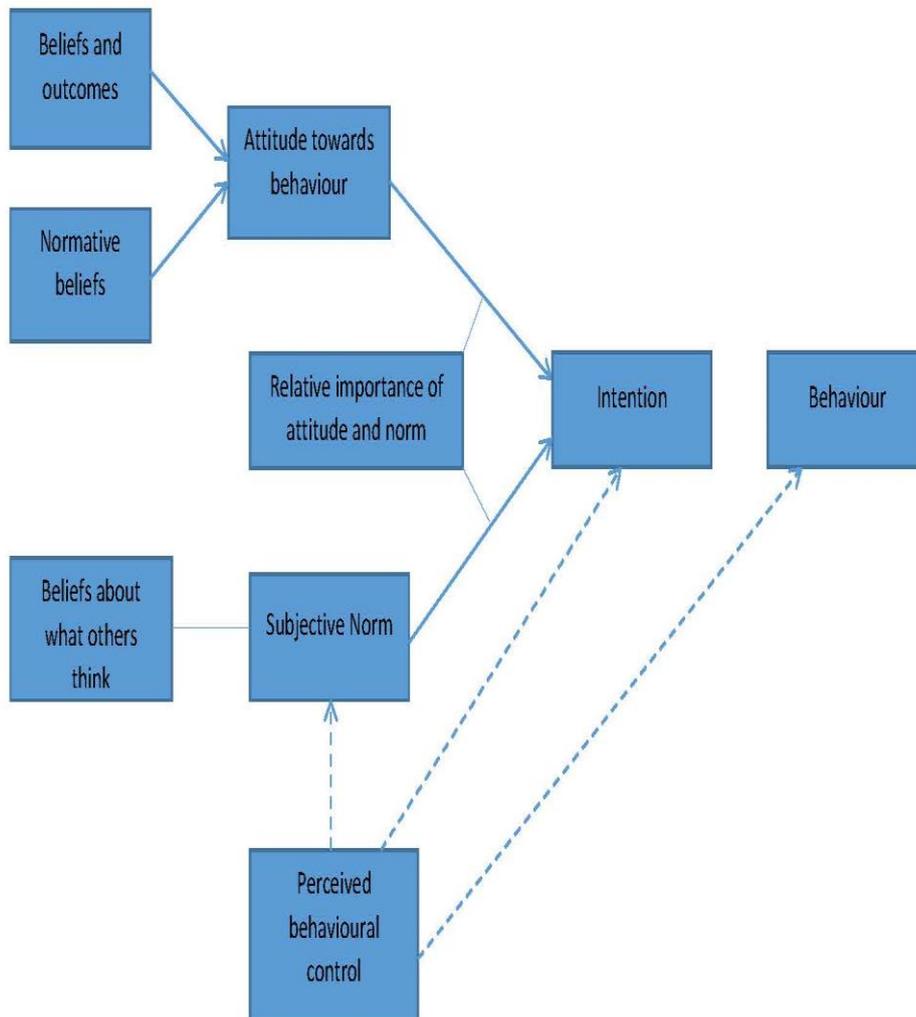
Findings highlighting the tenuousness of the attitude-behaviour correspondence stimulated the development of more nuanced 'adjusted' expectancy value theories. Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) 'Theory of Reasoned Action' (TRA), and its successor, the 'Theory of Planned Behaviour' (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), represent early and influential developments in this field. These models differ from earlier approaches in proposing an indirect mediated relation between attitude and behaviour. The TRA details the determinants to an individual's decision to enact a particular behaviour. It suggests that a person's behaviour is determined by their attitudes but that this relationship does not always translate perfectly and is mediated by one's intention to act and contextual factors such as social norms.

Ajzen's (1991) 'Theory of Planned Behaviour' (TPB) extends the TRA to incorporate other intermediary variables. The TPB proposes that three distinct factors influence an individual's intention to act which in turn determines their behavioural outcome. First are a person's own beliefs about the behaviour in question, their attitudes. Second are their normative beliefs, that is, their perceptions about social pressure to act in a certain

## Chapter Two

way; and third are their perceived behavioural control beliefs, that is, their beliefs about their own self-efficacy, to perform a given behaviour (see Figure 2.1). Crucially, the TPB not only takes into consideration individuals' own personal beliefs and attitudes concerning the consequences of their behaviour but also their beliefs about the normative prescriptions of others. Building on Ajzen's model, some researchers (cf. Cialdini et al., 1991) have suggested that social norms should be measured as two components: 'injunctive norms', denoting an individual's perceptions of how others expect them to behave, and 'descriptive norms', reflecting a person's perceptions of how other people themselves behave.

The TPB thus goes some way towards contextualising behaviour in social and normative contexts. Moreover, it opens up the scope of enquiry to include a focus on demographic and other background variables that may influence normative beliefs. The TPB is suitable for quantitative enquiry and has received considerable interest as a unifying frame for attitude concepts (Hwang et al., 2000). Since its development, it has been the model most frequently used in psychological work on environmentally significant behaviour. Here it has been adapted in a variety of ways to explain a range of behaviours including recycling (Cheung et al., 1999, Mannetti et al., 2004, Nigbur et al., 2010, Tonglet et al., 2004) energy-related behaviour (Bamberg, 2003) as well as other environmentally significant acts (e.g. Fielding et al., 2008).



**Figure 2.1 Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behaviour**

Part of the attraction of the TPB is its openness to the inclusion of additional variables (Mannetti et al., 2004). As a consequence, researchers have added a range of factors to this and other comparable models in an attempt to increase their explanatory power (Jackson, 2005). Variables such as belief salience, perceived behavioural control versus self-efficacy, moral norms, self-identity, and affective beliefs, amongst others, have been suggested by researchers as important predictors of environmental behaviour (e.g. Manstead and Parker, 1995, Mannetti et al., 2004, Nigbur et al., 2010). However, the tendency for this work to prioritise dispositional or internal

## Chapter Two

factors over external factors has provoked some critique. Olli et al. (2001), for example, attribute the poor correspondence between attitude and behaviour to the failure to account for social context.

ABC models, such as the TPB, have been criticised for espousing a static conceptualisation of individuals' behaviour and attitudes (cf. Hards, 2012, Rau et al., 2014, Blue et al., 2014). In this respect, most models and studies focus on present attitudes and present behaviour as static phenomena. Furthermore, when context is considered, it too is conceptualised as something static. However, tentatively, applying the TPB to an analysis of change in lifecourse contexts suggests that a person's personal norms and beliefs about a behaviour are likely to be important during transitional periods. As Thompson et al. (2011: 29) point out: 'a person who strongly believes that recycling is a complete waste of time is unlikely to be easily persuaded to begin recycling irrespective of how their personal circumstances change, whereas someone who believes that recycling is worthwhile may be more open to "giving it a go"', especially if a change in personal circumstances makes it more amenable to do so'. In addition, the TPB suggests that a person's perceived ease of adopting a new behaviour will likely influence the behavioural outcome during a moment of change.

Furthermore, in the context of developing a new behaviour, TPB suggests that social norms function as importantly as beliefs about control and difficulty. Indeed, a number of social psychological studies have highlighted the crucial function of social norms in shaping behaviour. For example, Kurz et al. (2005) found a disjuncture between personal desires to reduce water consumption and personal beliefs about social 'obligations', such as maintaining the appearance of the garden and keeping up with accepted standards for appearance and personal hygiene. Similarly, Hormouth (1999) found that social settings that promote the establishment of pro-

## Chapter Two

environmental social norms were better predictors of recycling compliance than individual values or attitudes.

Other studies have built upon this to highlight a range of other contextual factors as important for change. Within this work, context has been interpreted as a range of different things that, for the most part, relate to normative perception and external factors affecting control (Nye and Hargreaves, 2009). Olli et al. (2001), for example, denote context to constitute a person's social network, while others use it as a short hand to refer to an individual's socio-demographic background. Researchers such as Guagnano et al. (1995) and Hwang et al. (2000) understand situational influences to signify factors such as access to recycling and the quality of public transport. In each case, contextual influences have been considered as either moderator variables on the attitude-behaviour relation or as direct predictors of pro-environmental behaviour and have been persistently shown to have a significant relationship with environmentally significant behaviour, in some cases even overriding cognitive variables in the model (Stern, 2000, Hargreaves, 2011, Christina et al., 2014). Indeed, the Stern report concluded that interventions in context are more effective at stimulating behaviour change than interventions into attitudes or values (Stern, 2005).

While these findings would presumably lead to a questioning of the basic assumptions of cognitive-rationalistic approaches and the idea that human action can be explained through linear-based models, the most common response has been to continue the search for ever more determinants of pro-environmental behaviour. ABC models such as the TPB were developed to deliver parsimonious explanations of determinants of behaviour. However, as more and more variables are added to these and similar models, the balance between parsimony and explanatory power becomes

## Chapter Two

increasingly compromised (Jackson, 2005). Ironically, the search for ever more specific attitudinal and meditational variables has in fact decreased the predictive ability of these models as they become less and less usable (Nye and Hargreaves, 2009, Shove, 2010). As discussed below, treating context in a limited fashion as an external, add-on variable that presents barriers to individual behaviour has been critiqued as insufficient by sociological accounts.

Furthermore, as indicated, ABC models have been critiqued for espousing a static conceptualisation of human behaviour. However, recent research has shown that consumption and lifestyle patterns are seldom consistent over a person's lifecourse: contexts, needs, wants, socio-cultural influences and economic resources shift and change as people move through different life stages (Jaeger-Erben, 2013, Butler et al., 2014, Groves et al., 2015, Henwood et al., 2015). Indeed, some have gone so far as to dismiss the notion of stable and coherent environmental attitudes and values as mere constructs of the survey instruments which claim to describe them (Bamberg, 2003). This focus on static variables has given rise to a situation whereby little is known about dynamic processes, particularly in relation to how consumption patterns change over biographic time. Social psychological work has recently sought to address this lacuna by directing attention to the study of habitual behaviour and its transformation over time.

### 2.2.3 From deliberative action to habitual routines: Social psychological theories of habitual behaviour

Many value-expectancy social psychological theories, such as that of the TPB, rest on the assumption that behaviour is intentional and consistent with human goals. These assumptions have resulted in linear models of behaviour change which suggest that beliefs lead to attitudes which shape intentions that determine behavioural outcomes. The linear ABC models

## Chapter Two

presented above all suggest that behaviour change is the outcome of conscious deliberation. However, given the habitual nature of many environmentally significant domestic energy behaviours, including those that form the basis of investigation in this study, conscious deliberation is less likely to be important. Following this, recent social-psychological work (e.g. Aarts et al., 1997, Aarts et al., 1998, Verplanken et al., 1998, Verplanken and Wood, 2006, Klockner and Verplanken, 2012, Verplanken and Roy, 2016) has drawn attention to the automated nature of routine energy-intensive practices with research here paying more attention to the role of habit as a driver of behaviour.

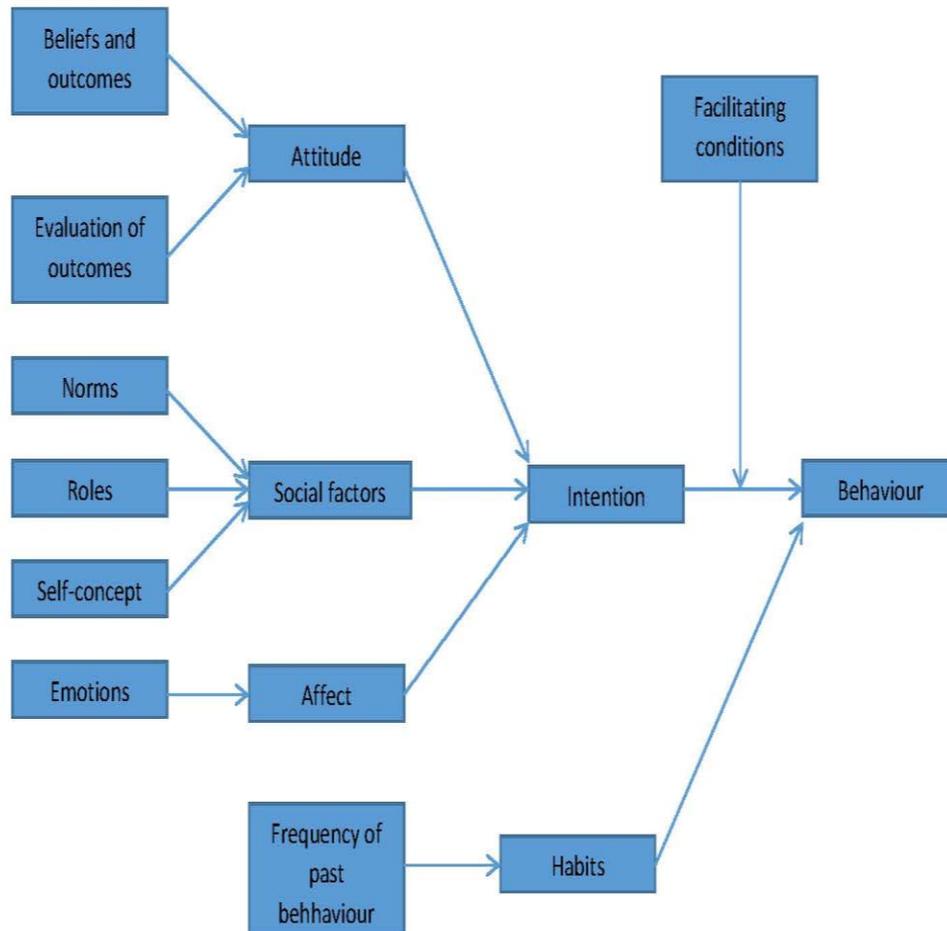
From a social psychological perspective, habit is conceptualised as a determinant of behaviour, a factor shaping behavioural outcomes (Darnton et al., 2011). In conceptualising habit, some key characteristics have been outlined in the literature. First, in contrast to linear models of behaviour which are often criticised for adopting a static view of behaviour, temporality is a central feature of habit, with a habit being defined as a behaviour that is repeated frequently over time (Verplanken and Roy, 2016). A second key feature of habit is automaticity, that is, the absence of conscious deliberation or thought (e.g. Aarts and Dijksterhuis, 2000, Verplanken and Orbell, 2003). Another characteristic of habit is a stable context; in order for a habit to be formed, the environment in which the behaviour is performed must be kept constant. In stressing context as an integral component of habit in this way, the emphasis shifts from personal intention or motivation to environmental cues as influential drivers of behaviour (e.g. Wood and Neal, 2007; Orbell and Verplanken, 2010, Neal et al., 2013). Contextual cues, such as people, places, time, aspects of the environment and indeed other practices, trigger the habitual behaviour to be performed. These three characteristics - frequency, automaticity and stable context - are defined as the three pillars of habit from a social-psychological perspective (Darnton et al., 2011).

## Chapter Two

Despite only recently receiving attention in social psychological scholarship on consumption, models that consider habit date back as far as more popular expectancy value theories such as the TPB. One such model is the 'The Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour' (TIB) which was developed by Triandis (1977) to explain individuals' less rational behaviour (see figure 2.2). This model is an exemplar of the 'habit as a factor in behaviour' perspective characteristic of social-psychological approaches to habitual behaviour. In this model, habit is presented as a causal factor determining behaviour, alongside factors such as attitudes, beliefs and norms. However, unlike other models that include habit as an additional predictor, the TIB gives habit its own path, running parallel to intentions, in determining behaviour. In this respect, the two paths are posited as counterbalancing each other, so that when habit is strong, intention is low, and vice versa. Embedded in the TIB, then, is the idea that behaviour can follow two different paths; a deliberative path (via intentions) and an automatic path (via habits). Following this, the TIB recognises that in addition to being deliberative and planned, our behaviour can be thoroughly unconscious and unplanned (Darton et al., 2011).

The TIB has been employed less than intentional-focused models in research on environmentally significant behaviour (Darton et al., 2011). This is despite the fact that it has been shown to be a better predictor of behavioural outcomes than the TPB in behaviours that are characterised by habituality, such as daily commuting (Bamberg and Schmidt, 2003). The implications of the finding that habit is a better predictor of behavioural outcome than intention has enormous implications for policy, the most obvious of which is that rational appeals to individuals to change their behaviour through information-based campaigns are likely to have little impact on behavioural outcomes. Furthermore, in emphasising the integral role of context to behaviour, social psychological approaches to habit are

helping to overcome the acontextual gap in this field. However, as discussed below, the conception of context underpinning this work has been critiqued by socio-geographical approaches as limited.



**Figure 2.2: Trandis' Theory of Interpersonal Behaviour**

#### 2.2.4 Life events, moments of change and the habit discontinuity thesis

In recent years, an emerging body of social psychological work exploring changes in consumption in the context of life events and transitions has emerged. Recognising the limitations of cross-sectional designs, this work seeks to explore dynamics in consumption over time. The design and implementation of many of these studies has been built upon the 'habit discontinuity thesis'. The habit discontinuity thesis suggests that habitual behaviour will be disrupted and more amenable to change if there is a break

## Chapter Two

in the context in which the behaviour is performed. Here, life events and transitions are conceptualised as constituting ‘moments of change’ when stable contexts are disrupted and automated habits become subject to reflection, shifting the unconscious into consciousness, and thus offering opportunities to reset habits intentionally (cf. Verplanken et al., 2008, Darnton et al., 2011). When contexts and habits are broken this can provide a ‘window of opportunity’ for behaviour change. As Verplanken et al. (2016: 131) highlight, ‘the rationale behind this hypothesis is that when old habits are temporally disrupted people may be more sensitive to new information and adopt a mind-set that is more conducive to behaviour change’.

A review of the literature reveals that a significant volume of work in this field focuses on the effects of significant, clearly identifiable life events, such as relocation or the birth of the first child, on individuals’ consumption practices, such as food and mobility (e.g. Scheiner and Holz-Rau, 2013, Clark et al., 2014, Lanzendorf, 2010, Rau and Manton, 2016). This work has shown that routine consumption behaviour changes across the lifecourse, albeit unevenly. Some life stages, such as the transition from education to employment or starting a family, appear to coincide with frequent and manifold shifts in the organisation of everyday consumption practices, such as those relating mobility and food, while other phase of life represent phases of relative stability. Methodologically, quantitative methodologies have dominated this field of inquiry, with many existing studies using large-scale survey data to model patterns and identify key life events and domains that impact on practices. Methods employed have ranged from retrospective studies based on self-completion questionnaires and online surveys (Rau and Manton, 2016) to longitudinal analyses of extant panel data (e.g. Scheiner, 2014). However, while this work has been important in capturing trends across the lifecourse of many individuals and in revealing the propensity for changes in practices to coincide with major life events,

## Chapter Two

the mechanisms and processes by which change occurs remain opaque (Jones et al., 2014).

Like previous social-psychological work, life-event centred quantitative work has sought to address limitations by broadening the scope of analysis to account for an added range of contextualised inputs for predicting changes in behaviours in association with life events. For example, Verplanken et al. (2008) shows that the effect of life events on behavioural outcomes is mediated by existing values, while Scheiner (2014), in a quantitative analysis of German mobility panel data, draws attention to gender as a significant mediator of the role of life events on travel behaviour. In addition, the degree of change in context has been posited as an important consideration, with increasing degrees of change in context associated with greater propensity for a change in behaviour (Thompson et al., 2011).

Further work in the field of travel research has explored interactions among life events as well as meditational effects of a range of contextual and situational variables with life events in various domains on environmentally significant behaviours. Lazendorf (2010) and Scheiner and Holz-Rau (2013) highlight the importance of exploring interactions between different life events and domains when testing their association with changes in travel behaviour. In addition, researchers have drawn attention to the impact of social and spatial contexts. For example, Clark et al. (2014) use UK panel data to explore the meditational effect of the built environment on travel behaviour in association with life events. Furthermore, quantitative analysis of panel survey data has revealed cohort and period effects on travel mode choice. Dargay and Vythoukkas (1999), through a secondary analysis of panel data, show that the effect of life stage on travel mode is mediated by cohort effect. They found that while car ownership tends to increase as one reaches the age of fifty and then declines thereafter, in general car

## Chapter Two

ownership has increased over successive birth cohorts, indicating the important influence of historical experience and cohort membership on mobility practice. These quantitative findings point to the importance of situating lifecourse consumption dynamics contextually. However, to date the methods employed have not been suitable for exploring these mechanisms and processes at the level of situated social practice.

In addition to identifying variables and drivers of change associated with the effects of life events on consumption behaviour, a number of studies have sought to explore whether pro-environmental behaviour change interventions might be more successful when applied in the context of major habit disruptions, such as those relating to life events. For example, a study by Bamberg (2006) reported that providing residents who had recently relocated with a one-day free public transport ticket combined with information about available public transport services led to a significant increase in use of public transport compared to a control group of relocated residents who did not receive the intervention. Furthermore, Schäfer et al. (2012) tested an intervention to increase pro-environmental food consumption in the context of two life transitions, that is, having the first child and moving home. They found that those experiencing a life transition were more amenable to pro-environmental behaviour change. Similarly, Verplanken et al. (2016) found that a sustainability intervention was more effective among a sample that had recently relocated when compared to a group who had not undergone a life transition. In terms of the time period for behaviour change, both Verplanken et al. (2016) and Schäfer et al. (2012) reported that the window of opportunity lasted approximately three months. This finding suggests that, rather than being experienced as abrupt disruptions or moments of change, changes associated with life transitions are more likely to occur incrementally over time. However, these accounts give little attention to the experiences and contexts of change associated with transitions.

### 2.2.5 Implications of actor-centric perspectives for this research

Although actor-centric perspective have made considerable progress in identifying numerous psycho-social determinants of people's intention to choose to enact environmentally significant behaviours, it is clear that many questions remain unaddressed in this field. At the most basic level, the assumptions that lie at the heart of this work have been extensively criticised for espousing an overly simplified and de-contextualised view of behaviour that places undue emphasis on the role of self-interested rational deliberation in decision making. While more recent work on habitual behaviour has sought to address these issues, key gaps in understanding remain.

Theoretically, a central paradox of this paradigm is the unresolved issue of the value-action gap. Although more recent and sophisticated cognitive models have attempted to address this dilemma, by turning attention towards identifying a range of contextual and situational variables, including habit and past behaviour, this problem remains unresolved. While welcoming this increasing focus on context, it has been argued that treating it as a mere add-on, a pre-existing external input influencing individualised decision-making processes, is insufficient (Nye and Hargreaves, 2009).

Life-event focused social psychological research moves beyond static approaches to consider how habitual behaviour changes in the context of lifecourse transitions. Adopting a temporally focused approach that seeks to account for the influence of contextual changes on behaviour, this research goes some way towards addressing the limitations of static and acontextual approaches in social-psychological approaches to consumption. However, these attempts to direct attention towards context, while welcome, remain at best incomplete, mainly because they treat context quantitatively as a set

## Chapter Two

of external variables that influence individuals' decision-making. In this respect, sociological accounts have highlighted the conceptualisation of context in these accounts as limited. Actor-centric approaches rest on a rationalist-individualist conception of the lifecourse (Sattlergar and Rau, 2016) that overlooks 'the role of individuals as active and socially connected change agents whose biographies and practices both reflect and shape the structure, composition and logics of the social settings they inhabit' (Greene and Rau, 2016: 4). As a result, individualist–rationalist understandings of habitual decision making and behaviour have prevailed, leading to a 'portfolio model of human action' (cf. Warde and Southerton, 2012), in which the emphasis is placed on uncovering means by which individuals can be influenced to modify their decisions in the context of life transitions, 'with the overall objective of putting rational sovereign consumers back in charge of their conduct' (Greene and Rau, 2016: 4). To this Greene and Rau (2016: 4) highlight that

'Perhaps as a consequence of the continued centrality of individualist-rationalist approaches, there has been little consideration of socio-symbolic, material and institutional dynamics and how these intersect with dynamics in performance over time. As such, questions remain regarding how wider structural processes, including changes in value orientation, legislation or policy, intersect with individuals' consumption biographies.'

It has been suggested that many of the limitations associated with actor-centric cognitive accounts have been associated with the methodological approaches employed (Hards, 2012). Employing predominantly quantitative methodologies that work to extract individuals from their social contexts and lived realities, this work has overlooked processes and mechanisms operating at the level of situated practices. Within this field, inductive,

## Chapter Two

qualitative investigations of lifecourse dynamics in consumption are limited. While quantitative research such as this is useful for gathering large-scale aggregate data, it is poorly suited to the investigation of complex social processes influencing human behaviour. This suggests that an in-depth, qualitative approach, focusing on lived experiences, may be valuable if consumption in the context of lived lives is to be fully understood. Furthermore, the temporal scale of these studies is frequently limited to a focus on particular life stages and phases rather than dealing with lifecourse in its entirety, a scale of analysis that is likely to be more conducive to exploring broader processes shaping the intersections of lives and practices over time (Greene and Rau, 2016). The emphasis on quantitative methodologies has obscured a deeper understanding of the experiential and contextual processes shaping dynamics in practice during life transitions. This study moves beyond a focus on specific life events and transitions to instead focus on consumption dynamics in their social-biographical entirety.

### 2.3 Structural approaches: re-socialising the individual in consumption research

‘To engage in attempts to change consumption patterns and consumer behaviours is, in one sense, to tinker with fundamental aspects of our social world. And to proceed without acknowledging this degree of complexity and sophistication is to invite an inevitable failure’ (Jackson 2005: 9).

Socio-geographical approaches open up the discourse on sustainable consumption to the wider social sciences. This literature offers an alternative conception of sociality, one in which human behaviour is understood as intrinsically integrated into the social, economic, cultural, material, spatial and political contexts of everyday life. While economic and social-psychological perspectives focus on the micro-level of the rational

## Chapter Two

individual decision maker, structural approaches draw attention to the social and technological construction of behaviour to reveal complex relations between self and other, individual and society. The central message emerging from this literature is that 'people do not act as isolated individuals but as people-in-society' (Seyfang, 2009: 9). These ontological differences influence how research is conducted. The advancement of everyday life analytical approaches to consumption throughout the 1990s has seen the adoption of a range of alternative methodologies. Here there has been a shift toward the employment of in-depth, interpretive, qualitative procedures to explore how meanings, knowledges and practices concerning consumption are constructed and negotiated in context.

### 2.3.1 The social symbolic self and the cultural politics of consumption

'An individual's main objective in consumption is to help create the social world and to find a credible place in it' (Douglas, 1976: 243).

The profusion of sociological writings on consumption since the 1980s has been pivotal in positioning consumption as a central site of social reproduction and identity formation. Opposing over-simplistic rationalistic conceptions of consumer behaviour, this new sociology of consumption strives to understand the symbolic and cultural dimensions of human behaviour and in doing so has revealed that consumption plays a crucial symbolic and communicative function in the articulation of the social self (Soron, 2010). In this respect, as Gabriel and Lang note, across a wide range of approaches within disciplinary fields such as sociology, anthropology, human geography, history and cultural studies, '[i]dentity is Rome to which all discussions of modern Western consumption lead' (Gabriel and Lang, 2006: 79).

## Chapter Two

Within recent sociological literature, less individualised theorisations have reconceptualised identity as an emergent property of social relations. Scholars such as Giddens and Bauman maintain that biography is fundamentally a reflexive project, shaped by institutions and structures of late modernity and maintained through narratives of the self that are perpetually monitored and modified (Giddens, 1991, Bauman, 2007). Within this reflexive milieu, energy-intensive consumption and resource use is critical to identity formation and reformation, playing a crucial role in the project of symbolic self-construction.

This communicative model of consumption is formalised by the school of 'symbolic interactionism' in the elaboration of three basic premises about human action (Blumer, 1969 as cited in Jackson, 2005: 71):

- 'That human beings act towards things and practices on the basis of the symbolic meanings those things have for them;
- That the meaning of such things and practices is negotiated through social interaction; and
- That in any given situation these meanings are handled in and modified by an 'interpretative process' specific to the situation and the individuals involved.'

The first of these assumptions reflects the assertion that material goods and energy-consuming practices hold symbolic as well as functional value. The second expresses the insight that social conversations, narratives and relations influence how people think and behave, all of which have implications for energy consumption and resource use. The third premise highlights the active agency of consumers. In this respect, and in contrast to the notion that people are passive recipients of information, it is understood

## Chapter Two

that actors select, check, suspend, rearrange and transform meanings in light of the given context or situation in which they are placed and the direction of their action (Jackson, 2005).

As this paradigm suggests, discussions on the communicative and expressive-related dimensions of consumption must be situated within the context of wider socio-cultural narratives and discourses. In this respect, the hegemonic cultural discourses in capitalist societies have come under scrutiny – in particular the propagation of a ‘prime modernity’ (Taylor, 1999), the cultural definition and dissemination of the ultimate modern way of life:

‘The dominant storyline about “living the good life” – often channelled by global media and celebrities, and controlled by certain private interests – upholds an image of achievement tied to high levels of consumption for all, consumption levels that are simply impossible to achieve equally across the globe, given the biophysical limits of our natural resources and earth system’ (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2013: 12).

The notion that consumption fulfils a symbolic, communicative function in human lives has a long pedigree in the social sciences (cf. Veblen, 1899, Hirsch, 1977), with research indicating that ordinary mundane consumption has a crucial performative and socially communicative function (Groncow and Warde, 2001). Bourdieu’s (1984) work points to consumer ‘taste’ as a crucial form of cultural capital, demarcating ‘social distinctions that may or may not coincide with more traditional forms of economic capital’. In recent years, lifecourse-focused sociological consumption research has highlighted the ways in which consumption holds a symbolic function in the fulfilment

## Chapter Two

and expression of social roles and identities. For example, Sevin and Ladwein (2008) found that pregnant women realise childbirth and anticipate their future role as mothers through consumption. Similarly, Mansvelt (2010) highlights how consumption enables mothers to retain aspects of their identity following the transition to empty nest. The role of consumption in the performance of gendered and lifecourse identities is discussed in greater detail in Section 2.3.2.

In summary, this strand of contextual work brings into relief the importance of socio-cultural processes related to the expression of identity for understanding the development of consumption and demand patterns. Late modern relational understandings of identity draw attention to the expressive and identity-orientated dimensions of contemporary consumption practices. From this perspective, we construct our social selves as 'we pursue, negotiate and affirm our self-concept through the social-symbolic conversation associated with the acquisition, disposition and exchange of both material artefacts and symbolic resources' (Jackson, 2005: 75). It is precisely the power of consumption to embody and convey emblematic meanings that places it in such a crucial position in the tasks of identity construction and social reproduction. An appreciation of this symbolic communicative model is thus crucial for understanding how energy-intensive practices have taken hold and for informing pathways towards sustainability.

### 2.3.2 Socio-technical transitions and the scripting of unsustainability

Another important strand of structural work focuses on the ways in which social contexts, infrastructures and technologies shape and influence everyday behaviour. While actor-centric perspectives treat contextual and technological dimensions as pre-existing external constraints on behaviour, this strand of work offers a radically different perspective that suggests that

## Chapter Two

human behaviour, suites of technologies and systems of provision are intricately intertwined and co-evolve in particular ways within a system of sociotechnical networks. In this respect, analysis extends beyond consuming per se to consider the conditioning effects of socio-technical infrastructures, contexts and systems of provision, to lead towards a more structural appreciation for how consumption and demand is organised.

The most distinguished writings emerging from this strand draw conceptual resources from the fields of innovation and science and technology studies. Using concepts such as 'pathways of dependency' and technological 'lock in', this literature takes a 'co-evolutionary perspective on changes in 'sociotechnical systems', based on the inseparability of social and technological change' (Seyfang et al., 2010: 5). Here it is recognised that socio-technical regimes become path dependent as past decisions and developments determine and shape future trajectories of development and the provision of goods and services. Over time, certain paths of development are closed off and the regime becomes locked into a particular trajectory of evolution. Pathways of dependency become 'locked in' as complexes of social, institutional and technological elements become gelled together in particular configurations. The sustainability challenge emerging from this perspective is thus to transform current systems onto more sustainable trajectories (Grin et al., 2010).

The idea of 'lock-in' further highlights the role of infrastructures and technologies in shaping everyday behaviour. This work has drawn attention to the constitutive role that material things have in everyday life. A core assumption underlying most of this unorthodox literature is the idea that 'agencies and competencies are distributed between things and people, and that social relations are 'congealed' in the hardware of daily life' (Shove et al., 2012: 12). Many influential studies from this perspective have drawn

## Chapter Two

influence from Actor Network Theory (Law and Hassard, 1999, Latour, 2005, Callon and Blackwell, 2007). Within this work, material objects, technologies and infrastructures are said to carry certain scripts that work to cue particular consumer actions and behaviour while counteracting others (Jelsma, 2003). Jelsma (2002, 2003) draws on these ideas further to consider the relationship between contemporary socio-technical contexts and environmentally significant behaviour. He uses the notion of 'scripting' to suggest that people become configured by material objects and landscapes to behave in anti- rather than pro-environmental ways. Extant socio-technical contexts are often inscribed with a morality that runs contrary to that of sustainability. Contemporary material surroundings 'constantly invite, tease or even force us into behaviour that goes against the new (pro-environmental) morality' (Jelsma, 2003: 108). For example, modern domestic technologies, from televisions to microwaves, are generally designed to be left on standby. Thus they are scripted with a morality of convenience and emblemise a vision of a time-pressed and energy-abundant society. While people have the capacity to resist the scripts embedded in their material landscapes (scripts have a mediating rather than deterministic function), in much of everyday life scripts are followed habitually and without conscious reflection as people tend to navigate their daily lives by following the path of least resistance. The result of this is that unsustainable moral visions and customs continue to remain largely unchallenged (Jelsma, 2003, Hobson, 2006).

Within the context of this scholarship, the challenge of realising sustainable consumption becomes in essence a challenge of design and planning. Any attempt to establish a sustainable society must necessarily involve a redesign of the material and infrastructural landscape in which we live. This redesign process, according to Jelsma (2003), should entail re-moralising our materiality so that our technical and material contexts stimulate rather than inhibit sustainable behaviour. Thus, it is suggested that by building new pro-

## Chapter Two

environmentally scripted material infrastructure and devices, the moral appeals of information-deficit approaches become obsolete as people become enrolled into more sustainable practices and lifestyles (Hobson, 2006).

### 2.3.3 Steering action: The structuring of practice through socio-economic-political forces

In addition to exploring the role of wider technical and material contexts in shaping how demand is socially constructed and reproduced, structural approaches have raised important questions about the ways in which broader social, economic and political processes shape and delimit action. While this work is still in its infancy, a conference session entitled ‘Steering Demand’ at the Demand International Conference held in 2016 (see [www.demand.ac.uk/conference-2016/](http://www.demand.ac.uk/conference-2016/)) sought to launch a more focused agenda for research exploring the processes and mechanisms by which consumption and energy demand is steered and governed by institutions and policy (cf. Butler, et al., 2016, Shove, 2016, Reardon and Marsden, 2016, Royston, 2016).

Tentatively, work in this area is demonstrating the unpredictable and non-linear impact of a wide range of policies in shaping and shifting patterns of demand. As Butler et al. (2016: 4) contend, recognising the complex influence of macro structures in shaping action necessitates a different approach to conceptualising steering:

‘[W]hat is needed are concepts that can recognise the inevitability and importance of policy and governance ‘interventions’ in practice without ascribing a linear straight-forward notion of how such processes operate’.

## Chapter Two

Thus, in contrast to linear actor-centric models, these contextual approaches offer a different perspective that highlights a 'non-linear, unintentional conception of change and steering', in which a dynamic notion of context is advanced. This work suggests that the process of steering is one of generating social rules and cues that 'create or negate possibilities for people to take up and reproduce or reinvent practices' (Butler, 2016: 4). Emerging research in this area is demonstrating that policy can have unintended path dependent influences that open or foreclose particular developmental pathways, with implications for the trajectories of practices and how energy is demanded. Policies and forms of social action contributing towards the social reproduction of energy-intensive practices delimit the possibilities for novel discourses and courses of action to take hold. Arguably, governmental bodies, as well as other institutions that have an influence over public discourse and material developments, have the most power in shaping social norms and cues, influencing objective structure and delimiting action (Butler et al., 2016).

Some recent research has offered insights into the role of policy in 'steering' demand. Shove et al. (2012) provide an analysis of the Japanese Government's 'Cool Bitz' policy to demonstrate how policy can shape practice. The 'Cool Bitz' initiative sought to reduce reliance on air conditioning in work buildings by ensuring they were not lowered below 20 degrees Celsius. Instead, office workers were encouraged to alter their dress attire and wear lighter seasonal clothes during summer months. The policy initiative resulted in a successful reduction of the use of air conditioning in work places. Furthermore, Hand (2005) highlights how government campaigns about health have shaped the evolution of social meanings about cleanliness, contributing to the wide-spread uptake of daily showering as a commonly performed practice.

## Chapter Two

As Hand et al.'s, (2005) analysis demonstrates, indirect policies can have an influence on environmentally significant practices. Building on this, the recent DEMAND 'Invisible Energy Policy' project (Royston, 2016) seeks to advance understandings of how energy demand is governed 'intentionally and unintentionally, by policy agendas at institutional and national scales'. The fundamental premise underpinning the project is that 'what is seen by policy makers to be 'energy policy' in fact covers a very small area of the terrain relating to the evolution of demand' (Royston, 2016: 1). The project seeks to explore the interactions and intersections of energy and non-energy policies, in terms of how they layer and interact over time, at national and international scales, to steer demand. The complexity of the task of understanding the intersection of multiple policy agendas in shaping the trajectories of practice rests on the emerging finding that such policies are generally large-scale, long-term and deeply integrated into dominant socio-technical systems and power relations (cf. Sayer, 2013). For example, a recent project focusing on higher education institutions highlights that transitions in energy practice and governance has been shaped by wider policy agendas and socio-economic transitions associated with broader shifts towards neoliberal economic policies, the increasing pervasiveness of IT in everyday life, as well as changing norms and standards surrounding comfort and cleanliness (Royston, 2016).

As work emerging from the 'Invisible Energy Policy' project highlights, broader economic transitions and processes shape consumption in everyday life. In relation to this, Butler et al. (2014) highlight how changes in the economic landscape towards more flexible forms of labour have intersected with personal lives to shape mobility practice. Furthermore, Butler et al. (2016) highlight how welfare and poverty policies and indicators have shaped public discourse about standards of living.

## Chapter Two

These recent accounts and those by others (cf. Shove, 2015, Shove et al., 2015) all direct attention to the often unpredictable, non-linear and uncontrollable impacts of policy on consumption, suggesting that efforts to direct demand are inevitably constrained by multiple processes beyond those generally related to energy and consumption policies. In highlighting change as the result of multiple, intersecting processes operating at various scales, this work is revealing how structures, institutions and policies of various kinds steer action by setting agendas, shaping public discourse and constraining or delimiting action. Recent work suggests that not only government policies but a much wider set of institutions play a role in shaping cultural discourse and material infrastructures. However, little research has explored how these wider institutions and contexts work to shape objective structures, social discourse and delimit action, especially in an Irish context. As Royston points out, if the influence of these broader political and normative contexts and policies in steering consumption remain unrecognised and unacknowledged, 'efforts to reduce demand will inevitably fail, regardless of targets and plans that may be in place' (2016: 12). A better understanding of how direct and indirect influences of policy interact with socio-technical developments to shape and delimit everyday consumption is an important area of research that has the potential to improve policy efforts.

### 2.3.4 Critical review of structural approaches and implications for this study

Structural perspectives draw attention to the ways in which the multiple, overlapping social and structural contexts by which people live out their daily lives serve to shape patterns of behaviour. Moving beyond individualised notions of homo economicus to the contextualised idea of homo sociologicus (Reckwitz, 2002a), this paradigm highlights the fundamentally social character of human nature and behaviour. In emphasising the social, material and political contexts of consumption,

## Chapter Two

structural perspectives offer a challenge to the essentialist ideas of the consumer and the bounded conception of context endorsed by the actor-centric perspective. While the actor-centric framework presents a largely asocial, de-contextualised view of human behaviour, the structural approach suggests that consumption is intrinsically contextual – deeply and intricately embedded in the socio-cultural, techno-material and spatial contexts in which it unfolds. In doing so, this scholarship has shown that contextual processes delimit and shape action, often working against the incorporation of sustainable practices into everyday routines and lifestyles.

Theoretically, structuralist approaches make a significant advance in terms of how context has been conceptualised and approached in the study of consumption. Contextual perspectives have been pivotal in turning attention away from internal psychological decision-making and attitudinal processes towards social-cultural and techno-material contexts. In contrast to actor-centric perspectives, in which context is conceptualised in a limited and static sense, this work advances a nuanced and dynamic understanding of context in which discourses, structures and institutions co-evolve. In doing so, it has been shown that far from being able to exercise rational deliberative choice regarding what they might or might not consume, in most contexts people find themselves ‘locked in’ to unsustainable patterns of consumption. While consumer ‘lock in’ results in part from structural, institutional, technical and material barriers to pro-environmental practice, it also emerges from dominant cultural narratives, social expectations and norms (Jackson, 2005). In this respect, context is conceptualised as something much more expansive than a group of external, situational barriers located on the peripheries of psychological phenomena. Rather, context is understood as constitutive of human behaviour, playing a fundamental role in shaping not only the material and institutional possibilities (or lack thereof) that shape action but also socio-cultural

## Chapter Two

perceptions, needs, wants and desires which result in certain patterns of consumption becoming more likely over time.

Methodologically, contextual approaches represent a significant departure from the narrowly conceived survey-based approaches indicative of the actor-centric approach. The proliferation of contextual approaches to consumption throughout the 1990s coincided with the cultural turn and wider social scientific trend towards ethnographic analytical approaches. These developments brought about a shift in emphasis from a preoccupation with positivistic, deductive inquest to greater engagement with inductive forms of inquiry. Over time, the quantitative mass surveys that dominated sociological and human geographical enquiry for many decades have been supplemented with, or indeed altogether abandoned in favour of, a range of in-depth, interpretive methods. Within this milieu, contextual approaches to consumption have come to demonstrate methodological diversity as researchers employ an increasing range of alternative, in-depth and often qualitative procedures to explore how discourses, narratives and contexts of consumption shape and configure energy-intensive action.

Crucially, the shift towards everyday analytical methodological approaches to consumption research, in which emphasis is placed on researching social processes in context, has been pivotal in drawing attention to the dynamic nature of consumption. In contrast to the static conceptualisation of individual traits and behaviour endorsed by many approaches within the actor-centric paradigm, structural approaches have emphasised that the dynamics of everyday life - identities, behaviour and materialities, fluid and in a process of constant flux - necessarily change and evolve over time. While structural research has revealed some promising insights into the dynamics of everyday consumption, this is yet a nascent area of enquiry with many

## Chapter Two

questions remaining. It would appear, then, that moving forward a greater engagement of consumption and energy demand research with contextual, everyday life analytical methods could yield invaluable insights into dynamic processes of continuity and change in consumption. As discussed in the forthcoming methodology chapter, this research study builds upon these approaches to advance an interpretive, qualitative approach to investigating dynamics of demand in the context of lived lives.

Not surprisingly, actor-centric and structural perspectives vary considerably in terms of the policy prescriptions that emerge from them. Whereas the actor-centric framework suggests that pro-environmental behaviour change will flow from changes in individual beliefs, attitudes and norms, the structural perspective sees changes in social and structural conditions as a crucial element of sustainable consumption transitions. As such, prescriptions emerging from contextual insights represent a much more complex challenge to the sustainable consumption policy agenda. From a structural perspective, focusing on individual behaviour change is neither feasible nor sufficient. Rather, it is argued here that change must occur at the collective, socio-technical level. However, the intensive, “soft” methods of enquiry characteristic of contextual approaches, while crucial to our understanding of the complex processes driving consumption, continue to be overlooked by many policy makers who, working within the dominant paradigm of a neoliberal and heavily rationalised decision-making system, overwhelmingly prioritise theory and research emerging from the dominant paradigms of economics and psychology. Politically, this is troublesome as it marginalises meaningful engagement with other accounts of social change and serves to obscure the role that governments play in sustaining unsustainable socio-economic systems and the degree to which they are implicated in structuring choice and possibilities (Shove, 2010).

## Chapter Two

Despite the significant advances paved by structural approaches, a number of issues require further attention and elaboration. First, research characteristic of the various sub-fields that comprise the structural perspectives has tended to compartmentalise different aspects of context by studying them in isolation. This suggests that, going forward, consumption research should consider both the socio-cultural and techno-material dimensions of context in tandem (Cohen et al, 2013). This would appear to be necessary if we are to develop as comprehensive an understanding as possible of contextual influences on environmentally significant behaviour.

Second, while the actor-centric framework has been criticised for presenting an under-socialised account of human behaviour, structural approaches tend to be positioned at the other end of the spectrum, advancing a perhaps equally obstructive over-socialised position. From a structural paradigm, environmental change is conceptualised as emerging from institutional and structural action via new technologies, infrastructures and socio-cultural meanings that are installed by providers, advertisers and policy makers. As such, the fundamental role of human agents in processes of environmental change is depreciated (Spaargaren, 2011).

In contrasting actor-centric and structuralist perspectives a bipartisan picture emerges in which a de-contextualised view of autonomous rational actors freely choosing their behaviour at will has been replaced by an over-socialised conception of powerless individuals locked-in to path dependent socio-technical trajectories. Such dualisms are, however, unhelpful as both perspectives omit certain influences on people's behaviour. The internalist actor-centric framework focusing on cognitive decision making processes ignores the significance of socio-cultural and structural influences on behaviour. Equally, externalist structuralist perspectives tend to discount

## Chapter Two

the importance of individual differences for how people interact with their surroundings.

The actor-centric and contextual strands provide conceptual and methodological resources for addressing particular types of research questions. However, none of the approaches thus far reviewed succeed in providing a holistic approach to the study of consumption. A holistic approach to the study of consumption would necessarily involve finding a middle ground between the structure and agency debate to connect social, cultural and material conditions with individuals' attitudes, expectations and habits. Such an approach would entail analysing not only the ways in which structure influences individuals but also how individual agents can shape context, thus widening the lens to an appreciation of both bottom-up and top-down dynamics of change. Such a holistic, middle-level approach has recently been approached in the field of sustainable consumption through a social practice-theoretical lens. The following section focuses on this body of work.

### 2.4 Social practice perspectives – transcending the agency-structure dualism in consumption research

As the preceding discussion in this chapter has shown, consumption as a field of enquiry incorporates distinct, often discipline-affiliated, ontological perspectives which hinge on disparate conceptions of the relative roles of agency and structure in influencing conduct. This dualism reflects long-running debates in the wider social science literature concerning the question of whether change in human action is guided essentially by choice or constraint. By concentrating on the performative character of social life, social practice theory seeks to provide a conceptual solution to this classic agency-structure dilemma in social theory. It does so by directing attention to how agent and structural constituents of social life merge and interact in

## Chapter Two

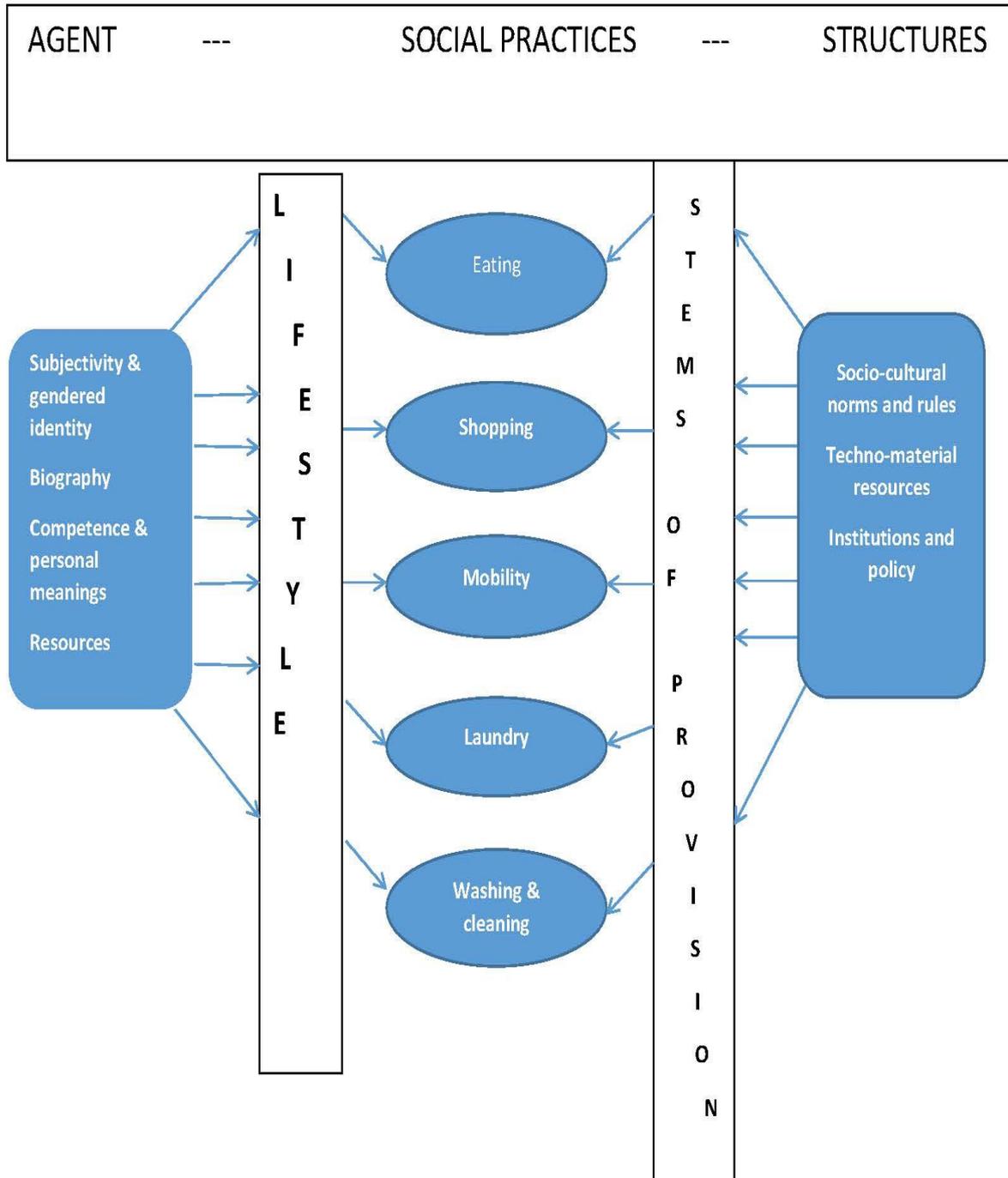
social practices. Giddens, setting the groundwork for much contemporary theorisation in this field, sums up the fundamental premise of the practice approach when he asserts that '(t)he basic domain of study of the social sciences, is neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of social totality, but social practices ordered across space and time' (1984: 2).

Social practice theory, as a relatively novel and unorthodox way of thinking about social life, has developed in two waves (Postill, 2010). First, from the scholarship of influential social theorists such as Giddens (1984, 1991) and Bourdieu (1977, 1984, 1990) and, second, from the more recent work of Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2002), Reckwitz (2002a, 2002b), and Shove and colleagues (Shove and Pantzar, 2006, Shove, 2010, Shove et al., 2009, Shove et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that 'there is no unified practice approach' (Schatzki, 2001: 2), a key proposition uniting social practice theories is that individuals' performance of distinct sets of everyday practices reproduce social structures (Giddens, 1984, Bourdieu, 1977, Schatzki, 1996). In this respect, social practice perspectives proffer to connect micro and macro approaches to social analysis by highlighting the interconnections between routinised everyday conduct and larger-scale institutional development (Reckwitz, 2002a). In this sense, habits and routines can be conceptualised as the reproduction of stable social practices, thus drawing attention to the recursive interaction between collective and social temporalities and the structure and allocation of practices in daily life (Southerton, 2013). Here, structure and agency are taken to be mutually constitutive, recursive and simultaneously determined through time and space.

## Chapter Two

Spaargaren's (2003) prominent model of social practice highlights how practices occupy the realm in between individual agency and wider social structures (see Figure 2.3). This model advances a different conception of context to that advanced by actor-centric perspectives. Instead of context being conceptualised as an external variable shaping behaviour, context is understood as an integral, embedded component of practice. Thus, renouncing the contrasting models of *homo economicus* or *homo sociologicus*, practices are presented as the fundamental social elements through which we can apprehend actions, structures and institutions (Warde, 2005, Shove et al., 2012).



**Figure 2.3: Spaargaren's model of social practice**

In recent years, a growing number of researchers have sought to apply this body of theory to the study of pro-environmental behaviour. Building on Warde's (2005) crucial insight that consumption occurs in and for the sake

## Chapter Two

of practices the focus of this research has shifted away from atomised, cognisant individuals towards everyday practices to analyse multifarious, intersecting processes of consumption. Recent research has shown how consumption of energy is an outcome of people's participation in social practices, such as eating, getting to work, or fulfilling social roles, such as parenting. When people use energy and resources they do not conceive of themselves as consuming, but rather as being involved in different activities such as cooking, cleaning or travelling. Consumption is, so to speak, derived from practices (Warde, 2005). Working from this observation, a growing body work has directed the analytical focus of consumption research towards social practices. To this end, social practice approaches are proving to be particularly suited for conceptualising and advancing the study of consumption from contextual and dynamics perspectives. Nonetheless, as discussed below, dominant practice-theoretical approaches to consumption, most notably the accounts developed by Shove and colleagues, have been critiqued for side-lining biographic experience (Greene and Rau, 2016) and for under appreciating human agency, reflexivity (Bonnington, 2015) and relationality (Burningham et al., 2014a, Burningham et al., 2014b) in consumption dynamics.

### 2.4.1 The implications of a practice perspective for researching consumption dynamics

What then can social practice theory contribute to the study of consumption in biographic contexts? Fundamentally, it entails reconceptualising consumption behaviour as a situated social practice (Barr and Prillwitz, 2014) that endures various transformations over time. Significantly, social practice approaches highlight the embedded, dynamic and ever changing nature of everyday practices and their role in social reproduction and transformation over time (Giddens, 1984, Bourdieu, 1977, Schatzki et al., 2001), suggesting that to understand social change

## Chapter Two

requires understanding the evolution of practices themselves. In foregrounding practices as the key unit of analysis, existing work has demonstrated that practices develop careers or biographies of their own, with their lives often predating and recursively co-evolving with individuals' performances (Shove et al., 2012). This work has been crucial in moving beyond individualised, acontextual and static conceptions of consumption to draw attention to the dynamic nature of action and its configuration by wider socio-cultural and techno-material contexts.

Applying social practice theory to the study of everyday practices across the lifecourse thus brings about a fundamental shift in how agency, context and change processes are approached (Warde, 2005, Watson, 2012). While existing actor-centric work has highlighted the ways in which attitudinal and contextual variables interrelate with life events by shaping individuals' consumption, a social practice perspective reframes this discussion away from individual behavior towards the dynamics of practices. Barr and Prillwitz (2014: 7) argue that such a shift in perspective is crucial as:

'Social practices are more broadly conceived than habits in that they place current individual routinised behaviours into both a social and a historical context, thus recognising how apparently individual choices are framed by contemporary trends and the development of such trends over time and space.'

Importantly, then, a social practice perspective departs from individualist-rationalistic notions of consumption as emerging from cognitive processes to instead focus on the embeddedness of everyday energy practices in everyday life, as well as wider socio-symbolic and techno-material contexts as they evolve (Heisserer, 2013; Heisserer and Rau, 2015).

## Chapter Two

In addition to stressing the embodied, temporal, spatial and material organisation of human action, adopting a social practice perspective suggests that practices are made up of a distinctive set of elements (cf. Shove et al., 2012). For example, Reckwitz views practices as distinct entities composed of a unique set of elements and highlights processes of routinisation in their (re)production:

‘A ‘practice’ ... is a routinized 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’ (2002a: 249-50).

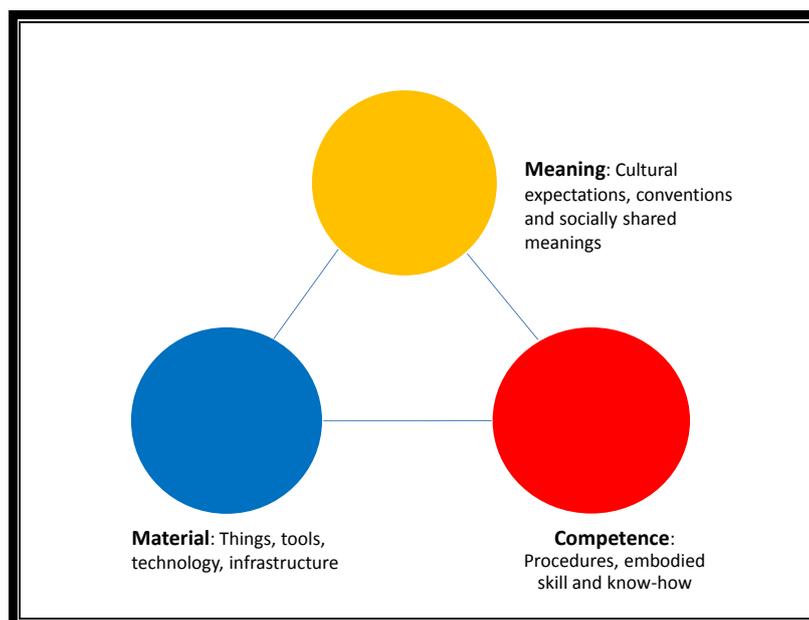
Importantly, this suggests that the elements of a practice are the property of the practice itself rather than that of individuals. In this respect, Schatzki’s (1996) distinction between practice-as-entity and practice-as-performance is particularly helpful in orientating researchers to two different dimensions of practice. While on the one hand practices, such as car driving, constitute distinguishable, coordinated entities historically formed as collective achievements that are in some sense ‘transcendent of individual incidences of its doing’ (Watson, 2012: 489), on the other hand they require recursive performance and enactment by individuals in order to reproduce and transform over time (Schatzki, 1996, Røpke, 2009). A performance then ‘presupposes a practice’ (Warde 2005: 134), as social actors continually recreate practices ‘via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors’ (Giddens, 1984: 2). These two dimensions of practices - entities and performances – evolve in a dynamic interaction with each other (cf. Heisserer and Rau, 2015). As Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger (2014) point out:

## Chapter Two

‘Practices as entities and practices as performances address two sides of one coin: while one asks for structural, long term and enduring aspects, the other asks for their day-to-day reproduction in the conduct of everyday life’.

Studying the ways in which practices-as-entities and practices-as-performances recursively interact is an important area of inquiry for practice theorists.

Shove et al. (2012) draw on Schatzki’s notion of practice as entity to explore further the internal relations among elements of practices. They identify three components of practices – images, materials and competences - and suggest that interactions between these constituent elements constitute the internal organisation of social practices. This influential model has been appropriated for use in many recent practice-theoretical studies of consumption to date.



### **Figure 2.4 Dynamic elements of social practice (Shove et al., 2012)**

According to this model, images refer to the symbolic dimensions of practices and include aspects such as meanings, norms and aspirations. The meanings associated with practices often vary according to context. Individuals are expected to demonstrate an understanding of this when integrating elements in the performance of a practice. For example, while the practice of driving a Hummer might convey status and power in certain communities, in other contexts, such as that of an eco-village, it would most likely express excessive indulgence and contempt and thus would be avoided. The images and meanings associated with a practice are also configured by wider socio-temporal discourses. For instance, while the practice of keeping a slave is considered inhumane in contemporary western society it was once considered legitimate and had very different meanings and images associated with it.

The majority of, if not all, social practices involve material stuff. Shove et al. (2012) seek to make explicit the material dimension of social practices by including it as a component in their model. This element thus refers to the tangible physical entities that are associated with a social practice including objects, technologies, equipment and bodies. The practice of driving for instance requires a motoring vehicle, fuel and a network of roads, signs and so forth. The materiality of social practices embeds them in wider sociotechnical networks. As such practices are constrained or enabled by their contexts and are constantly creating demands for new material things. Like meanings, the material dimension of social practices is far from static; the stuff of practices is constantly changing over time (Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Shove et al., 2012).

## Chapter Two

Finally, the third element of social practices relates to forms of competence which encompasses know-how, skills and technique. While in some instances practitioners require specialist training to acquire the skills and expertise required to engage in a practice, as is the case in car driving, in others instances forms of competence are learned through less formal modes of social learning. The notion of competence thus highlights the central role of individuals as components of the practices performed by them. In doing so it posits individuals as active agents who gradually acquire required skills and levels of competence through repeated engagement with and performance of a practice.

A key focal point of research on consumption practices has been to explore the careers of practices-as-entities. According to this view, the reproduction and transformation of practices can be studied by examining changes in the specific configurations of the elements that constitute them. These configurations are historically and geographically grounded in specific normative and material contexts and thus vary across time and space. Practices develop specific trajectories or 'careers' as routines and habits continually evolve through the emergence and dissolution of linkages between elements. The practice of driving a car, for example, came into being and diffused over time and space during the past two centuries, during which period its key elements – cars, infrastructure, skills required to drive as well as rules and norms about driving in society – have continuously evolved in different ways around the world (Cairns et al., 2014). Significantly, practice-theoretical perspectives challenge commonly held views of change as exceptional or 'out of the ordinary', instead emphasising the highly dynamic nature of everyday practices and their role in social reproduction and change, thus shifting attention towards biographies of practices (Shove et al., 2012).

## Chapter Two

Another way in which change has been explored from this perspective is exploring the links between practices. Just as the elements constituting a practice link together to form socially recognisable practices, practices themselves form links to one another to form bundles and complexes of practices (Shove et al., 2012). Practices can be connected in pairs or bundles through shared meanings, materials and spatial arrangements. In the same way that links between elements shift over time, links between practices come into existence and dissolve in the context of a continually evolving landscape of bundles and complexes of practices. In forming connections, practice bundles sometimes develop into stiffer complexes of co-dependence. For example, Shove et al. (2015) highlight the ways in which car dependency has resulted from processes of infrastructural development that has reconfigured how practices are linked and performed in time and space via an overall process of spatial distancing between sites and services. In this respect, as Shove and Walker (2014: 47) highlight, an important focal point for practice researchers is:

‘...detailing precisely how social practices, and bundles and constellations of practice, hang together, and identifying the material and other arrangements amidst which they ‘transpire’, and which they also sustain and reproduce’.

### 2.4.2 The individual in practice theory

By redirecting attention away from the individual to concentrate instead on the social organisation of practices (Watson, 2012), practice-theoretical theories offer a radically different approach to understanding the relation between individuals and their action to that of dominant approaches to consumption: ‘Instead of practices being seen as ‘reducible to individuals, individuals are conceptualised as ‘practitioners’, ‘carriers’ or ‘hosts’ of practices’ (Greene and Rau, 2016: 8). In other words, instead of attributing

## Chapter Two

knowledge, competencies and meanings as the property of the doer, these are understood as constituent elements of practices. Following this, the processes by which an individual becomes 'recruited' to or enrolled in a practice, that is, how they develop into skilled practitioners, emerge as an important point of analytical focus (Warde, 2005).

As individuals become 'enrolled' in a practice they become carriers not only of skilled bodily behaviour, but also of particular routinized forms of tacit understanding, knowing how and aspiring (Reckwitz, 2002a, Warde, 2005). Reckwitz (2002a: 256) summarizes the commonly held assumptions regarding the place of individuals in practice theory as follows:

'As a carrier of a practice an individual is neither autonomous nor the judgmental dope who conforms to norms: She is someone who understands the world and herself, who uses know-how and motivational knowledge, according to the particular practice. There is a very precise place for the 'individual' - as distinguished from the agent - in practice theory: As there are diverse social practices and as every agent carries out a multitude of different social practices, the individual is the unique crossing point of practices, of bodily-mental routines.'

Thus, despite the emphasis on practices as the unit of analysis, the importance of individual lives should not be overlooked (Greene and Rau, 2016; Spaargaren, 2013). The role of individuals as carriers and integrators of skills and knowledge is vital to the survival and reproduction of a practice (Reckwitz, 2002; Giddens, 1984). In this respect, practice theorists are cautious not to overstress the structuring effect of practices on individuals. Individuals, as 'carriers' of practices, are knowledgeable, active and capable

## Chapter Two

bodily and mental 'agents who make use of the possibilities offered to them in the context of specific systems of provision' (Spaargaren, 2003: 688), and, in doing so, reproduce and transform practices over time.

However, despite this, empirical practice-theoretical research has tended to neglect the role of the individual in practice dynamics (Greene and Rau, 2016). Following this a growing number of scholars have critiqued the conceptualisation of the human subject as a 'carrier' of practice (cf. Bonnington, 2015, Grove et al., 2015, Piscicelli et al., 2015). These accounts argue that the human subject is more complex, reflexive and relational than the carrier conception recognises. Perhaps as a consequence of this neglect of the individual, practice-theoretical accounts have overlooked how personal concerns and understandings of how to live well shape individuals' engagement with energy (Sayer, 2013, Walker, 2013, Henwood, 2016). To this end, it has been suggested that the role of wider political-economic forces in shaping individuals' lives and action over time has been overlooked (Sayer, 2013, Greene, in press). Furthermore, to date, little attention has been paid to understanding social differentiation and disparity in meanings and patterns of performance across individuals or social groups (Walker, 2013, Greene and Rau, 2016). What remains unclear is how power and capability (Walker, 2013) shape how new recruits to practices become enrolled and how their participation in their career evolves and develops over time. The results of this study indicate that patterns of recruitment are differentiated along gender and social class dimensions. While the actor-centric perspective suggests that such variations are attributable to individual differences in attitudes and values, a practice approach implies turning attention towards variations in levels of competence, meanings and access to requisite material conditions which are shaped by social and historical processes (Warde, 2005; Shove and Pantzar, 2005).

### 2.4.3 Considering biography

#### 2.4.3.1 *Careers*

With respect to understanding change more broadly, and the evolution of consumption biographies in particular, the question of individuals' 'careers' of engagement with a practice across the lifecourse arises as an important area for analysis. In this respect, Shove et al. (2012: 39) directing attention to the importance of understanding individual and collective 'careers' of engagement with practice for changing patterns of demand and propose 'that the lives of practitioners and practices interact' in the dynamics of practice as it plays out over space and time. Accordingly, as Warde (2005: 149) suggests, the question of how a practitioner's career commences, progresses and changes over time is important for understanding dynamics in practice.

To date, however, the relationship between individuals and practices has not been explored in a systematic way (Greene and Rau, 2016). Most existing longitudinal practice research focuses on larger-scale processes to trace shifts in prevailing norms and technologies at an aggregate societal level (e.g. Southerton, 2009, Anderson, 2014, 2016). Following this, little work has explored practitioners' biographies or careers-in-a-practice (Greene and Rau, 2016), even though an individual's lifelong experience is likely to be highly significant for their engagement with practices (cf. Shove and Pantzar, 2007, Spurling, 2010). In relation to this Greene and Rau (2016: 9) highlight that many practice-theoretical studies have, to date, 'endorsed a rather static framing of individuals as carriers of requisite elements needed for the enactment of practices'. Hui and Spurling (2013: 11) point out that existing work concerning consumption dynamics tend to treat either individuals or practices as stuck in a series of synchronic instances. That is, 'where practices are recognised as changing across time, individual enactments are addressed in terms of isolated moments of performance. Conversely, when individuals' lives are examined in their diachronic

## Chapter Two

unfolding, practices are reified as unchanging entities'. Following this there has been a paucity of work that has focused on how the lives of practices and individuals interact.

In light of this gap, this thesis extends the concept of 'career' to consider an individual's lifelong engagement with a practice. To this, drawing on Greene and Rau (2016: 9), it is argued that:

'an individual's career-in-a-practice can be conceptualised as a biographic repository in which elements such as embodied skills, knowledge, meanings and changing technologies are accumulated, rearranged, replaced or removed over time. This implies recognising that processes of accumulation, rearrangement and integration of elements are shaped by prior biographic experience as well as wider social, spatial, temporal and structural contexts.'

Employing this biographically situated conceptualisation of career provides a means to explore the dynamic and complex intersections between the lives of individuals and practices. This entails uncovering the ways in which 'shifting cultural conventions and institutional norms and standards at the macro scale intersect and interrelate with the trajectories of individuals' career-in-a practice at the micro scale' (Greene and Rau, 2016: 9). Such an approach implies recognising that, at any one point in their lives, individuals are engaged in multiple concurrent careers. Studying the ways in which energy practices intersect with shifting roles and commitments in work and family careers represents an important avenue of inquiry for advancing understandings of biographic dynamics in energy demand.

## Chapter Two

As of yet, most consumption research has engaged with second wave practice theorists, most notably the theoretical accounts of practice developed by Shove et al. (2012), Schatzki (1996) and Reckwitz (2002a). While these perspectives have helped to advance understandings of the contextual and dynamic nature of everyday action, they have paid less attention to the question of biography and individuals' lives. Perspectives that focus more explicitly on biography tend to emanate from an earlier wave of practice theorists (e.g. Bourdieu, 1977; Pred, 1981a; Pred, 1981b), a body of work that has remained unrepresented in practice-theoretical consumption and energy demand research. These insights could be usefully combined with a biographically situated conception of career to address existing gaps and advance understandings of dynamics of energy practices as they play out in biographical time.

### *2.4.3.2 Habitus, gendered performativity and the dispositional actor*

In relation to exploring biographic dynamics of practice, a key practice theorist to consider the individual is Pierre Bourdieu. A fundamental premise of Bourdieu's theory of action is that humans are dispositional beings and that this disposition manifests itself through 'Habitus' - a set of mental dispositions, embodied know-how and bodily schema, operating a pre-conscious level, that once triggered by specific contexts (fields) generates practices (Bourdieu, 1984). Habitus functions as an internalised and embodied life world that shapes an individual's propensity to act in particular, routinised ways that are in synchronisation with the norms and expectations of their socialisation experience.

The acquisition of original habitus occurs mainly during early socialisation as a by-product of participating in daily activities as well as through social exposure to normative forms of knowing and acting. Through experience, aspects of the social world become internalised as habitus, a way of

## Chapter Two

knowing inscribed in bodies, which shapes the future actions of individuals and groups. Crucial to the formation of habitus is the social field and capital of the context in which one is socialised, with social position, gender, class and parental economic and cultural capital considered decisive for the constitution of habitus. In this way, 'habitus is not limited to carrying know how and to enabling actors to perform competently, it also brings to fruition the objective reality that generated it' (Nicolini, 2012: 56).

Bourdieu's work essentially focuses on how the social is incorporated into the body via socialisation. Through processes of internalisation and inculcation, an individual comes to embody structures as enduring dispositions in the forms of preferences, tastes, aspirations and actions that structure future conduct. These dispositions reflect the doxic beliefs and practices of one's socialisation experience, so that the 'natural and social world appear as self-evident' (Bourdieu, 1977: 164). In this way, structures become 'internalised as second nature', a sedimented, 'embodied history' (Bourdieu, 1990: 56). In manifesting itself as a form of knowing akin to a 'feel for the game', habitus structures individual action to reproduce the taken-for-granted and routinised, while shaping subjectivity by instilling in one's sense of self 'a sense of one's place...a sense of other' (1990: 131). Thus habitus is less a way of knowing than an embodied way of being in the world. According to Bourdieu, the doxic dispositions and forms of knowing instilled in habitus are so enduring because they operate at a pre-conscious level, rarely open to deliberation.

Emphasising habitus as a mostly pre-reflexive, stable, durable and transposable phenomenon was a central aspect of Bourdieu's theory of social action. Habitus as a 'structuring structure' generates practices through dispositions to act according to what it makes sense to do. Following early socialisation, habitus acts as a relatively enduring set of

## Chapter Two

dispositions that become active in a wide range of life domains or social fields, shaping, for example, how one deliberates and navigates life pathways such as educational and occupational choices and transitions. Although Bourdieu did not explicitly recognise that individuals develop practice along a career, he did understand that people develop a unique trajectory of performances. The concept of habitus can thus be useful for exploring why individuals develop particular careers or become enrolled in particular routine ways of doing (cf. Hards, 2011).

A number of studies have applied the concept of habitus to energy demand work. For example, Hards found that environmentally committed individuals' careers of action on climate change were often rooted in pro-environmental habitus, such as that of the 'simplicity habitus', defined as 'a disposition towards simple, frugal or resource-efficient ways of life' (2011: 213). Biographic narrative interviews revealed that such dispositions often stemmed from upbringing and socialisation, with parental images and ethos identified as important factors in the formation of longstanding socially and environmentally aware dispositions. Similarly, Henwood et al.'s (2015) biographic research demonstrates the power of narrative for revealing the dispositions of the habitus. Researching individuals' narratives about their consumption over time, they highlight the ways in which personal dispositions shape how individuals make life decisions which in turn influence dynamics of continuity and change in consumption over time. In doing so, they reveal how personal narratives bring into focus wider social and historical contexts and how contextual processes delimit dispositions and action. These accounts indicate that habitus is a useful synthesising concept for exploring important themes in consumption research, such as those relating to structure and agency, interconnection and normality (Butler et al., 2014, Butler et al., 2016).

## Chapter Two

Habitus directs attention to how a person navigates and makes their way through the world and can be a useful concept for exploring why individuals develop particular careers or become enrolled in particular routine ways of doing (Hards, 2011). While gender remains under theorised in Bourdieu's account, literature on performativity and gender has advanced understandings of the gendered character of practice subjectivity (West and Zimmerman, 1987, Butler, 1990). Central to an individual's socialisation experience is their socialisation as gendered beings. Lifecourse scholars have drawn upon Bourdieu's ideas to explore the role of gendered habitus in structuring differential lifecourse pathways. Here it is recognised that habitus is necessarily gendered because '(g)ender is central to social regulation...(it) is fundamental to our very existence' (Holmes, 2008: xii). Gendered original habitus draws men and women down different lifecourses in terms of education and career choices and pathways, thus reproducing socially constructed differences between men and women over time (Levy, 2013). Central to the naturalisation of the masculine-feminine opposition is a series of binary oppositions which are lived, practiced and invoked in everyday life, most notably illustrated by gendered structuring of social space, characterised by the traditional confinement of women to circumscribed private and domestic sites as opposed to the masculine locations of the public sphere (McNay, 1999).

Scholarship on gender performativity has shown how gender is a learned doing rooted in socialisation and continually enacted in daily life. West and Zimmerman in their seminal paper suggest that gender is in itself 'an accomplishment, an achieved property of situated conduct' (1987: 126). Sociological understandings of gender as an ongoing doing of femininity and masculinity have developed from ethnomethodological methods that have shown that gender is something we learn to do in the ongoing flow of interaction of everyday life (cf. Garfinkel, 1967). Gender is fundamental to how we are constructed and evolve as subjects, shaping how a person is

## Chapter Two

treated as well as what are thought appropriate ways for them to act, with everything we do as beings related to ideas about gender (Butler, 1990). In suggesting that people are only 'culturally intelligible' as gendered beings, as a girl/boy, woman/man, Butler contends that cultural ideas about gender are crucial to how people's subjectivities are constructed.

A performative, practice conception of identity thus recognises that identities are shaped by the social environments in which they are performed. As Holmes (2008: 7) discusses, a historical approach is crucial to recognising that 'what it means to be a woman or a man is different depending on the historical period in which they live'. Furthermore, feminist research has problematised the homogenising of male and female categories to highlight gender as a diverse and heterogeneous phenomena, with multiple ways of being feminine or masculine differing across social groups and classes. As Holmes (2008: 38) highlights 'there are always a variety of social expectations about and ways of doing femininity and masculinity at a particular times and places' and these 'are always changing and are open to being interpreted and challenged by individuals'. However, despite the centrality of gender to a practice-based understanding of identity, as discussed in Section 2.6.2, there is a paucity of research that has explored how gender intersects with consumption.

### *2.4.3.3 Paths and Dialectics*

There has been some debate as to whether the concept of habitus allows adequate room for conceptualising change, with some arguing that the emphasis on enduring dispositions limits its use to explorations of continuity in individuals' and groups of individuals' practice (cf. Archer, 2000, 2007, Spurling, 2010). In emphasising the effects of early socialisation in shaping enduring dispositions, it has been suggested that Bourdieu's concept has been less suitable for theorising change. Building on Bourdieu,

## Chapter Two

the work of Allan Pred emerges as particularly significant. Pred (1981a, 1981b) was specifically concerned with addressing what he identified as a gap within practice-theoretical literature, namely how an individual's daily activity is reproduced or transformed over the course of their entire biography. In this respect, Pred's perspective considers dynamics of practice over the scale of the whole lifecourse. To this end, he was concerned with exploring how the everyday activities, accumulated knowledges and biographies of individuals intersect and interact with the social reproduction and transformation of practices, societies and institutions.

Directing attention to the biography of individuals, Pred (1981a: 9) advances the concept of path as a means of exploring the time-space progression of a person's existence:

'the biography of a person is ever on the move and can be conceptualised and diagrammed at daily or lengthier scales of observation as an unbroken, continuous path through time-space.'

Thus, the 'daily path' and the 'life path' provide two analytical scales for conceptualising individual action and its transformation over time. The former refers to activities and occurrences that play out at the scale of the daily life, whereas the latter pertains to longer scale, overlapping events and institutional roles in which individuals are associated over the course of years and decades, in domains such as family, employment and other spheres of life.

In considering dynamics at these two scales, the path concept stresses the relational, material, spatial and temporal embeddedness of an individual's daily activity. In this respect, Pred highlights the 'intricate

## Chapter Two

interconnectedness of different biographies' as they merge and intersect in time and space (1981a: 10). As individuals progress through life pursuing fulfilment of their plans and projects, their daily path is continually coupled and uncoupled with the paths of other people, technologies and natural phenomena, each of which have unbroken biographies or time-space paths of their own. However, this coupling and uncoupling process is constrained by time-geographical realities; because an individual's capacities are limited by finite time resources and the inability to participate in spatially separated activities, their commitment to certain practices necessitates decoupling from others. Furthermore, because an individual's daily path is interconnected with the activities of other people, many activities necessitate synchronisation of daily paths and co-ordination of routines in time and space (1981a).

At longer scales of observation, analysis of the life path scale reveals the impact of an individual's socio-historical experience and how the number and variety of institutional roles they have held along the way have influenced their life and action. Pred discusses how the longer-term decisions and roles that a person has chosen impacts on their daily practice, a concept he refers to as 'daily/life path dialectic'. Longer-term roles, such as a person's work career, shape what they do on a day-to-day basis, and may have an effect on their ability to take part in personal or family activities. Pred argues that it is where the path of the individual intersects with institutional projects that the dialectic between structure and agency can be observed. How these intersections between institutional and personal temporalities shape patterns of demand in personal life is thus an important question for practice researchers.

Drawing on Bourdieu's writings, Pred outlines a second dialectic – the 'internal/external dialectic' - with which to explore the intersections

## Chapter Two

between structure and agency. The 'internal/external dialectic' focuses on the interaction between the internal, psychological activities of an individual and the external events and actions corporally experienced in daily life. In contrast to Bourdieu's work which has predominantly explored early socialisation, Pred's dialectic plays out over a lifecourse as the accumulation of knowledge, experience and embodied skills that derive from an individual's participation in external projects and activities shapes the present and over time leads to path dependencies in practice trajectories.

The external projects and activities a person engages in over time is configured and shaped by the socio-historical and place-based contexts in which their life evolves. Thus, while each individual's biography is unique, patterns of social differentiation in life pathways emerge as people of similar socio-economic background, class, area, or generation are 'apt to have amassed numerous similar or common path elements,' externally in terms of the types of institutionally configured roles, projects and activities in which they participate, and internally, in terms of 'strong ideological resemblances' or a shared 'structure of feeling' (1981a: 12). In the context of this investigation, the internal/external dialectic is informative as it directs attention to ongoing interplay between wider societal contexts and the development of subjective meaning and careers of practical action.

In theorising dynamics at the scale of daily and life paths, Pred furthermore discusses three major classes of "constraints" which operate at different contexts or scales of social reality, and which serve to shape the actions and events sequences of an individual's daily existence over time. Capability constraints, operating at the micro level, concern the individual's personal knowledge and skill, psychological and physical capacity and personal capitals; coupling constraints, functioning at the meso-level of social reality,

## Chapter Two

include the interdependencies and interactions between an individual and other people, objects, technologies and places. Authority constraints functioning at macro scale represent general rules, laws, economic conditions as well as societal and cultural norms that shape or foreclose opportunities for action by determining 'who does or does not have access to specific domains at specific times to do specific things' (Pred, 1977: 208). The concept of constraint highlights the social structuring of daily life directing attention to the ways in which activities are patterned over space and time.

Bourdieu and Pred's concepts are useful for exploring dialectic processes in practice dynamics and hold immense potential for biographic investigations of energy demand. However, gender remains undertheorised in both accounts. Combining notions of engendered habitus and performativity with Pred's concepts would entail hypothesising that gendered life paths will intersect with the patterning of practices at the daily path, so that the daily-life path dialectic is a gendered process. Given the importance of gender as a master status configuring life pathways, an important question for practice researchers concerns how the daily-life path dialectic, as it intersects with the performance of energy practices, plays out as a gendered process. In addition, while the internal/external dialectic hints at the role of socio-historical and institutional contexts in configuring individuals' paths and projects, a more detailed consideration of the operation of political, normative and structuring forces in shaping lives is missing from these accounts (Spurling, 2010). In this respect, insights from contextual approaches directing attention to the co-evolution of discourses, infrastructures and institutions can be usefully combined with practical theoretical approaches to advance a balanced, contextualised approach to the study of consumption dynamics in biographic contexts. Finally, despite seeking to account for agency and structure, the role of human agency in change processes remains undertheorised in these

accounts (Archer, 2009). To this end, the lifecourse perspective offers additional insights that have informed the development of this study.

### 2.5 Situating individuals in society: the lifecourse paradigm for researching continuity and change in lives

Paralleling the practice turn in consumption research, a shift has occurred in the social sciences more generally towards biographic and lifecourse theories and methods for understanding the development of individuals in societies (Chamberlayne et al., 2000, Mortimer and Shanahan, 2003). The lifecourse perspective refers to a multi-disciplinary paradigm for analysing people's lives within their social, structural and cultural contexts which incorporates a range of diverse yet interconnected approaches to social theory and research. Emerging during the middle of the twentieth century, this broad approach to social research and analysis arose out of the convergence of several bodies of work concerned with bringing together a focus on individual agency on the one hand, and an emphasis on social structure on the other, as the basis for understanding social change (cf. Elder Jr, 1974, Hareven, 1982, Hareven and Adams, 1982 for examples of seminal studies). While lifecourse studies incorporate a wide range of disciplines and perspectives from across the social sciences, sociology and psychology are commonly considered to be the two most influential disciplines in the field, offering a diverse range of approaches to perceiving, theorising and researching the lifecourse (Green, 2010, Diewald and Mayer, 2009, Settersten Jr, 2009).

Psychological and sociological perspectives on the lifecourse differ in some key respects, with the former tending to focus more on individual level processes while the latter adopts a broader analytical lens to incorporate group level processes in meso and macro contexts (cf. Green, 2010). In the context of this research study, concepts and methods emerging from

## Chapter Two

sociological perspectives on the lifecourse have influenced the development and trajectory of the approach. Sociological lifecourse perspectives share a key affinity with social practices perspectives in that both seek to straddle the middle ground in structure-agency debates. However, they do so in different ways. While practice theory treats socio-material practices as the basic unit of analysis, sociological lifecourse approaches seek to understand continuity and change in individuals', and groups of individuals', lives over time in the context of the wider historical and socio-economic contexts in which these lives unfold.

Understanding how social change intersects with lived lives is central to a lifecourse approach to research. To this end, the lifecourse paradigm has advanced a number of key principles and concepts to understand lives as they evolve and change within social contexts. In this investigation, these concepts were combined with practical theoretical accounts that consider biography to apply to the study of biographic dynamics in consumption.

### 2.5.1 Four paradigmatic principles of the lifecourse paradigm

Leading scholars of the lifecourse perspective purport that four core paradigmatic principles encapsulate the primary analytic themes (Giele and Elder, 1998). The four paradigmatic principles are: human agency, linked lives, socio-historical location and timing.

In contrast to practice-theoretical accounts which have been critiqued for side-lining the issue of human agency, the concept of human agency is integral to the lifecourse paradigm for understanding social change. This highlights individuals as planful and purposeful actors who, within the context of social constraints, make choices among options that construct their lifecourse (Elder, 1994). For example, two individuals may experience

## Chapter Two

and navigate the same life transition very differently in the pursuit of their own personal goals. Advancing an 'agency within structure' perspective, the lifecourse paradigm highlights how the choices individuals make always and necessarily take place within a social context. In this respect, social differentiation in terms of social and material capital is understood as shaping the operation of agency.

Recent practice-theoretical research and Shove's influential model have been criticised for neglecting the relational contexts of lives and how these work to shape practice (Burningham, 2014). Directing attention to the way agency is shaped and constrained by social structures another core concept advanced by the lifecourse perspective is that of linked lives. In emphasising a relational conception of the subject, the concept of linked lives highlights how transitions in the life of one individual can have implications for the lives of others. In this respect, human lives are studied in their relational and collective contexts, for example in families, networks and cohorts (Mayer, 2009). This relational conception of the subject can be usefully combined with a biographic, practice-theoretical frame to explore how practice is shaped by changing relational and social contexts (cf. Henwood et al., 2016, Rau and Sattlegger, 2017).

Another core principle of the lifecourse perspective is emphasising the socio-historical location of lives. In this respect, lifecourse approaches seek to connect micro and macro processes in explaining continuity and change in individuals' lives. Lives are always understood as situated in their broader social, cultural, political contexts, with these contexts continually undergoing transformation over time. In this respect, lifecourse research adopts a multi-scale perspective in which 'lifecourse development is analysed as the outcome of personal characteristics and individual action as well as of cultural frames and institutional and structural conditions

## Chapter Two

(relating micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis, structure, and agency)' (Mayer, 2009: 414).

Finally, when timing of events and transitions occur in the lifecourse are important focal points in lifecourse research. For example, learning to drive at eighteen versus thirty years of age will impact car driving trajectories. Furthermore, different birth cohorts encounter different structural and social contexts as they make their way through the world, with these likely to shape different patterns of subjectivity and action (Mayer, 2009).

### 2.5.2 Temporal concepts for research continuity and change

In addition to these paradigmatic principles, the lifecourse perspective offers a number of concepts for researching continuity and change in lifecourse trajectories. The lifecourse concepts of transitions, trajectories and turning points are useful for exploring change at different paces and in different contexts. These concepts can be employed to explore how various choices, decisions and experiences lead to practice outcomes near or longer after they occur.

Trajectories refer to long term development trajectories that operate gradually over a lifecourse. Devine et al. (1998) refer to trajectories as persistent thoughts, actions or strategies that shape practice and are usually quite resistant to change. In this respect, it is plausible to consider the ways in which habitus in shaping dispositions to act shape trajectory development (cf Hards, 2011).

Transitions refer to sudden or gradual changes in status or role that shape the direction and development of trajectories. Role and status transitions are often accompanied by the endowment or resigning of responsibilities as well as movement in to or out of social fields and settings (Settersten,

## Chapter Two

2003). An example of an abrupt transition is commencing a new job, whereas the transition to parenthood or retirement is often more drawn out and gradual moving through stages of preparation and adjustment.

Turning points denote more distinct inflections in a trajectory. A turning point typically involves a particular experience, event or awareness that brings about changes in the direction of a pathway or persistent trajectory over the long-term. In this respect, a turning point is usually used to denote a point in a trajectory of life that can be demarcated as 'before' and 'after'. However, there is some evidence to suggest that turning points may not be a character of all trajectories. For example, Devine et al. (1998) found that food choice trajectories tended to not be characterised by radical turning points but instead typically illustrate more gradual variations over time ascribed to life transitions. In contrast, more distinct turning points have been commonly identified in car driving trajectories. Rau and Manton (2016) advance the concept of mobility milestones to refer to crucial turning points in mobility trajectories, such as learning to drive, attaining a driving licence and acquiring a car, that result in long-lasting changes in the direction of a car driving trajectory over time.

Over all, these principles for lifecourse research reveal a highly nuanced conceptualisation of the intersection between individuals' lives and wider socio-historical contexts. In combination with practical theoretical accounts that have considered the question of biography, these historic-sociological lifecourse principles and concepts have informed the development of this study.

### 2.6 Research exploring biographic dynamics in consumption

In recent years, an emerging body of sociological and practice-theoretical approaches to lifecourse consumption research has emerged. This work draws upon qualitative narrative methods to explore dynamics in practice from a lived experience perspective, the results of which have presented a challenge to rationalistic individualistic approaches to lifecourse consumption research. In this section, work emerging from this field is reviewed.

#### 2.6.1 Sociological lifecourse approaches

This strand of research explores changes in consumption from sociological lifecourse perspectives. Sociological lifecourse consumption research has focused on the identification of factors shaping individuals' food choice trajectories at the scales of individual and societal development. In terms of individual time, some studies have explored how ageing and changing health status shapes food trajectories (e.g. Chapman and Ogden, 2009). Sobal et al. (2006) in a qualitative study on food choice over the lifecourse, developed a conceptual model that conceptualised how behaviour is shaped over the lifecourse. This model conceptualises food choice trajectories as created by the individual whereby each food choice experience adds to the trajectory and shapes subsequent food choices. Sobal et al. (2006) identifies diverse influences on food trajectories, including:

- Personal characteristics including physiological, psychological and relational factors;
- The resources possessed for food choices, including tangible and intangible capital, e.g. money, equipment, time, knowledge and emotional support;

## Chapter Two

- Ideals learned through socialisation and acculturation;
- Social factors concerning roles and social units, e.g. families, groups, networks and organisations are an origin of opportunities and obligations for food choices;
- Contexts representing the environments within which the lifecourse evolves including social structure and policies, economic conditions, historical eras and changing physical environments.

Directing attention to historical context, others have demonstrated the ways in which individuals of different generational cohorts develop in distinct cultural contexts and systems of food choice. For example, Devine (2005) highlights the intersection of social and economic changes, with factors such as changing work schedules, women's enrolment in employment and developments in nutritional guidelines and food technologies, shaping changing food trajectories.

As Devine (2005) highlights, food practices are dynamic and change over both individual and historical time. Delaney and McCarthy (2009) studying the food choice trajectories of older adults in Ireland identified increased affluence and rising standards of living to be relevant macro-level factors shaping change over the lifecourse. They found that early socialisation had a long-lasting influence on how individuals' negotiated an increasingly complex food system. In this respect, perceptions of modern, processed food as unhealthy were contrasted with childhood experiences of home-produced and unprocessed food. However, despite these entrenched perceptions, contextual changes such as the increased availability and normalisation of hitherto uncommon foods lead to gradual changes in participants' diets over time.

## Chapter Two

In the context of mobility, a number of studies have applied a sociological lifecourse framework to the study of walking and cycling trajectories over the lifecourse in a UK context (Chatterjee et al., 2013, Jones, 2013, Jones et al., 2014). Adopting an in-depth, qualitative lifecourse approach, informed by the sociological lifecourse perspective, these studies examine the role of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in bringing about changes in travel (cycling and walking behaviour). Jones (2013), employing a qualitative biographic methodology identified a range of factors shaping cycling and walking trajectories at the scale of individual and social development. With regard to the individual scale, social roles, gender, life stage and health were found to be important factors shaping trajectories. In terms of societal change, the socio-historical timing of lives shaped differential walking and cycling trajectories between generations, with developments in infrastructure and the economy noted in particular. In addition, sensitive periods, most notably the transition to adulthood and the work-life transition, were identified as phases in mobility trajectories in which practice was more amenable to change. Further, Chatterjee et al. (2013), exploring the interactions between extrinsic and intrinsic factors, found that the impact of contextual change on behaviour was mediated by facilitating conditions, intrinsic motivations and personal history. Challenging linear models of causality, they found that contextual changes often preceded deliberation over behaviour.

These sociological lifecourse accounts make an important advance in considering dynamics at the scale of the whole lifecourse and highlight the value of retrospective sociological lifecourse approaches for advancing contextualised approaches to consumption dynamics. In the context of achieving the aims of this study, this longitudinal lifecourse research offers useful conceptual and methodological guidance.

## Chapter Two

### 2.6.2 Considering gender

From the limited available data on gender and consumption, there are clear indications that gendered roles in society transpose into gendered patterns of resource and energy use. In this respect, it is evident that women and men diverge in their consumption patterns, partly because of gendered patterns of career development at home and in the workplace (Räty and Carlsson-Kanyama, 2010).

Despite significant social change in Ireland that has accompanied the dramatic increase in female participation in the labour market and a shift in values, a highly unequal division of labour continues in Irish homes (Connolly, 2015). A time use study conducted by the Economic and Social Research Institute reported that on weekdays, women spend an average of five hours a week on caring and household activities, compared to one hour forty minutes for men. Furthermore, 81% of Irish men do no cleaning/laundry and 71% do not engage in any cooking or food preparation on a weekday and these figures remain consistent at the weekend. Conversely, over two-thirds of women spent time on these activities on weekends and weekdays. Men spend significantly more time on employment and travel, with an average of just over seven hours on weekdays compared to three hours and forty-seven minutes for women. However, at weekends, men and women's employment times decline, but women's unpaid domestic and caring work remains unchanged. Thus, overall women experience significantly less leisure and relaxation time than men at weekends (Mc Ginty, 2005).

Despite the fact that women engage in more energy intensive domestic labour, European and North American studies focusing on direct energy use suggest that, overall, men's consumption of energy tends to exceed that of women due to differences in disposable income, leisure time, greater

## Chapter Two

mobility ranges, and ownership and use of electronic appliances. Furthermore, additional labour created by energy-saving practices, such as hanging the laundry out instead of using the tumble dryer, tends to be placed disproportionately on women (Räty and Carlsson-Kanyama 2010).

Furthermore, emerging research on travel patterns of men and women suggests a significant difference in gender and energy as it is embedded in everyday mobility. Gendered key events such as childbirth often lead to different gendered patterns in consumption practices such as travel behaviour (Scheiner, 2014). Furthermore, the longer, often direct commutes of men have been contrasted with the shorter distanced but generally more complicated travel patterns of women who not only often have to attend work but also engage in trips directed at a range of other social practices, such as collecting and dropping off children to schools and childcare, shopping, medical visits and an extensive list of other typically feminised routine events (Cresswell and Uteng, 2016). However, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the experiential and biographic processes shaping these differential patterns of engagement. To date, there has been little exploration of how gender intersects with the lifecourse to constrain and shape consumption practice. The links between the lifecourse, gender and energy practices have yet to be fully explored conceptually and empirically.

Sarah Pink's (2004) ethnographic exploration of identity, consumption and domestic life offers important ways of thinking about how consumption is enmeshed in the constitution of gendered identities, embodied and performed in place. Building on Daniel Miller's (e.g. 2001) material culture approach to the home, she suggests that the making and experience of the home as a material, multisensory, social and experiential environment is fundamental to how gendered self-identities are constituted through

## Chapter Two

everyday consumption practices. Conceptualising a range of domestic practices, from the mundane (e.g. routines of cleaning) to the distinctive (e.g. decorating the home), as performative activities to be interpreted through processes of representation, her analysis shows that individuals continually enact their identities through their consumption practice at home, consequently producing their own narratives, priorities and values in the process. In her more recent work (cf. Pink 2011, 2012, Pink and Mackley, 2012), Pink has extended this enquiry to consider the question of energy consumption at home. In this regard, her ethnographic exploration of kitchen and laundry practices offers compelling insights into the tension between the ways in which both the sensory-aesthetic experience of the home and the normalisation of high levels of energy consumption are interrelated and engendered processes.

The limited data thus points to the intersection of gender with energy consumption. However, in an Irish context this has not been explored from an experiential and longitudinal perspective. How these different patterns are rooted in biographic experiences and processes, as well as the way practices are embodied differently between genders, has been under explored. This omission is reflective of the broader neglect of gender within practical theoretical studies of consumption. Furthermore, as sociological scholarship has shown, gender intersects with other social categories, such as those of age and socio-economic status (Holmes, 2008), highlighting the need for nuanced and socially differentiated research in this field. The theme of gender emerged as central to this study's focus on biographic dynamics in energy consumption.

### 2.6.3 Lifecourse practice-theoretical work

In recent years a small but growing body of practice-theoretical work has begun to explore the intersection between lives and practices in biographic

## Chapter Two

contexts. Here a distinction can be drawn between approaches focusing on specific life transitions and those adopting a longer term biographic scale of analysis.

Adopting a shorter temporal frame, life-event centred practice work characteristically focuses on dynamics in performance as individuals transition through clearly identifiable life events, such as the transition to parenthood. This work, has explored how people are recruited to and deflected from practices in the context of life transitions. In doing so, it has highlighted the intersections of energy consumption with the performance and realisation of social identity roles. For example, Burningham et al. (2014) trace dynamics in women's engagement with shopping practice during the transition to motherhood. They highlight dynamics of continuity and change in modes and meanings as shaped by prior biographic experience as well as changing relational, material and symbolic contexts that accompany the transition to new parenthood. For many women, the transition to motherhood is associated with the development of new meanings and skills as shopping becomes reframed as an 'artful', skilled activity bound up with the expression of caring and love. Jaeger-Erben and Offenberger (2014), also focusing on the transition to parenthood, adopt a broader frame of reference that connects individuals' lives and their everyday domestic consumption to wider dynamics in parenting practices. To this end, they demonstrate that it is via the appropriation and performance of practices relevant in social fields associated with 'good parenting' that new parents come to embody their new social identity role during this momentous lifecourse transition.

Grove et al. (2016) adopting an experiential approach incorporating a methodological focus on narratives of lived experiences, reveal that life transitions involving role shifts and initiations into new communities of

## Chapter Two

practice are often experienced as intensely emotional. They found that the emotionally-intensive character of life transitions often obscures rational deliberation as individuals' attachments to practice often increase. As they state:

'These moments are not represented by interviewees as brought about by new information or knowledge about the world. Instead, they are interpreted as rooted in long-standing beliefs in which individuals are intensely emotionally invested'.

This interpretation contrasts with rationalist-individualist conceptions of the lifecourse that posit life transitions merely as moments when habits become subject to conscious reflection and thus more amenable to change through the provision of information. Moving beyond individualistic-rationalist conceptions of the subject, Grove et al.'s research highlights individuals as 'complex, always connected, relational subjects' - whose mundane, routine practice reflects 'modes of being and doing that support their sense of who they are, but also of how they should 'handle' others to whom they are connected, or with whom they come into contact' (2016: 5). Building on this, moving beyond a conception of individuals as mere 'carriers' of practice, Henwood et al. (2016) combine social practice insights with psychosocial concepts of identity, to advance a relational conception of the subject in a biographic investigation of energy practices. Their analysis of individuals' narratives reveals that individuals energy practices are strongly shaped by dynamics in relational contexts. Children growing older and gaining independence as well as the process of ageing are identified as transitions that, over time, against a changing socio-technical landscape, shape individuals' daily conduct. They suggest that:

## Chapter Two

‘A relational approach to the study of everyday practices starts by showing due regard for family members’ personal and social experiences alongside shared values and connectivity in their ways of life... [The relational] subject attunes to the material, cultural and embodied ways in which their own and others’ life experiences and futures emerge and change, to help make sense of historical shifts in technological, environmental and societal relations’ (Henwood et al. 2016: 396).

The Energy Biographies study (cf. Butler, et al., 2014, Shirani et al., 2013, Grove et al., 2016, Henwood et al., 2016) in advancing a biographic-practice approach to studying energy practices has advanced understanding to highlight how ‘practices are not only entangled with other practices (as practice theory argues), but are also implicated in other relational entanglements’ (Henwood et al., 2016: 397). Building on this work, a relational conception of the subject, as one that is embedded and entangled within social and material webs of connection, underpins this investigation.

Another relevant strand of practice-theoretical work explores temporal coordination and allocation of practices in daily life. For example, Southerton (2003) has explored how the lifecourse acts as a social constraint configuring and shaping dynamics of practice in daily life. Certain demographic characteristics such as age, gender and working roles shape how practices are allocated and coordinated in the day. Those who have dependent children and are committed to institutional work roles are more likely to report a squeezing of practices and more tightly bounded intersection of commitments. When thinking about how this might apply to dynamics of practice over the lifecourse, it is plausible to hypothesise that during periods of life in which institutional commitments are strongly held, individuals will find it more difficult to change their practice. Another useful

## Chapter Two

concept here is that of biographical availability. The notion of biographical availability was developed within social movement literature to refer to the presence or absence of constraints that influence movement participation (McAdam, 1986). For example, women with young children are often posited as having little biographical availability with this put forward to explain their limited participation in social movements. In contrast, young adulthood is often posited as a time of high biographical availability and high levels of movement participation (Almanzar and Herring, 2004). Although the concept of biographical availability has not been applied in the context of investigating energy practices over the lifecourse, it is reasonable to hypothesise that phases of life in which social constraints on practice are higher will be characterised by less biographical availability and agency to change practices.

Emerging life-transition centred practice work thus directs attention to the changing logics, contexts and allocation of practice during biographic transitions. Attention might also be focused on how these intersect with biographical attachments as well as pre-structured and dynamic social identity roles. However, approaches that limit the temporal frame of analysis to focus on dynamics as they are occurring during specific lifecourse transitions are less suitable for exploring processes and mechanisms operating over longer time scales (Greene and Rau, 2016). To this end, an emerging body of reconstructive-biographic work is seeking to explore longitudinal processes by researching dynamics of everyday domestic practice in the context of the biography in its entirety. For example, Henwood et al. (2015) demonstrate that recruitment to and defection from specific energy-intensive practices is shaped by biographical patterns of attachment to practices that individuals develop over the course of their lives. Combining psycho-social conceptions of attachment and identity with practice-theoretical insights, they highlight how individuals develop

## Chapter Two

attachments to practice over their lives with this being intricately implicated in the constitution of identity.

Shove et al., (2012), drawing on Alasdair MacIntyre's (1981) work, argue that individuals' pattern of engagement with or deflection from practices is shaped by the operation of internal rewards, in which it is suggested that performing a practice in accordance with shared understandings of what it means to 'do it well' brings satisfaction and meaning to individuals. In exploring individuals' narrative accounts of their practice over time, Grove et al. (2016) demonstrate that individuals become attached to practices they see as constitutive of and bolstering their sense of identity. As they state, attachments to practice 'arise as part of the biographical experience of attachment relationships through which individual identity is formed' (2016: 7). Following this they argue that in constituting and supporting important and valued forms of identity, engaging in routine practices during contexts of change holds an important psychological function.

Practice-theoretical approaches focusing on narratives of lived experiences have thus made important insights into the intersections of identity and practice as it develops over time. Further work adopting lengthier perspectives point to the value of longitudinal approaches in exploring broader contextual processes shaping patterns of social reproduction and change over biographical time. To this end, an emerging body of reconstructive-biographic practice research investigating dynamics in the context of the whole lifecourse is directing attention to the role of socio-historical time and space in shaping or foreclosing the development of practice careers and patterning of energy demand over individuals' lives (cf. Hards, 2011; Henwood et al., 2015; Greene and Rau, 2016). In addressing the challenge of representing multiple scales and temporalities in demand inquiry, this work is highlighting the dynamic, recursive interaction between

## Chapter Two

socio-technical transformations and the structure and allocation of practices in daily life. For example, Greene and Rau (2016) highlight the timing of lives as crucial for the patterning of mobility practice trajectories, whereas Henwood et al. (2015) direct attention to the intersection of broader socio-technical transitions and energy performance in everyday life.

Hards (2011) analysis of the careers of action on climate change among environmentally committed individuals revealed that patterns of performance across careers is shaped by processes of performance, coordination and dependency and framed by the impacts of biographical time, historical time and space and place. In doing so, she found that individuals' careers of action on climate change are shaped by 'the intersection of a personal trajectory with larger-scale social processes' (Hards, 2011: 292). Following this she recommends that future research should explore how these processes play out in the context of non-environmentally engaged individuals. In response, this study explores patterns and processes of career development with a sample of 'ordinary' individuals.

Practice-theoretical approaches to exploring biographic dynamics in consumption offer a highly dynamic and contextual approach to studying dynamics that departs from that of rational-individualistic approaches. Within these accounts, both lives and contexts are treated dynamically. Attention to processes of co-evolution in the intersection of lives, practices and contexts is integral to these approaches. Despite these emerging advances in reconstructive biographic approaches, clear gaps in understanding exist. Challenging questions remain regarding how wider structural processes, including changes in societal institutions and non-energy policies, interact with patterns of demand over biographical time. In

## Chapter Two

addressing these gaps, the value of a biographic-practice approach for exploring ‘multiple forms of dynamic already embedded in the social world’ (Walker, 2014: 49) emerges as particularly promising (cf. Greene and Rau, 2016). Building on recent work, there is potential for bringing research on energy demand into connection with theoretical and methodological accounts that facilitate biographically-situated social analysis.

### 2.7 Chapter summary and research questions

The key argument underpinning this literature review is that contextualised, biographic approaches to consumption research have, to date, been under-theorised and under-researched. While the actor-centric framework has been criticised for presenting an under-socialised account of human behaviour, structural approaches tend to be positioned at the other end of the spectrum, advancing a perhaps equally obstructive over-socialised position. This dualism reflects the long standing structure-agency debate in the social sciences and represents a challenge to holistic approaches to consumption research.

Both internal and external seeds of change are important considerations in understanding dynamics of practice. Social practice perspectives and sociological lifecourse approaches offer dynamic approaches to social analysis that seek to overcome the classic dualism reflected in actor-centric and contextual approaches. However, they do so in different ways. Practice-theoretical accounts have sought to address this by redirecting attention away from either individuals or structures to explore how these interact and merge in practice. However, with consumption-focused practice-theoretical research, the role of the individual, in particular the practitioner’s biography, has been largely neglected. To this end, it has been argued that engagement with an earlier wave of practice theorists, notably the accounts of Bourdieu and Pred, who more explicitly consider the

## Chapter Two

question of the individual and his/her biography in practice dynamics, might usefully contribute to advancements in understandings of biographic dynamics in practice.

While the practice-theoretical accounts of Bourdieu and Pred have drawn the question of biography into discussions of practice dynamics, the role of the human agency in these accounts continues to be side-lined. In this respect, these perspectives have been criticised for espousing a somewhat socially-determined view of human agency (Archer, 2009). The lifecourse paradigm, in emphasising human agency as a core analytic principle, offers a useful means by which to re-centre attention on the human subject and their agency. Furthermore, the lifecourse paradigm offers a number of other temporally and contextually orientated concepts and principles that can be usefully combined with a biographically-focused practice-theoretical approach in the study of consumption dynamics.

Some important gaps in knowledge have been identified in this literature review. First, within consumption research more generally there has been limited attention to the study of how practice changes over time in the context of individual lives. While recent advances in social psychological work has begun to address these gaps, an inadequate rationalistic-individualistic conception of the lifecourse limits these approaches' ability to account for processes and mechanisms of change at the level of situated practice. While practice-theoretical approaches adopt a more nuanced, contextualised account of change, to date there has been little consideration of how lives and practices interact. In this respect, the question of individuals' biographies has been overlooked. In decentring analytical attention away from individuals and towards the dynamics of practice, existing approaches have tended to overlook the place of people in practice theory.

## Chapter Two

To date, most longitudinal accounts of practice have focused on understanding dynamics at the scale of practice-as-entity. Following this, there is a relative paucity of research that has explored biographic dynamics at the scale of practice-as-performance. In this respect, it is important to distinguish between understanding what guides changes in social practices compared to what guides changes in individual actions, as well as how these intersect over time (Gram-Hannsen, 2011). As a consequence of this neglect of practitioners' biographies, work that has considered dynamics at the scale of the whole lifecourse is yet incomplete. Biographic, retrospective approaches that consider change in the context of the whole lifecourse are important. This scale of analysis can potentially offer valuable insights in terms of advancing understandings of the intersection of structure and agency over longer timescales. Going forward, this thesis seeks to build on recent advances made by scholars such as Hards (2011; 2012), Henwood (2015) and others to resituate the place of people in practice theory and advance understanding of dynamics over biographical time.

In light of the neglect of individual biographies, there has to date been little consideration of social differentiation in practice careers, especially in relation to the theme of gender and how this intersects with other demographics, such as social class and age. Further, much actor-centric lifecourse research has employed a rather over-simplified method that treats lifecourse experience homogenously, failing to recognise and represent diversity in circumstances and experience. This thesis seeks to begin to address this gap. A key aim of the study is to explore social differentiation in energy practice careers. In doing so it seeks to explore and analyse energy practices as they relate to personal biographies and socio-historical contexts.

## Chapter Two

A combined lifecourse and social practice-theoretical frame underpins this thesis. Social practice and lifecourse perspectives share a number of key affinities. They both offer experiential, contextual and dynamic approaches to social analysis. First, from an experiential perspective, a major benefit of working with theories of social practices and the lifecourse is the fact that they both emphasise the routine, pragmatic, recursive, 'ordinary' and everyday-life character of action. Whereas lifecourse analysis directs attention to individual narratives, meanings and agency as they are situated in everyday life, practice approaches direct attention towards people's lived experiences and daily lives in the context of attending to 'how practices are organised within a person's daily life; including how they relate to each other, and compete for time and other resources' (Shove et al., 2009, Shove et al., 2012).

Within this thesis, a second key characteristic of both approaches is their emphasis on contextuality. In order to achieve a holistic understanding of dynamics of change, a combined focus on technological and cultural dimensions of consumption is required (Spaargaren, 2013). In contrast to structural approaches which tend to compartmentalise aspects of context, both social practice and lifecourse perspectives seek to advance holistic approaches to exploring contextual change as it intersects with lives and practice. While practice-theoretical approaches direct attention to the merging of both socio-cultural and techno-material contexts in practice, lifecourse approaches focus on understanding the intersection of social, economic, political and institutional dynamics as they play out in the context of lived lives. Thus a crucial advantage of integrating social practice and lifecourse perspectives is that a combined approach facilitates a holistic, contextual investigation of change.

## Chapter Two

A third key feature of both approaches important for this investigation is their emphasis on dynamics. Moving beyond actor-centric approaches, practice-theoretical approaches present change as always ongoing in the fabric of daily life. Moreover, in terms of documenting how practice changes over time, temporally-orientated lifecourse concepts, such as those of trajectories, transitions, turning points, sensitise the researcher to patterns of continuity and change in practice careers. In this respect, a combined practice-theoretical and lifecourse approach offers a range of temporally orientated concepts and tools for theorising about dynamics in consumption and explaining the patterns observed, thus, becoming a potentially useful frame within which to analyse biographic dynamics in consumption practice.

As outlined in the introduction, the over-arching research question underpinning this thesis is:

**How do the everyday energy practices of individuals intersect and interact with processes of biographic and socio-technical change?**

Furthermore, the following sub-questions emerge in the context of this literature review and underpin the remainder of this thesis.

- 1. How does performance of energy practices develop and/or change throughout the individual lifecourse?**

As outlined, a key gap in understanding concerns dynamics in practice as they occur in the context of the wider lifecourse. This study seeks to build on recent work to address this lacuna. Adopting a biographic, practice

## Chapter Two

approach, attention focuses on understanding how practice careers develop, change and are maintained over the lifecourse. To this end, Pred's (1981a, 1981b) concepts of daily and life paths are employed to structure an analysis of how routine practice is patterned and configured over the lifecourse. In seeking to address gaps in understanding surrounding the social differentiation of practice among various lifestyle groups, this study examines variation in the allocation and coordination of everyday energy practices according to life circumstance and stage.

### **2. What are the key processes that influence biographic dynamics in consumption?**

Upon developing a picture of how practice is organised, develops and changes in biographic contexts, the next step is to explain the patterns observed. As such, the second key sub-question focuses on explaining biographic dynamics in order to examine processes and mechanisms shaping continuity and change. Crucially, answering this question from a biographic-practice orientated approach entails investigating the vital role of context in shaping practice. In this respect, contextual processes are analysed from a number of different scales, from the micro level scale of an individual's development through the lifecourse, including relational dynamics, to broader social, technological and political contexts which frame and shape this process.

### **3. What lessons can be drawn for consumption policy from contextual, dynamic investigations?**

As this literature review has outlined, to date policy responses to consumption have largely drawn on actor-centric, cognitive understandings

## Chapter Two

of consumption. However, policy responses emerging from these models have not brought about necessary shifts in behaviours. A key rationale for this study was to explore what contextual and dynamic approaches to consumption can offer to advancing policy in this field. Reflections on the policy implications of the investigation are outlined in the concluding discussion.

The review of the literature reveals that quantitative lifecourse consumption research has done little to shed light on contextual processes and mechanisms of change. Recent qualitative sociological and human geographical work has drawn attention to the value of narrative and lifecourse methods for investigating biographic dynamics in consumption from a situated, contextual perspective. This study builds on these latter accounts to advance a qualitative investigation in the field. To this end, an innovative fusion of biographic, ethnographic methods has been developed for this investigation. Given the paucity of in-depth qualitative approaches in this field to date, particular attention is given to methodological development. Reflections on the value of a biographic, practice methodological frame for advancing dynamics in practice are outlined in the concluding discussion. The principles and philosophy underpinning this methodology are now discussed in Chapter Three.

## Chapter 3: Development of the methodology: Approaches and techniques

### 3.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have highlighted key gaps which remain in our understanding of dynamics of domestic practice. Despite recent advances in temporally-orientated consumption research, gaps in our understanding of the ways in which lives, practices and contexts co-evolve and intersect over longer time frames were identified. It has been established that this research seeks to address these gaps by answering three questions:

1. How does performance of energy practices develop throughout the individual lifecourse?
2. What are the key processes that influence biographic dynamics in consumption?
3. What lessons can be drawn for consumption policy from contextual, dynamic investigations?

This chapter introduces and discusses the methodological approach developed and employed to answer these questions. Due to the exploratory and holistic scope of the study, a constructivist biographic methodology was developed to investigate biographic dynamics in energy practices. This innovative integrated biographic-narrative methodology employed a structured problem-centred framework (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) and incorporated a suite of narrative and lifecourse techniques and methods to explore how and why domestic energy practices evolve over time. In this chapter, the key features, assumptions and epistemological underpinnings of this methodology are discussed. The integrated problem-centred methodology incorporates principles and methods from qualitative

biographic and narrative methods. As such, some of the key features of biographic approaches in general and narrative inquiry approaches in particular are discussed. Following this, the specific advantages and features of the integrated PCI framework for advancing a multi-modal research approach are outlined.

### 3.2 Criteria for the development of the methodology

The methodology outlined in this chapter has drawn inspiration from an emerging body of contextual, experience-centred biographic approaches to demand research (Groves et al., 2015, Hards, 2011, Hards, 2012, Jaeger-Erben, 2013). Following recent innovations in the field, it is argued that qualitative reconstructive-biographic methods offer a holistic, contextual and experiential means of analysing processes that have hitherto been overlooked by deductive or temporally-limited research designs. The methodological requirements for future research in this field identified from the literature include the following: a problem-centred, practice approach; a dynamic, biographical approach; an in-depth, qualitative, experienced-based approach; a contextual, holistic and Irish-based approach. These criteria, discussed below, formed the basis of the methodological design for this study.

#### 3.2.1 A problem-centred, practice approach

Within sustainability research, the idea of problem-centring implicitly underpins the notion that research should be directed towards topics that are progressive in nature and contribute to the betterment of society (Witzel and Reiter, 2012). The concept of problem in this study refers to the focus on everyday domestic practices with environmental significance. As outlined in the introduction, everyday domestic practices that comprise the focus of this study account for a significant proportion (one third) of greenhouse gas emissions. This key societal problem is the context which

## Chapter Three

underpins the relevance and rationale for the focus on domestic practice as the central focal point of analysis. Focusing on social practices as the unit of analysis, it is contended that it is possible to study and observe how processes of structure and agency merge and intersect in configuring and shaping everyday life as it changes over time.

The challenges of operationalising a practice-theoretical approach methodologically has been discussed and debated within the literature (Halkier and Jensen, 2011, Heisserer, 2013). Multiple intersecting processes and mechanisms shape and influence how practices are performed over time, from the micro to the macro scale of analysis. The challenge of representing multiple scales and contexts is further compounded by the habitual, taken-for-granted nature of many consumption practices, such as those relating to everyday domestic life (Butler et al., 2012, Henwood and Shirani, 2012). Research concerning mundane everyday practice is presented with particular representational and operational challenges in terms of capturing the intricate and dynamic nature of everyday life and its extension into pasts and futures (Butler et al., 2012).

Methodologically, this study includes the use of exemplars to focus, structure and orientate the investigation. Inspiration for employing the use of exemplar practices within a biographically orientated methodological frame was garnered from Sarah Hards' investigation (2011, 2012) of the careers of action on climate change among environmentally-committed individuals. Hards sought to explore individuals' action on climate change in a holistic sense, but found that the use of exemplars was an important means of structuring her investigation and making data more manageable to use. Hards employed exemplars of car driving and political campaigning to represent practical and political action on climate change respectively. Following Hards, in this study, three key exemplar practices – mobility, food

and laundry - were used to structure the investigation. Structuring the methodology and problem-centred discussion around these key exemplars proved an effective means of exploring the intersection of structure and agency in everyday conduct as it evolves in biographic time.

### 3.2.2 A dynamic, retrospective-biographical approach

The recent temporal turn has led to increasing attention on temporal methods in consumption research (Blue et al., 2014, Rau et al., 2014). However, the review of the literature revealed that there are some considerable gaps in dynamic approaches in the field, especially in relation to approaches that examine dynamics over the scale of biographical time. To date, studies that have explored dynamics from a longer temporal frame have tended to be quantitative in nature, relying on lifecourse surveys or focusing specifically on the careers of practice with little consideration of individuals' experiential lives. In contrast, a much smaller number of qualitative studies have explored dynamics from a retrospective lifecourse perspective. As outlined in Chapter Two, an emerging body of reconstructive-biographic practice research investigating dynamics in the context of the whole lifecourse is directing attention towards individual experiences and the role of socio-historical time and space in shaping or foreclosing the development of practice careers and patterning of energy demand over individuals' lives (cf. Hards, 2011; Henwood et al., 2015; Greene and Rau, 2016). These studies reveal that a retrospective and long-term temporal frame can reveal important insights into the dynamic, recursive interaction between socio-technical transformations and the structure and allocation of practices in daily life. Building upon this latter body of work, this study employs a temporally-extended, retrospective frame to offer insights into studying the 'multiple forms of dynamic... already existing in the world' (Walker, 2014: 49).

## Chapter Three

Within this retrospective methodological frame, the study contends with the challenge of representing multiple temporalities of analysis, namely in relation to evolution of the everyday in the context of the wider lifecourse context. In studying how concurrently evolving lives, practices and contexts interact, the methodological point of intersection between them becomes unstable. In order to deal with this challenge, two temporal scales of analysis underpin and structure this investigation; the daily path and the life path (Pred, 1981a, 1981b). These temporal frames of reference sensitised the development of a methodological approach which sought to capture the everyday in terms of larger scale biographic processes. Analysis at the scale of the life path enables a broad stroke perspective on longer term processes and mechanisms operating over the extent of biographic time, whereas the elicitation of episodic narratives and detailed documentation of practices at the scale of the daily path facilitates an exploration of contextual processes shaping practice at the micro-scale of lived experience. This method of zooming into and out of the scale of the daily path within the context of transitional periods and phases of stability over the life path enables an exploration of how longer-term patterns intersect with changes in everyday life.

### 3.2.3 A contextual, holistic approach

The review of the literature revealed considerable gaps in understanding relating to the role of context in shaping and configuring practice over time. Within much extant lifecourse focused consumption research, context has been conceptualised and measured in a limited way. Despite recent advances in the treatment of context within consumption research, most notably through the proliferation of practice-centred approaches in the field, challenging questions remain regarding how wider structural processes, including changes in social, material and institutional contexts, interact with patterns of demand over longer temporal scales (Greene and Rau, 2016). Building on existing work (cf. Hards, 2012, Henwood et al.,

2015), a contextual, practice-centred approach that seeks to advance a more nuanced and complex understanding of context as it shapes lives and conduct over biographical time was deemed the most appropriate for the purposes of this investigation.

Multiple contextual scales were investigated in the context of this study. The micro-level, routine processes were studied in tandem with the individual's larger biographic context and the macro-level social order in which this biography was situated. As discussed above, the concepts of daily and life path shed a temporal light on these two scales of analysis. Further contexts under consideration in this study include biographic, social, material and institutional. By exploring how individuals' lives and their practice careers at the micro-level are shaped by broader political, social and material contexts, the methodology seeks to reveal the intersections between multiple scales, temporalities and contexts. Operationalising this expanded and temporally-nuanced conception of context comprised a key methodological challenge that needed to be addressed. In this respect, the methodology, using multi-scalar, practice-centred research concepts and techniques, attempts to deal with the issue of capturing the complexity of the relationships between macro, meso and micro levels of social reality, as well as how these interactions play out over time. As discussed below, the biographic-narrative methodology provides a means by which to explore context in an embedded and diffuse way. A careful suite of innovative temporally-orientated and contextual methods were employed to focus this study and to help address this key challenge in representation.

### 3.2.4 An experiential approach

A challenge or gap identified concerns the consideration of domestic energy practice as a *lived experience*, that is 'how individuals understand it and how it fits into their daily lives' (Hard, 2011: 760, cf. Henwood et al., 2016). Much

## Chapter Three

extant consumption research and the subsequent policy responses have been out of touch with the lived realities, challenges and opportunities that people face in their everyday lives. To improve the effectiveness of policy, it has been suggested that research should engage with people's everyday perspectives and lived experiences, to explore how and why change occurs from the perspectives of the individuals themselves (cf. Hards et al., 2012, Butler et al., 2014, Grove et al., 2015). Focusing on the experiential, the subjective and the everyday can help to uncover processes and mechanisms that have hitherto been overlooked in consumption dynamics. Policy approaches emerging from research that focuses on the actual lived realities and experiences of individuals are likely to be more effective in bringing about necessary changes in practice (Spaargaren, 2011).

To date, most studies exploring a retrospective approach to consumption biographies have drawn upon quantitative lifecourse methods. While these have been useful for exploring broad patterns, and identifying events, they have been much less useful in uncovering casual processes and giving an account of the participant's perspective. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Two, the role of the individual in practice-theoretical demand research has been neglected. While biographic dynamics have been explored at various scales, the scale of experiential lived time has been overlooked within consumption research. A key factor in relation to this has been the methodologies that have been employed, which have been predominantly quantitative and deductive in nature.

To address these gaps, this research adopts an exploratory and inductive research approach. This includes an in-depth qualitative generation of 'thick' data that captures how experiences, contexts and practices intersect in the context of individuals' life experiences. Following this, a small-scale study was deemed the most appropriate, investigating a sample

## Chapter Three

encompassing people with differing circumstances, experiences and perceptions. As discussed in this chapter, biographic methods attend to the subjective and experiential ways in which human beings as active agents interact with structural, social and historical forces in the making of their lives (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). By foregrounding the realm of the experiential and treating individuals as experts in their own lives, biographic methods have the potential to reveal new insights into dynamics of consumption as it intersects with biographical time.

### 3.2.5 An Irish-based approach

In a European context, Irish-based consumption research is still very much in its infancy. While the recent Consensus project represents a significant advancement towards improving understandings of the dynamics of consumption among Irish householders, research in this field is still lagging. While advances in contextualised, biographic studies on energy consumption have been conducted in a UK (Groves et al., 2014, Groves et al., 2015, Henwood et al., 2015) and European context (Schäfer et al., 2012), to date to the author's knowledge no such study has been conducted in an Irish context. By providing an in-depth account of factors affecting the formation of domestic energy practices in Ireland, this research will begin to address the lacuna in Irish-based consumption research. In a European context, Irish exceptionalism in terms of the rate and pace of recent structural change offers a unique context through which to explore processes of structuration under examination. The recognition of the central role of context in configuring subjectivities and forms of action that underpins this thesis indicates that an exploration of the Irish case can reveal new and important empirical insights and provide an opportunity to test the validity of practice and biographic theories through offering a means by which to understand the dynamics everyday life. In addition, by synthesising comparative and intersecting themes and drawing lessons for

policy in this area, this research will add to the body of literature that, crucially, can be drawn upon to inform future policy directions in this field.

### 3.3 Biographic research methods

Within social scientific sustainability research more generally and demand research in particular, biographic methodologies have received growing attention as offering contextual, dynamic and experiential tools for researching everyday consumption practices (Jaeger-Erben, 2013, Hards, 2011, Hards, 2012). In this study, biographic approaches are compatible in the context of the criteria for the methodology outlined. Importantly for methodological design, biographic perspectives offer a range of temporally-oriented, experience-centred and contextual tools for studying social change (Elder and Giele, 1998, Blue et al., 2014) which can be fruitfully drawn upon by practice researchers in methodological design.

Biographic inquiry treats and studies individual lives as embedded within situated temporal, spatial and social locales. As such, biographic methods enable the social scientist to gain a detailed contextualised understanding of social life as well as revealing how pasts and futures impact upon the present (West and Merrill, 2009). As Chamberlayne et al. (2002: 2) explain: 'biographies are rooted in an analysis of social history and the wellsprings of individual personality, [they] reach backward and forward in time, documenting processes and experiences of social change'. Providing 'a sophisticated stock of interpretive procedures for relating the personal and the social' biographic methods have the potential to offer fruitful pathways for structurationist empirical investigations (Chamberlayne et al. 2000: 2). Starting from the assumption that macro abstractions 'find their embodiment and realisation in the episodes of everyday life' (Sztompka, 2008: 35), biographic inquiry seeks to connect agency and structure, the personal and the social, but looks to ground these ideas more firmly in the

'bedrock reality of everyday life' (Butler et al., 2012: 3). A practice-orientated biographic research framework as a means of approaching the study of everyday life may serve to facilitate the methodological investigation of the intersections between lives and practices.

### 3.3.1 Principles of biographic inquiry

Situated within the context of a wider cultural or subjective turn in the social sciences, the biographic 'turn' has seen a movement away from positivist forms of inquiry towards epistemological and ontological orientations emphasising the socially constructed nature of reality (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, Andrews et al., 2004a). Following this paradigmatic shift, personal and social meanings, experiences and understandings have gained importance as substantive topics of investigation. These developments have been accompanied by an ongoing search for new methods of inquiry and research tools that can prise open the diverse dimensions of everyday lives (Chamberlayne et al., 2000). Although diverse and heterogeneous, biographic approaches share some key heuristics or characteristics (adapted from Chamberlayne, 2000 and Jaeger Erben, 2013):

- Doing biographic research means to 'enter' someone's life. The experiences and practical knowledge and understanding of individuals take precedence and most biographic approaches prioritise inductive grounded theory analysis.
- Biographic research focuses on the everyday and experiential as the scale in which social change can be explored.
- Time and temporality feature centrally within biographic research methods.
- Context is integral in biographic research, and biographic methodological tools seek to link micro and macro scales of analysis.

## Chapter Three

- Biographic studies generally employ qualitative, ethnographic methods, such as narrative interviewing, diaries and participant observation, to investigate interactions between experiences and contexts. The field of biographic methods offers a range of conceptual and procedural tools for researching individuals' lived experiences and how these change over time.
- Small sample sizes are generally employed in biographic research. The in-depth exploration of a small number of cases is recommended to yield thick, experiential and contextual data.

How deep and far reaching the process of entering an individual's life is, depends on the research questions and the temporal scope being investigated. In this respect, biographic research is conducted at various scales of temporal analysis, from the retrospective life-story scale to a focus on specific life stages or transitions as they have recently been encountered or are occurring in situ (Jaeger-Erben, 2013). As discussed, in this study the retrospective method was deemed the most appropriate for addressing the research questions outlined.

### 3.3.2 Narrative inquiry

The field of narrative inquiry represents a subfield of the broader field of biographic research. Narrative inquiry encompasses the same general principles of biographic approaches and incorporates some additional features, most notably an emphasis on the centrality of story or narrative as a means by which the self is experienced and structured. In this respect, the field of narrative inquiry refers to a broad set of biographic methodological approaches that emphasises the importance of stories that underlie our experience for enabling us to find meaning and intelligibility in the world. Narrative is understood as a ubiquitous means by which self-

## Chapter Three

reflexive individuals make sense of their experiences and how they unfold over time:

‘Without narratives our experiences, thoughts and actions would not have the coherence that they do and we would not have the capacity for self-reflection. A non-narrative subject is an inchoate subject, both to itself and others... narratives are tools for self-reflection, for seeking patterns (I would say “meaning”) in experience and action’ (Menary, 2008: 9).

Because of the ubiquity of narrative in the human experience, individuals are considered expert narrators. Indeed, from a very early age, human beings engage with narrative to make sense of their experiences in the world. Narrative inquiry employs story-generating techniques to investigate the life experiences and meanings from the perspectives of the individuals concerned. Indeed, Bourdieu recognised the value of narrative-biographic accounts for revealing the dispositions and evolution of habitus (Barrett, 2015). While there has been a tendency within qualitative research to suppress long-winded narrative answers, and see them as problematic in the analysis process, narrative inquiry seeks explicitly to focus on these aspects of story as they are told for revealing internal structures of understanding and thinking. In this respect, narrative material is a window by which to explore inner dialectics and dispositions as well as wider social norms and contexts (Andrews et al., 2004b).

Among the benefits of integrating narrative into the practice-centred methodological approach is the potential to respond to calls for greater attention to human subjectivity and agency in practice inquiry. In offering an experience-centred and contextual approach to investigating practice

## Chapter Three

biographies, the field of narrative inquiry offers a variety of research tools that can refocus attention on these dimensions, including the elicitation of personal narratives as a means of assessing the meaning and cultural dimensions of practices (Greene and Westerhoff, 2015).

In addition to providing insight into perceptions and disposition, narratives also offer a means by which to explore broader socio-cultural contexts and how these intersect with subjectivity and action. In this respect, narratives exist at various scales from the individual, including biographic accounts and stories of one's lifecourse, to the collective, incorporating broader societal conventions, norms and understandings about appropriate conduct (Squire, 2013). Analysing the way in which lives are storied in relation to the person's embedment in time and place is central to narrative inquiry (Riessman, 2008). To this end, narrative is understood as a mode of communicating and traversing fluid interpersonal, social and cultural positionalities. Narrative analysts conceptualise personal stories as a window to wider social narratives, revealing as much about socio-cultural and historical processes as they do about individuals. Personal autobiographies are always situated in a socio-historical location and narratives are a means by which to explore the intersections between individuals' lives and context. As Riley and Hawe (2005) highlight:

'narrative methods may give new and deeper insights into the complexity of practice contexts ...narrative analysis adds further insights into 'contexts of practice' because it studies the world through the eyes of the storyteller and applies a theory of time.'  
(Riley and Hawe, 2005: 4).

## Chapter Three

In addition to offering an experience-centred and contextual approach to social analysis, temporality is a central feature of narrative. As Andrews indicates, '(h)uman experience too is arranged and bound in time. Human actors cannot but engage with time, and therefore narrative, in their formation of desires, intentions, expectations and memories' (2004: 6). The emphasis on experiential time enables an exploration of dynamics of practices via the lived experiences of practitioners. Personal changes and the events precipitating and following them are generally told in the form of narrative, in which accounts are organised around a plot containing a sequence of causally-related events (Ramirez-Valles, 1999). Narratives provide first hand experiential reflection on causality from the perspective of the interviewees themselves and offer a means to capture 'the cause and consequence thinking' that governs individuals' actions (Rile and Hawe, 2005: 226). The concepts of turning points, 'complicating actions' (Labov and Waletzky, 1967) as well as 'transformative moments' (Hards, 2011) are used to denote disruptions to normality and transitional periods (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). In relation to this, a key benefit of a narrative approach is the treatment of the entire data relating to an individual's life story as a whole. This is extremely important in the context of this research as preservation of events, experiences and sequence of causality, as they are presented by participants, is crucial to the experience-centred approach to investigating change. In this respect, a narrative approach can help to advance understandings of the dynamics of practice, including how and why practices change over time (Hards, 2011).

The field of narrative inquiry is characterised by a diversity of methodological techniques and approaches. Elliott (2005a) distinguishes between realist and social constructivist perspectives. Realist perspectives treat the interview as an opportunity to obtain detailed information from respondents. Social constructivist perspectives place more emphasis on the elicitation of experiences, meanings, understandings and perceptions.

## Chapter Three

Within this study, both perspectives are valid as the focus is on eliciting meaning and dispositions as well as performances and actions. Furthermore, different approaches focus on the elicitation of different types of narratives. Andrews (2004) identifies three key types of narrative: event, experience and socio-cultural narratives. Event narratives refer to stories about events such as significant or mundane life events and transitions. Experience-centred narratives denote stories about individuals' daily life experiences. Socio-cultural narratives refer to the wider 'canonical' narratives embedded within individuals' subjective accounts. However, while this conceptual separation has proven useful for the purposes of theoretical clarity, these boundaries do not hold up in the empirical analysis of lived realities. Rather, event, experience and socio-cultural narratives interact symbiotically in the context of individuals' stories about their lives. In this study, all three types of narratives were elicited in participants' accounts.

Narrative methods also range from unstructured to more structured approaches. At one end of the spectrum are approaches such as the Biographical Narrative Interview Method which advocate a very passive role on the behalf of the researcher. Wengraf (2001) argues that a narrative interview should be completely participant-led, with control relinquished from the interviewer to the participant with little to no intervention on behalf of the researcher during the interview process. Indeed, narrative interviews generally do not include an interview schedule other than a general focus on a theme or topic. For Hards (2012), one of the values of a narrative approach is that *a priori* categories are not imposed. Rather, participants are empowered to select information they see as relevant. On the other hand, more structured approaches to narrative interviewing include the use of interview schedules but maintain a focus on the elicitation of personal narratives and stories about experiences in the production of data. Whether an unstructured or structured approach is

## Chapter Three

taken will depend on what the researcher seeks to uncover in the context of the research questions under investigation. As discussed below, the Problem-Centred Interview (PCI) framework enables the incorporation of a mixture of styles of narrative interviewing into the one research process. Due to the broad and expansive focus of the research questions underpinning this thesis, this integrated approach was deemed the most suitable approach for the investigation.

### 3.3.3 Problem-centred Interview (PCI) framework

The PCI is a form of ethnographic interviewing that emerged from Germany where it was developed by Witzel for a project investigating young people's experiences of unemployment after leaving school. In studying this problem, Witzel wanted to investigate the intersections between young people's biographic experiences and wider contexts. However, in seeking to explore specific mechanisms and causal process on this defined topic, he found that most narrative interviewing techniques advocating little intervention on the behalf of the researcher were unsuitable for the investigation. To address this lacuna, he developed the problem-centred interview framework for conducting biographic-narrative inquiry (Witzel and Reiter, 2012).

The PCI offers a structured, rigorous, yet flexible approach to conducting biographic-narrative research. While some have questioned whether the PCI can truly constitute a novel and distinctive methodology (cf. Gubrium, 2013, Witzel and Reiter, 2014), in the context of this study it offers a useful and structured framework for conducting multi-modal biographic research. The most significant feature of the PCI is that it incorporates a range of different narrative interviewing approaches into the interviewing process. Incorporating the facets and principles of narrative inquiry, the PCI combines the advantages of flexible, non-directive questions with more

## Chapter Three

focused interview techniques during data collection phase (Witzel and Reiter, 2012). This structured yet open approach was deemed most appropriate in the context of this study as it helped to overcome the 'fallacy of non-intervention' that was considered an issue if an unstructured narrative approach, such as the Biographic Narrative Interview Method, was employed. Given that the study focused on a specific problem or topic of everyday consumption practice, an opportunity to question specifically on certain practices and their transformation over time was considered necessary. The elusive nature of the research topic necessitated a triangulated approach encompassing unstructured and semi-structured techniques to collate data on personal biographies and contexts as well as practice-specific transitions and experiences.

Following the experience-centred focus of narrative inquiry, the PCI approach prioritises the everyday and practical knowledge of individuals as the locus of social analysis. In doing so, it prioritises narrative accounts that stay true to participants' experiences and life worlds while also providing room for a more focused and in-depth exploration of the topic under investigation. Here the focus is on the reconstruction of meaning and experience on all crucial aspects of the research topic/problem involving the depth and breadth that is appropriate for the research aims.

The epistemological challenge of the PCI is to create a discursive dialogue between the researcher's prior knowledge and the respondent's practical knowledge. In keeping with an interpretivist narrative inquiry perspective, the PCI recognises that knowledge is always co-produced collaboratively between the researcher and participant throughout the research process. The discursive-dialogic co-production of knowledge results from the interaction between respondents' practical knowledge and the researcher's prior knowledge which merge and intersect throughout the data

## Chapter Three

production process. This iterative and ongoing process shapes and configures both the participants' and researcher's awareness and understanding on the topic.

Throughout the research process, the researcher's role is to develop and implement research strategies that optimise participants' opportunities to explicate their experiences and knowledge on the topic being investigated. This is even more important when considering that often the research context will be the first time in which respondents reflect upon their lives and its contexts in a systematic way, especially when the topic under investigation is the taken-for-granted realm of practical action and knowledge. Considering this, it is recommended that the PCI approach goes beyond traditional interviews to incorporate multiple avenues by which participants can express themselves. Supplementing narrative interviews with additional research tools such as demographic surveys and structured visual-biographic data collection methods are recommended to ensure a holistic and rigorous investigation into a defined topic. Visual-biographic and lifecourse tools, in aiding the identification of significant biographic experiences and sequences, are useful for structuring large amounts of thick, in-depth data emerging during narratives interviews (Hards, 2011, Witzel and Reiter, 2012)

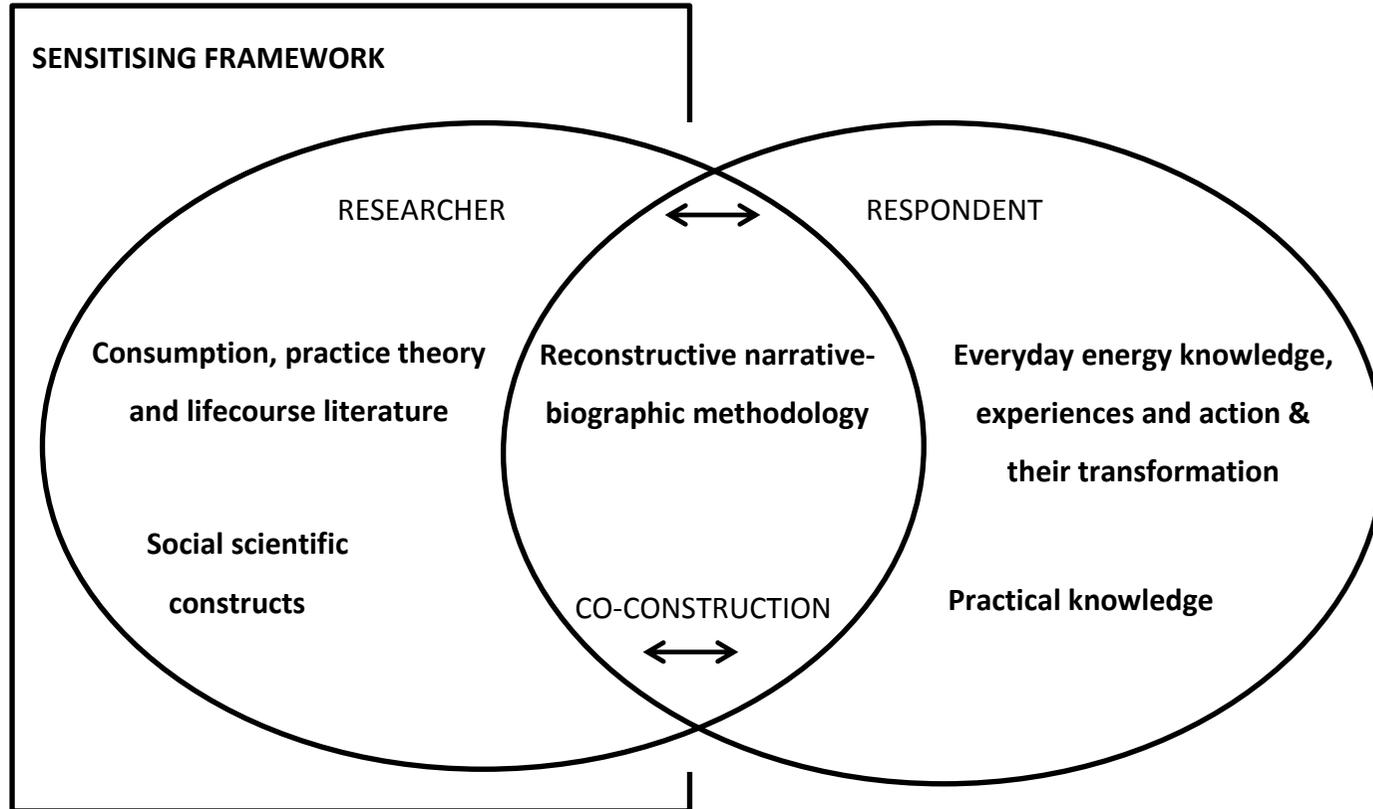
### 3.3.4 Prior knowledge and researcher positionality

Within qualitative inquiry, researcher positionality has received considerable attention as an area of methodological process requiring explicit reflection and explication (Silverman, 2014). Biographic inquiry, given its emphasis on life story and the elicitation of interpretive, subjective and practical knowledge, is a case where positionality takes on a central focus (Chamberlayne, et al., 2000). The PCI approach encourages 'radical openness' in the research process and a structured guideline for how a

### Chapter Three

researcher can systematically disclose their perspective and positionality is provided by Witzel and Reiter (2012). The researcher is invited to uncover and be cognisant of his/her own preconceptions and knowledge and how this will interact with the research process. The development of a synthesising framework which includes reflections on the intersection of the researcher and participants' prior knowledge in the research process is considered crucial in this regard.

Witzel and Reiter distinguish between different types of prior knowledge including: every day, contextual and research knowledge. Everyday knowledge refers to the knowledge garnered by the researcher through his/her lived experience in the world. Research knowledge refers to the knowledge obtained during the literature review process, including the theoretical and synthesising concepts underpinning the investigation. Contextual knowledge refers to knowledge on the broader context in which respondents' lives are embedded. In this study, contextual knowledge included background information on Ireland's developmental history, as well as broader contextual knowledge on wider societal transformations in practices, such as driving statistics, development plans and changing gender relations and norms in Ireland. Participants often had more contextual knowledge than me, given they were typically older and had accumulated more life experience. As the research process progressed and contextual information emerged from participants' accounts, this information was investigated and researched further. As such an iterative co-productive dialogue between my prior knowledge as interviewer and the participants' practical knowledge led to an iterative production of knowledge during the research process (see Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1: Interaction between researcher prior knowledge and respondent's practical knowledge**

## Chapter Three

Introducing the metaphor of the researcher as well-informed traveller, the synthesising framework sets out a preliminary 'road map' that guides where the research will go within a specific territory. For exploratory research, where very little is known about the topic and the risk of transgression is particularly high, this road map is especially useful for guiding fieldwork and keeping the study on track. The synthesising framework is used to facilitate and guide many of the steps throughout the research process, from setting sample criteria to designing the context and guide for interviews to the analytical process. In effect, it keeps a thread of rigour and connectedness between what could otherwise become an unwieldy and difficult to manage multi-modal research process. Furthermore, in ensuring that all forms of prior knowledge are acknowledged and can be used in a synthesising way, the PCI synthesising framework approach 'should guarantee that the everyday, contextual and...research knowledge of respondents has the chance to enter a dialogue with that of the interviewers' (Witzel and Reiter, 2012: 47). In doing so, the PCI offers a focused approach to investigating a specific topic in a structured, expansive and in-depth way.

While the synthesising frame is reflected upon in advance of fieldwork, it is iteratively engaged with and updated throughout the research and analytical process. In this sense, knowledge is produced through an iterative, assimilative, collaborative method. As the researcher gains new knowledge in the co-production process, his/her task is to move iteratively between inductive insights and deductive concepts as they engage in an ongoing process of analysis and research. If the data speaks to a particular theoretical concept this concept can then be further investigated and applied. This process of reflective iteration necessitates that the researcher is very well read on concepts and literature. As such, a disadvantage of this approach in comparison to a deductive approach is that it demands much

## Chapter Three

more of the researcher as well as of participants. In other words, it is more labour intensive.

The PCI framework developed for this research process includes a three stage methodological process. The structure and implementation of this is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

### 3.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological criteria that were considered in developing and designing the research approach. It introduced the field of biographical research methods as offering a fruitful means of addressing existing gaps. In offering a phenomenological, contextual and dynamic means through which to explore change in practice, a qualitative biographic-narrative methodology offers a means by which to exploring the intersections between structure and agency in individuals lives. The principles and assumptions underpinning biographic-narrative research methods were discussed and the problem-centred interview framework approach comprising the methodology was introduced. The following chapter discusses how the problem-centred, biographic-narrative methodology was implemented in this study.

## 4. Chapter Four: Applying biographic-narrative methods

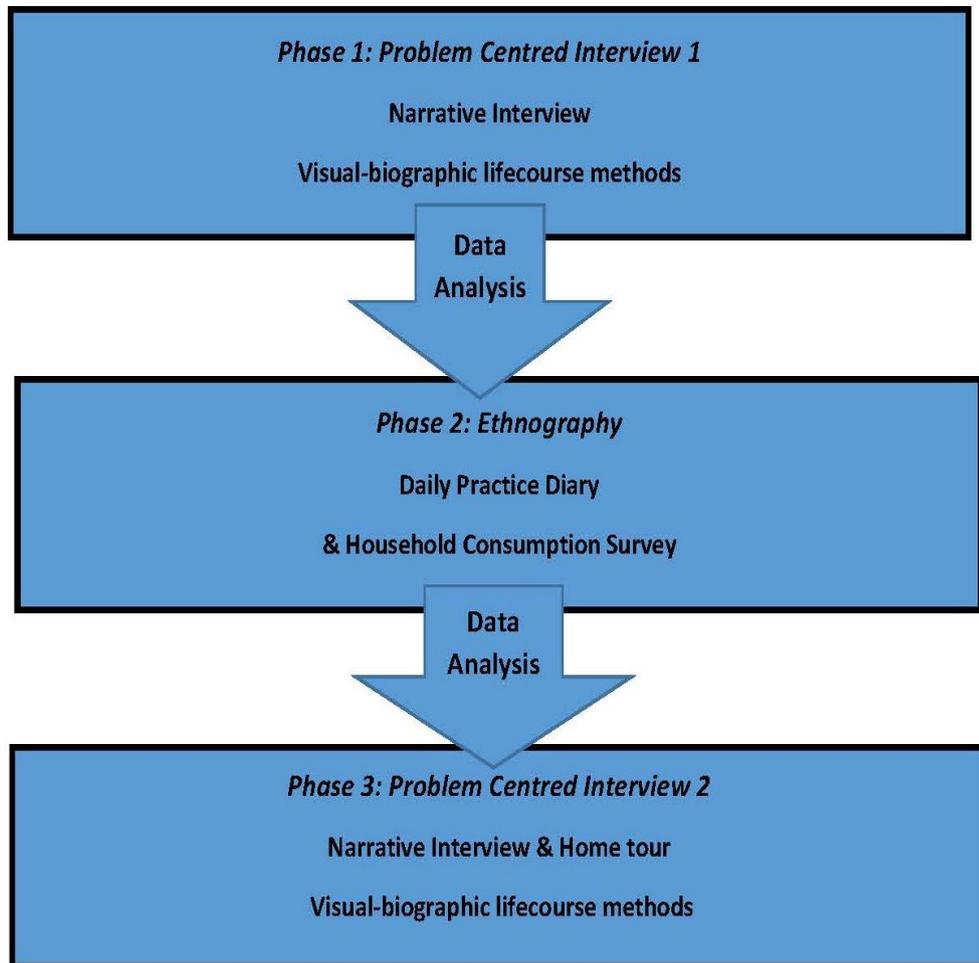
### 4.1 Introduction

Chapter Three outlined the key principles, methodological and ontological underpinnings of the methodological approach. This chapter details the implementation and application of this methodology in the research context, explaining how the various methods were employed at each stage of the research process and reflecting on the strengths and limitations of the approach. The three-stage research process is outlined in Figure 4.1. Biographic research encounters some key ethical challenges, and the way that these were addressed is also considered. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the advantages and limitations of this approach in the context of this investigation.

### 4.2 Sample

Narrative-biographic research commonly employs a purposive and theoretical sampling format whereby the aim is not to produce representative results but to gain an in-depth, experiential understanding into a phenomenon. Theoretical sampling is suitable for exploratory, qualitative research, allowing for much more flexibility and iteration through the research process than in most quantitative designs. As Mason (1999: 100) outlines:

‘Theoretical or purposive sampling is a set of procedures where the researcher manipulates their analysis, theory, and sampling activities interactively during the research process, to a much greater degree than in statistical sampling’.



**Figure 4.1: Overview of the methodological process**

## Chapter Five

In this study, a theoretical sampling format facilitated the inclusion of respondents with diverse lifecourse circumstances and levels of environmental engagement. The research involved a subset of participants who participated in a recent cross-sectional survey of household consumption in Ireland as part of the large-scale CONSENSUS, project (for more information see [www.consensus.ie](http://www.consensus.ie) and Davies et al., 2014). This representative survey gathered baseline data examining householder attitudes and practices of household consumption in Ireland. Sampling from this population offered various benefits, including access to previously collected socio-demographic information and data on reported environmental attitudes, motivations and actions.

A diverse sample was sought and sampling criteria included age, gender, geographic location and reported levels of environmental concern and environmental practice (See Appendix 1 for an overview of some key characteristics). The rationale for this emphasis on diversity was guided by the literature review and identification of socio-demographic characteristics worthy of investigation. There were several criteria for inclusion in the sample, including:

- **Environmental concern and practice:** A key gap in the literature concerns the energy practice careers of 'ordinary' people. For example, Hards (2011, 2012) explores biographic processes with samples of pro-environmentally committed individuals. However, a gap concerns individuals who do not readily identify as pro-environmental in this way. Hards (2011: 308) recommends that further work explore the biographies of individuals who are not engaged with sustainable practices. Studying the biographic trajectories of ordinary individuals may offer different insights into experiences and contexts of change. This is particularly important for uncovering why people engage in and maintain environmentally

## Chapter Five

intensive practices, an area with major policy implications. In this study, participants were selected based on their reported environmental attitude, motivations and actions, and ranged from unconcerned and unengaged with environmental issues to very concerned and engaged.

- **Participants are over 40 years of age.** Individuals over this age would likely have witnessed significant contextual changes in Ireland during their lifecourses and have generated enough life experience to offer in-depth experiential and contextual data. Participants ages ranged from 48 to 89 years; they were subsequently categorised into four key age groups (see Table 4.1)
- **Gender:** As outlined in Chapter Two (Section 2.6.2), to date, gender has been sidelined in research on energy practices. In order to explore intersections of gender and energy, an equal number of seven men and seven women participated in this study.
- **Income:** Recent research has suggested that practices may be differentiated along social class lines (Plessz et al., 2014). In order to explore social differentiation in this respect, a range of different incomes were included in the study.
- **Participants lived in Galway or Dublin in an urban or rural setting:** Each of these settings helped to provide further insight into role of context in practice. Galway and Dublin have different developmental trajectories and urban and rural environments have different dynamics. Galway located on the West of Ireland (see Figure 4.2) experienced a relatively slow pace of development throughout the twentieth century, whereas Dublin, constituting Ireland's capital city experienced earlier and faster pace of economic and infrastructural investment and development.

Chapter Five

Born	Today's 70sand80s 1925 – 40	Today's 60s 1941-55	Today's 50s 1955 - 70	Today's 40s 1970-85
Male	Tony (77)	Henry (70) Frank (68)	Michael (59) Seamus (57) James (56)	Daniel (48)
Female	Billie (89) Grace (83)	Claire (64) Martha (62)	Bridget (57) Triona (53)	Sara (48)

Table 4.1: Participant's characteristics by age and gender



**Figure 4.2: Location of fieldwork**

In keeping with a biographic research approach, a small sample size was chosen as the appropriate scale to facilitate an in-depth and holistic analysis of each case. The final sample size included fourteen participants. While initially it was intended to include a sample size of twenty participants, this was revisited half way through the research process and the decision to reduce the sample size to fourteen participants was arrived at. This sample size was deemed appropriate to provide an adequate number of cases to ensure that a diverse range of biographic circumstances, including age, gender and modes of practice, were included, whilst still allowing capacity for the necessary depth of participation and analysis given the amount of data generated per case (see Table 4.2). In addition, the inclusion of individuals who experienced different external circumstances in the

## Chapter Five

evolution of their lifecourses was important for revealing the effect of socio-historical location on participants' lives. As such, the sample was spread out over four age groups to reflect potentially different cohort experiences. In addition, five people took part in the pilot phase, indicating that a total of nineteen individuals engaged with the methodology.

Another benefit of sampling from the Consensus survey sample was that the contact details of a group of participants willing to take part in further research was made available to me. From this pool of approximately 150 people, a list of twenty-six participants was selected based on their correspondence with the sampling criteria. Initial emails and posted letters were sent to these participants. This included a summary of the findings from the Consensus survey and a letter inviting them to partake in a new study exploring domestic consumption and the lifecourse (see Appendix 2). A detailed participant information sheet outlining details of the study and what participation would entail was also included (see Appendix 3). Participants were invited to reply by email, letter or phone within seven working days to accept or decline the invitation to participate. This process was repeated until a sufficient sample size had been recruited. Due to the iterative and intensive nature of the data collection process, which necessitated ongoing analysis alongside the research process, sampling took part in two key stages. The Galway fieldwork took place between April and June 2014 whereas the Dublin fieldwork took place in October and November 2014. All interviews were conducted in participants' homes.

### 4.3 Implementing the methodology

The methodology comprised three distinct yet interconnected stages (see Table 4.2). First, biographic-narrative interviewing involved eliciting detailed accounts of individuals' wider biographic history and careers of domestic practice. Lifecourse and practice timelines complemented the

## Chapter Five

interview, providing a visual-descriptive reconstruction of individuals' lives and facilitating a detailed discussion of the intersections between biographic context and everyday practice. Following this, participants took part in a two-week semi-structured practice diary task in which they recorded information on their domestic practice. Finally, follow-up interviews involved further exploration of participants' routines at previous life stages as well as transformations of their practice over time. Table 4.2 outlines the three phases of the research process, the scale of analysis configured within each and the data generated during each stage of the research process. The implementation of each of these phases is discussed in detail in this section. However, three months prior to fieldwork, a pilot study was first conducted to test and develop further the implementation of the methodology.

### 4.3.1 Pilot study

The main purpose of the pilot study was to test the implementation of the various methods and possible means by which they could be analysed. The integrated multi-modal PCI methodology, incorporating the combination of structured and semi-structured interviewing techniques, as well as the timelines, practice graphs, diary and house tour interview were tested on five acquaintances. These comprised four women ranging from the age 41 to 91 years old and one man aged 39 years (see Appendix 4 for details of pilot participants). The pilot study took place during the period November 2013 to February 2014. In addition, to gain a deeper appreciation for what participation entailed, I tested the methodology on myself by taking part in an auto-pilot.

Chapter Five

Phases	Methods employed	Data generated
<p><b>Phase 1:</b></p> <p><b>Problem Centred Interview 1</b></p> <p><i>Life path, Daily Path</i></p>	<p>Unstructured narrative</p> <p>Semi-structured narrative</p> <p>Biographic timelines</p> <p>Practice graphs</p>	<p>Narrative life history</p> <p>Narrative practice history</p> <p>Biographic timeline</p> <p>Practice career graphs</p> <p>Postscript</p> <p>Reflective field notes</p>
<p><b>Phase 2:</b></p> <p><b>Diary and Survey</b></p> <p><i>Daily Path</i></p>	<p>2 week daily practice diary</p> <p>Demographic survey</p> <p>Practice survey</p>	<p>Daily path performance</p> <p>Demographic data</p> <p>Survey data on consumption attitudes and practice</p>
<p><b>Phase 3:</b></p> <p><b>Problem Centred Interview 2</b></p> <p><i>Life path, Daily path</i></p>	<p>Semi-structured narrative</p> <p>House walking interview</p>	<p>Narrative of daily practice</p> <p>Narrative practice history</p> <p>Material contexts of practice</p> <p>Postscript</p> <p>Reflective field notes</p>

Table 4.2: Phases of research and data generated

## Chapter Five

The pilot study provided an immense learning curve and a crucial opportunity for me to refine my practice as researcher and co-constructor of knowledge. The insights gained during and the amendments made following this process are outlined below:

- **The benefits of a phased, multi-modal methodological process:** Due to the vast amount of biographical detail that participants were required to recall and bring together during the interview process, an extended methodological approach that offered multiple opportunities for participants' stories to be told was considered crucial. The three-phase research process entailing a combination of verbal, written and visual data generating techniques were useful in helping individuals work through the vast amount of data and information generated and discussed.
- **Shortening the diary phase from one month to two weeks:** Initially it was intended to complete the diary phase for one month. However, it emerged during the pilot study that most participants experienced fatigue with this length of time. As such, following the pilot study the diary phase was reduced to two weeks, with the option of one week for those who expressed resistance to maintaining a diary for a fortnight.
- **Reordering the location of specific methods and techniques in the research process:** While initially I gave participants the practice life graphs to fill out in their own time during the diary phase, upon feedback I learned that many individuals found this challenging and would have preferred to complete the graphs together during the interview process. As such, following the pilot the life graph drawing technique was thread through stage two of the first interview. In addition, during the pilot study the house-video tour was incorporated into interview one. This was later moved to interview two as it became apparent that this interview provided a more practical context in which to complete the home tour.

- **Refining interviewing techniques and skills:** The pilot study provided the first context in which to test and implement the initial translation of research questions into interview techniques and questions. In light of participant feedback a number of changes were made to the questioning and format of the interview schedule. The pilot also provided an important context in which to test out narrative generating techniques and exploring the way people respond to narrative questioning differently. Pilot interview transcripts were listened to in order to study and refine my interviewing techniques. Following this experience, I honed my interview skills which were continually worked upon and improved during the main field work stage.
- **The importance of ongoing iterative analysis:** The pilot study experience brought into relief the crucial importance of ongoing reflection and writing detailed field notes and memos throughout the research process. Different memo writing and analytical techniques were developed and tested during this period.

#### 4.3.2 Generating primary data: Three phases

Once the refinements and amendments had been made following the pilot study, the main phase of field work commenced. The final, three-phased methodological process is detailed in Table 4.2. The implementation of each of these phases is described in detail in this section.

##### *4.3.2.1 Phase one: Problem-centred interviews*

Phase one comprised the first PCI interview. Each problem-centered interview was broken down into several stages to enable the incorporation of different narrative styles and tools into the interview process. Interview one was divided into three stages and incorporated unstructured and structured narrative interview techniques and a range of visual-biographic

tools to reconstruct with participants their biographic experience and practice careers over time (see Table 4.3). Adopting a problem-centred approach to interviewing, the resulting 'biographical' format incorporated an opening narrative component, followed by a semi-structured exploration of key consumption themes. Three stages of phase one included: 1) description of the self and life story; 2) exploration of energy practice careers; 3) reviewing data generated and debriefing on diary task. Prior to the commencement of stage one, participants signed consent forms. Overall, phase one lasted between one and a half and five hours.

### **Stage one: Self construction and life story**

Part one of the interview followed an unstructured life-story narrative format in relation to two key narrative questions. Interviewees were first invited to give a description of themselves today. Providing an opportunity for participants to define themselves, their interests and the practices they see as characterising them was important for eliciting individuals' conception of identity and sense of self. This addition was included about half way through data collection as it emerged through my ongoing reflection that it would be a useful strategy. Prior to this, identity statements were collated throughout the auto-biographical narrative to form a picture of the individuals' construction of self.

Following this opening question, participants were invited to tell their 'life story'. During this phase, individuals detailed narrative accounts of their lives and I did not interrupt the flow of their story. Following this, further follow-up narrative-generating questions were asked as required to generate a complete view of the individuals' life story. While some individuals narrated freely without the need for much prompting, others required more considerable prompting throughout.

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Focus/aim</b>
<b><i>Self-construction and life story</i></b>	Narrative opening, story generating questions; Structuring by interviewee; Passive role for interviewer	Self-identity construction; Biographic backdrop
<b><i>Practice biographies</i></b>	Semi-structured exploration of practice biographies; Bidirectional dialogue; Active role for interviewer	Evolution of practice dispositions and conduct; Generating career patterns at life path and daily paths; Exploration of contexts and processes of change
<b><i>Reviewing data generated and debrief on diary</i></b>	Semi-structured review of data and insights generated; Explanation of ethnographic stage	Clarifying insights; Generating additional data; Preparation for stage two

Table 4.3: Structure of PCI 1

The process of constructing a picture of an individual's life history was facilitated with a participatory timeline drawing activity. As the participant narrated, I jotted down notes about key concerns, goals, life events and transitions discussed. Following their verbal narrative, the interviewee and I worked together to visualise and construct a biographical timeline. This timeline documented the key phases, events and transitions in the concurrent life domains identified as salient for participations, including family, work, and residency. Figure 4.3 provides an example of a participant's timeline generated during this stage. This phase of the interview generally lasted between sixty and ninety minutes. However, for one participant it lasted for over three hours.

### **Stage two: Exploration of energy practice careers**

Once a holistic picture of the individual's biography had been established and represented visually on the timeline, the next phase of the interview involved looking back over the participant's life again to focus specifically on capturing and representing dynamics in their energy consumption practices over time. Unlike stage one, this part of the interview followed a semi-structured narrative format. An interview plan and schedule, theoretically informed by insights from lifecourse and social practice perspectives, guided the discussion about changes in participants' routines over time (see Appendix 5). Each life stage and turning point identified in the first stage of the interview was explored once again through an analysis of the exemplar practices. Narration generating techniques and questions were incorporated as individuals were encouraged to detail concrete experiences and stories in their response to the themes and questions discussed. While the aim of this interview was to explore dynamics in everyday practice in a holistic sense, a focus on the key exemplar practices structured the discussion.



## Chapter Five

Visual biographical tools in the form of participatory life-graph drawing activities (cf. Hards, 2012, Howell, 2013) were employed during this stage of the interview to promote reflection and recall on the key exemplar practices under investigation, namely laundry, car driving and food practice. During the construction of the graphs, the turning points, transitions and milestones drawn by the individual and their exemplar practice careers were discussed in detail, generating rich accounts of participants' practices over time.

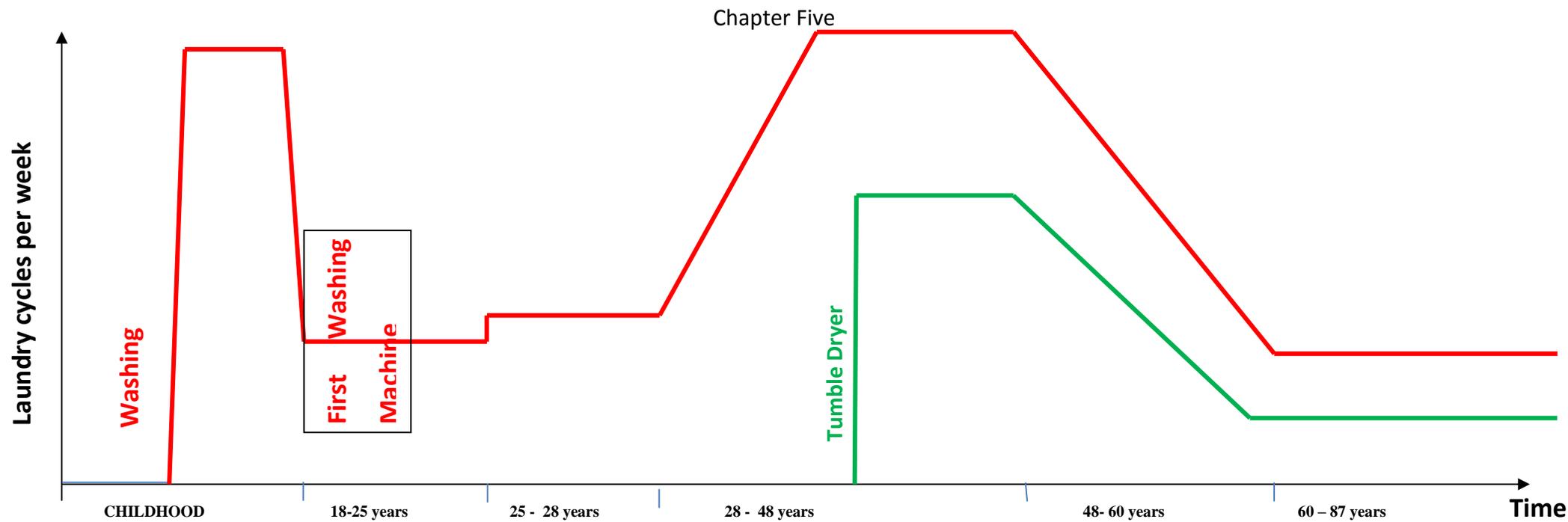
Participants were presented with a blank graph and asked to draw their level of use or action in relation to the practice in question over time. The x-axis represented time, whereas the y-axis represented their level of action. Individuals were reminded that the goal of the graph was to capture the main trends in their careers and that they didn't need to remember every single detail. As stated in the introduction to this exercise: 'The 'graph' is a pictorial guide rather than a real graph. I'm just looking for an idea of when and why your practice has changed in your life, and whether the changes have been gradual or sudden; what factors lead to it being high or low, steady or fluctuating.' Under the visual graph line drawing, individuals were encouraged to reflect on the practical realities of each stage of their practice career as well as to reflect on any opinions, norms or meanings they associated with that period. These categories were included to prompt individuals to reflect on their practical action and experiences further.

Graphs representing car-use followed Hard's (2012) approach. In these graphs, individuals were requested to draw lines representing their use over time. In addition, individuals were prompted to record how other modes of mobility intersected with their car-driving career. Like the car-driving graph, the laundry graph focused on overall level of use over time. Individuals were

## Chapter Five

asked to draw a graphic sketch representing their average number of laundry cycles per week over their laundry career, whether these were administered by themselves or another person in their lives. In the practicalities section, they were directed to reflect on 'the number of laundry cycles per week, the number of people's clothes being washed and dried and their relationship to you, the type and model of washing machine/dryer (if you can remember), the type of settings you used, the type of detergent, how you dried your clothes'. Figure 4.4 and figure 4.5 illustrate a participant's laundry and a participant's car-driving careers represented on graphs.

The food graphs were more difficult to design and implement and required more refinement over time. It was decided that food graphs would initially focus on consumption of high energy food produce, namely meat and dairy. However, after implementing this with several pilot participants it emerged that, for most individuals', consumption of these foods remained stable throughout their lifecourse. As such, a new food practice graph task was designed. This graph included three key lines focusing on different domains of food practice, namely consumption, procurement and wastage. Here individuals were asked to think about any changes they recalled in each domain as they moved through their lifecourse. This proved to generate much more discussion on the changing contexts of food provision and how this intersected with changing temporal rhythms and connections between other practices in the home. These findings are discussed in detail in the context chapter. An example of the food graph is shown in Figure 4.6.



		CHILDHOOD 1928-1946	18-25 years 1946-53	25 - 28 years 1953-56	28 - 48 years 1956-1976	48- 60 years 1976- 1988	60 – 87 years 1988- 2014
Feelings, opinions, values etc	Practicalities	All handwashing by hand; washing every day except Sunday; women's job - I started helping out at age 7. We used a big galvanised bath, boiled water and wash board and a clothes line over the range for drying	Moved into town; lived in rented accommodation of BandB I worked in with new washing machine; a lot still hand washed; Clothes dried naturally	Rented flat with husband; washing machine provided; washing for husband and myself; drying naturally	Children born; washing increases gradually with growing family; washing every day; No disposable nappies; cloth nappies boiled More synthetic clothes, gradually reducing handwashing Buy a tumble dryer late 1970s	Children start leaving home; gradually reducing washing and drying; All washing now done by washing machine; Reducing reliance on tumble dryer Mixed between natural and tumble drying	Just myself and my husband again; washing for him and myself 2-3 times a week; Mixture between natural and tumble drying Replaced machines twice in this time Occasional increase in washing when grandchildren staying
	values etc	Work was all carried out by women - the men were outside on the farm, Family of 10	The B&B had all the mod cons and it made life a lot easier!		A huge relief having the washing machine	This happened quite gradually so the change wasn't noticed so much	Recently purchased an energy efficient washing machine to reduce impact and cost

Figure 4.4: Female participant's laundry career

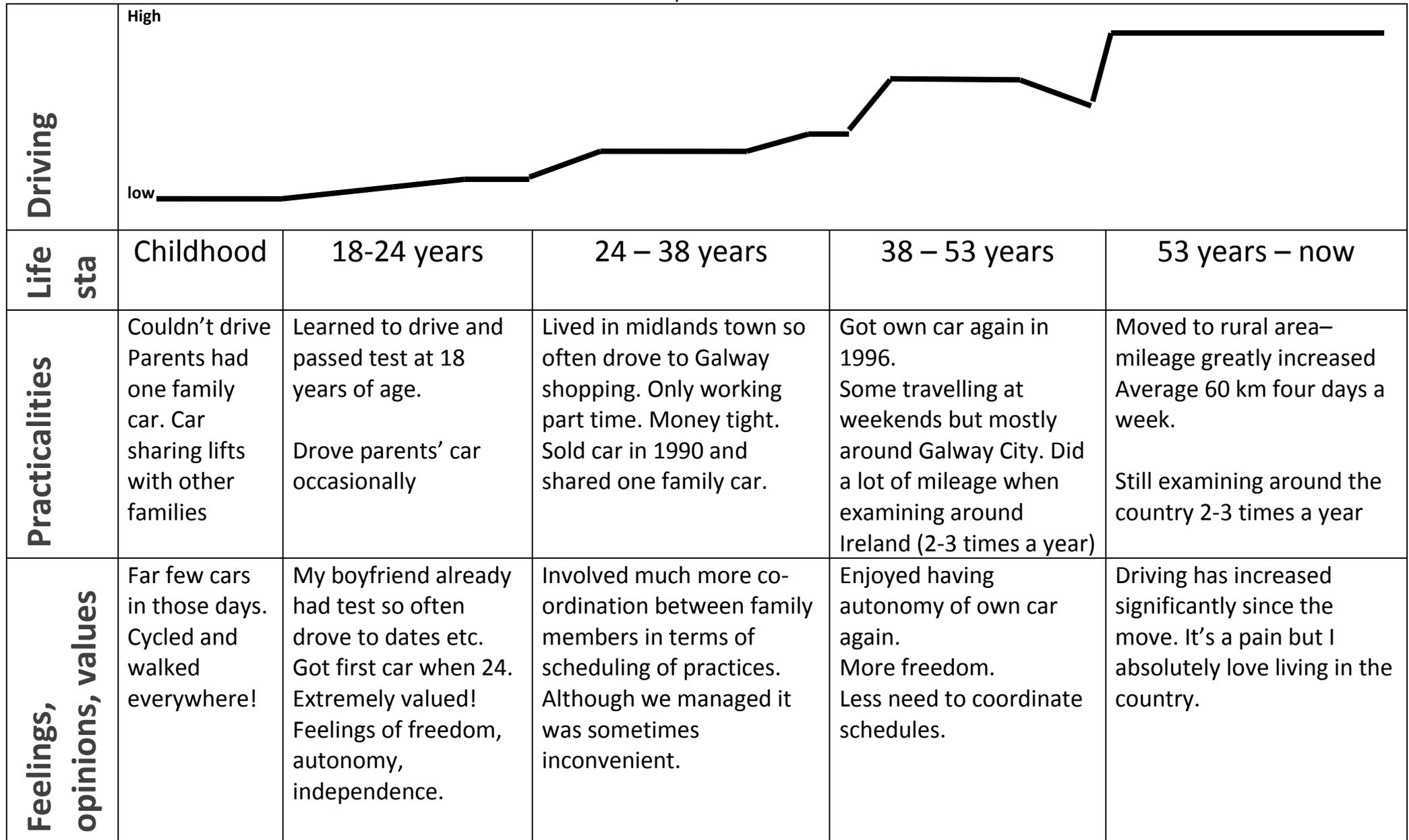


Figure 4.5: Female participant's car-driving career

Chapter Five

							Time →	
CHILDHOOD 1928-1946		18-25 years 1946-53	25 - 28 years 1953-56	28 - 48 years 1956-1976	48- 60 years 1976- 1988	60 – 87 years 1988- 2014		
<b>Procurement</b>	All food procured from farm and local markets;  Social aspect to food shopping at the markets	Local Irish produce  Milk and bread delivered daily	Local Irish produce	Supermarkets start arriving  Gradual shift towards bulk buying  Shift from daily to weekly shopping  More processed foods arriving/foods from foreign locations	Gradual change in food produce; more processed foods emerging; foods from more diverse locations  Predominantly shopping from supermarket but maintains bakery and butchers  Use of bus and car	Shift towards healthier foods over time  Predominantly shopping from supermarket but maintains bakery and butchers  Shift away from bus towards family members		
	<b>Preparation</b>	Home-cooked meals prepped by female members of house	Prepping for self Development of skills	Prepping for self and husband Undertakes domestic/home economics evening course	Increasing skills in food prep  Carrying food prep for children and husband  Growing family leads to increasing time spent on food prep	Carrying food prep for children and husband  Growing family leads to increasing time spent on food prep	Children leaving home; decreasing time spent on food prep  Increasing concern with health foods	
		<b>Wastage</b>	Swilling practice All food waste recycled on farm	Food waste collected by local farmer Recycling of bottles etc.		Period living in Dublin; One single black bin for all wastage  Stop recycling glass	Back in Galway; One single black bin for all wastage Stop recycling glass	2001 Policy - Three-bin scheme Separation of waste: landfill, compost, recycling Start recycling glass in bottle banks

**Table 4.6: Female participant's food practice career**

## Chapter Five

The visual biographical tools were useful story-generating techniques. Data that was difficult to generate using non-visual verbal means, such as information regarding temporalities of change, was reflected upon and collated during the life-graph drawing techniques. For example, participants were prompted to reflect on the rate and pace of changes identified, with steep slopes indicating sudden or rapid changes and gradual slopes representing more incremental changes. These nuances were helpful for addressing the research question concerning how practices change over time. The graph-drawing activity also promoted individuals to reflect more carefully on the specifics of change and, in this respect, may have contributed to improving the accuracy of the data (Hards, 2011, 2012). The audio recordings during the graph completion process added additional content to the interview data as participants continued to develop their narratives and add new contexts and experiences not previously discussed (see Appendix 6 for the life-graph drawing activities as they were presented to participants).

### Experiences of participating in the graphs:

While the biographical practice graph tools were useful for structuring discussion and generating narratives around key exemplar practices, they were received and experienced differently among the sample. Some individuals found the graph-drawing techniques more challenging than others. As mentioned, following the pilot, the graph-drawing activity was moved from the ethnographic diary phase and incorporated into the interview process. However, while initially I encouraged participants to draw the graphs themselves, respondents frequently expressed discontent with this as they felt bewildered by the information and task required of them. Generally, older individuals expressed this perspective. For example, consider Billie and Graces' response to my efforts to encourage them to draw:

## Chapter Five

Researcher: *“Do you want to try and draw a line there?”*

Billie: *“Oh god I don’t know how I could do that. Would you not help me and draw it? Oh here you might as well do it. You draw it out for me, yeah.”*

Similarly, Grace expressed hesitation to my invitation for her to fill out the life graphs:

Grace: *“Oh god, Jesus, that would just be something now that would...I couldn’t even think of it, not even think of it, oh those graphs are beyond me, oh no no no, if you gave me those graphs now I’d be lost with it, you’d have to explain it all. No please you do that I wouldn’t be able for that now.”*

Later, reflecting on her resistance to these methods Grace commented: *“I didn’t think I had sufficient input to give you, it was my lack of confidence in myself because of my age and my status, I didn’t think I had the confidence really to feel that it’s worthwhile.”*

Due to experiences such as these, individuals generally preferred me to closely guide and help them draw the graphs, or to hold the pen and document what they were telling me. In contrast, individuals such as Daniel and James who had a lot of experience with graphic means of representation in their work roles were more confident about filling in the graphs themselves. Similar issues were encountered by Hards (2011) who recommended the use of visual biographical tools as supplements to interviews rather than stand-alone methods.

### Stage three: Reviewing data generated and debriefing on diary task

The final stage in phase one involved reviewing with participants the data generated throughout the interview and debriefing them on the two-week

diary task. This provided a crucial context in which interpretations could be checked and additional information could be added to accounts if it arose.

### *4.3.2.2 Phase Two: Diary*

A diary can be defined as a document created by an individual that is 'regular, personal and contemporaneous' (Alaszewski, 2006: 1). Diaries are useful means of capturing data as it occurs in real time and can add rigour to qualitative research, investigating personal experience by observing 'contradictions, confirmations and 'neglections' in the accounts of participants' (Bonnington, 2015: 478). Given the taken-for-granted and elusive nature of the practices under investigation, the inclusion of a diary added rigour to the research process in moving beyond relying on verbal data collection to capture how people actually behave, and not only what they retrospectively recall (Berg et al., 2015). In addition, diaries offer a means to capture material, social and temporal contexts of practice as it is occurring in situ, providing key insights into daily path practice dynamics. In this study the diary acted as a useful biographical prompt to stimulate participants' reflection on the working of the routines. It further acted as a prompt by which individuals' current day practice could be compared to that of other phases and stages in their life.

Diaries can be structured or unstructured. A semi-structured diary format was deemed the most appropriate in this regard for several reasons: First, it helped to standardise the information received by participants enabling cross-comparison across the sample. Second, given the intensity and level of participation required by respondents, I wanted to be able to capture as much information as possible with minimal amount of effort required by participants. Most individuals commented that the diary was well laid out and easy to use, which was important in helping them to stay motivated. Having well laid out sections that required little time and demand from

## Chapter Five

participants, but also provided room for additional comments and reflections if so needed, was important.

In this study, a two-week semi-structured diary was designed and employed to bring into empirical focus dynamic processes in daily life and to further prompt participants to reflect on the working of their routines and everyday practice. In designing the practice diary, I drew on insights from a review of previous practice-theoretical studies in this area and aimed to capture information relating to performance of everyday practices in terms of their material, temporal, relational, social and spatial contexts. Structured and laid out sections requested standardised information from participants on the three exemplar practices: mobility, food and laundry (see Appendix 7). Participants were also requested to keep all receipts for purchases or activities relating to their household consumption. In addition, room for unstructured reflections and personal comments were provided in which participants were encouraged to detail what happened in their day and provide reflections on their practice.

Participants were invited to keep the diary for a period of two weeks. However, two participants opted to keep the diary for a period of one week only. During this phase, participants also completed a survey that included a demographic questionnaire as well as Consensus survey questions relating to the key exemplar practices under investigation (see Appendix 8). Explicit instructions were included at the start of the diary (see Appendix 7). These included encouraging participants to give as true an account as possible, not to worry if they missed a day and to remember that there were no right or wrong answers and that the study was interested in their own mundane routines. A reminder text message was sent to participants at 8 pm every evening, encouraging them to complete their diary.

### Experiences of participating in the diary

In general, participants reported that they found the diary more cumbersome than the other methods. Some individuals indicated that they found it a chore and the fact that the diary was carried out independently, alone in one's own time, added to these feelings. Those who had previously kept diaries articulated more positive feedback about their experience participating. However, those who had never kept a diary before generally indicated they found it more burdensome, with one individual, Seamus, indicating he found it "*strangely intrusive*". However, many commented that the daily text message and the practice of keeping receipts helped them to piece together their day and record as much as possible.

Following the completion of the diary, individuals reported that they were often surprised at the many new things they learned about the working of their own routines. This provided an important context for investigating practices deeper during the second interview. When reflecting on their experience of participating in the diary, most participants highlighted the positive impact it had in increasing their awareness of their everyday practice. Henry's comments exemplify those of other participants:

Researcher: *"Do you feel that the diary task would have made you more aware of certain things you wouldn't have thought of?"*

Henry: *"Yeah it would, absolutely, like what do you do and why do you go there and jeez I took the car here and maybe I should do, so yeah it does. I looked at it and I was like God I'm using the car a good bit, more than I would have thought. If you had asked me without doing it, I would have probably thought that I would have used it less."*

However, Seamus, expressed a different opinion indicating that he didn't see the point to it, found it "*strangely intrusive*" and a burden to fill out:

*Seamus: "I look back on it I think oh that makes me look a bit sad. Never eating with anybody. But I just, I never thought about it before. That's just the way I am. I just reported as honestly as I could... I didn't really see the point to it. You could have found out about the information in an interview. I was glad to see the end of it."*

While most individuals were more appreciative of the purpose of the diary in the overall research process, many commented that they felt that their lives looked mundane and boring when down on paper. This suggests that researchers must be sensitive to differences among individuals in terms of their reception of and experiences of participating in ethnographic qualitative methods such as these.

### *4.3.2.3 Phase Three: Problem centred interview 2*

The second interview focused attention on bringing together and linking insights garnered this far on the dynamics of everyday practices in wider biographic contexts. Drawing on the data gathered in the first two stages of the project, this interview provided an important context for exploring in greater depth with participants the working of their routines and how these have changed over time. Another key focus of this phase was to explore participants experiences of taking part in the study and their evaluations of the multi-method approach. Like the interview in phase one, this interview was divided into a number of distinct stages (see Table 4.7). These interviews lasted between one hour and two and a half hours.

Chapter Five

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Focus/Aim</b>
<b><i>Daily practice and revisiting lifecourse transitions in practice</i></b>	Semi-structured narrative; Exploration of material, social, structural contexts and drivers of daily practice; Review of life path transitions data	Generating episodic narratives in relation to daily conduct; Clarifying insights and generating additional data
<b><i>House tour</i></b>	Unstructured walking interview around participants home; Use of material environment as narrative prompts;	Exploration of material contexts of energy practices; generating reflections on past material contexts
<b><i>Sustainability and social change</i></b>	Semi-structured exploration of wider views on sustainability and social change in Ireland	Accessing wider attitudes and meanings on sustainability and social issues
<b><i>Experience of participation</i></b>	Semi-structured exploration of participant's experience of the research process	Methodological learning and development; Assessing limitations and benefits of approach

Table 4.7: Structure of PCI 2

## Chapter Five

### Stage one: Discussion of daily practice and review of lifecourse transitions

Using the practice diary as a key prompt, the interview commenced with a discussion of the participants' everyday routine life, exploring the material, social and structural contexts and drivers of their practices. Participants' reflections on how representative the diary was of their everyday lives and how their current day routine was similar or different to other life stages were also discussed here. Following this, participants were once again encouraged to reflect on lifecourse transitions in practice. Using the visual-biographic graphs produced in interview one as prompts, further exploration of the contexts, meanings and mechanisms/processes associated with each trajectory, transition and turning point ensued. Here additional insights and information were often added as individuals had reflected on their accounts further.

### Stage two: Walking House Tour

Part two incorporated a walking house tour. The purpose of this was to stimulate a more in-depth exploration of the multi-sensory context in which domestic practices are performed, bringing into relief not only the role of material objects, technologies and infrastructures in participants' practices but also to investigate the ways in which changing material contexts of daily life have intersected with shifting modes of performance. The house tour also provided a context in which to explore how the materiality of practice is intricately bound up with the biographies, self-identities, memories and imaginations of those who perform them (Pink and Mackley, 2012). During this phase, many new insights were garnered as the material environment and objects within individuals' homes acted as useful narrative generating prompts for current day and past engagements with technology.

## Chapter Five

Stage three: Wider views on environment, sustainability and social change

Stage three comprised a semi-structured discussion on the role that environmental considerations play in directing individuals' routines. It also involved an exploration of respondents' wider views on social change and sustainable consumption.

Stage four: Reflections on the methodological process and experience of taking part in the study

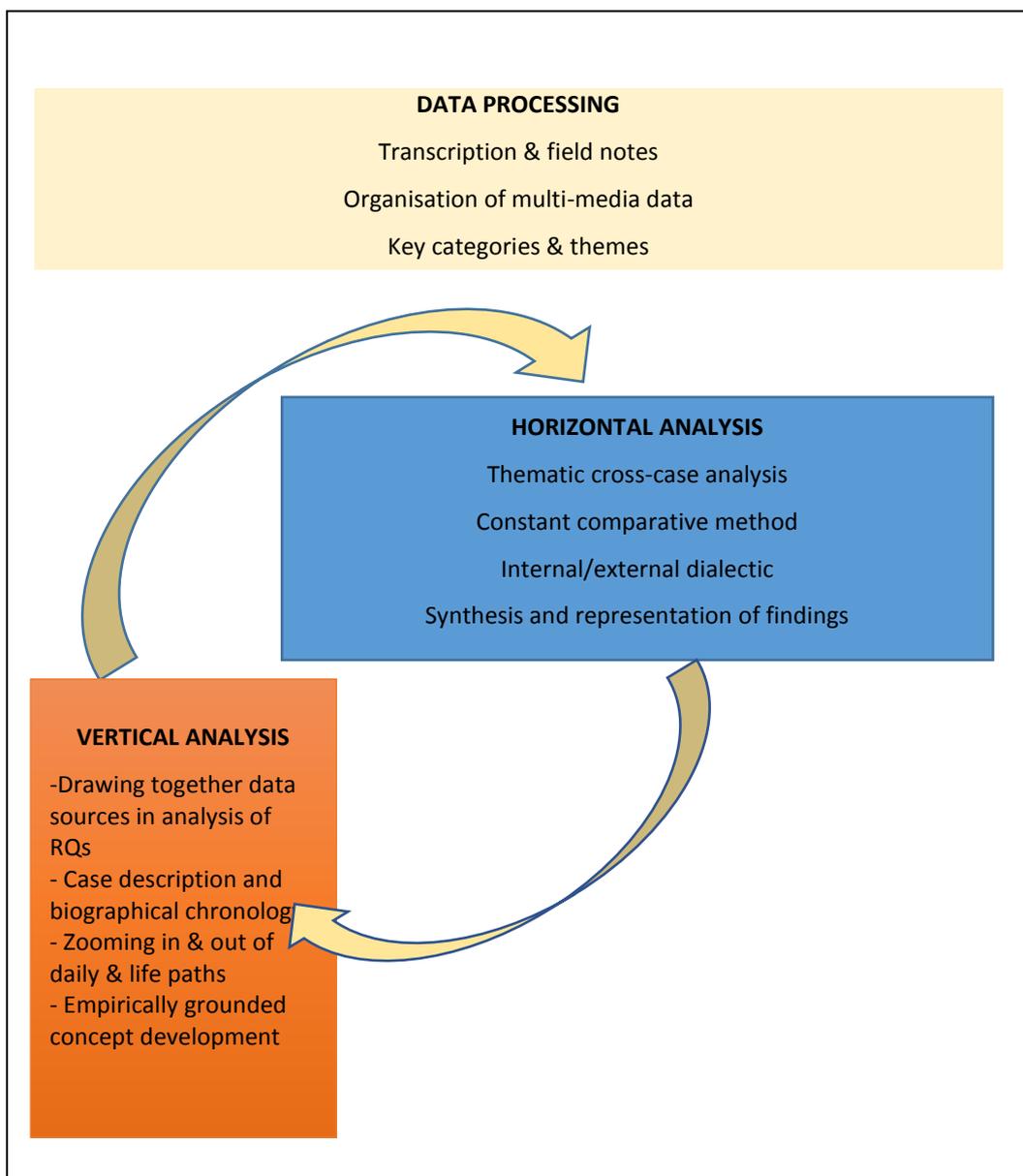
Finally, part four involved discussing with participants their experience of taking part in the study and their views on the role of various methods in helping them to think about and reflect on their practice over time. This discussion revealed interesting insights into the impact of participation on participants' thinking and action. Most participants reported that the process of partaking in the three-stage methodological process had a significant impact in shedding discursive awareness on their action. In light of this, many individuals discussed plans they had to affect change in their practice following their participation in the study. While the diary method was stressed as the most significant in facilitating participants' cognisance to the working of their routines, accounts suggest that the multi-modal three-phased longitudinal process had an important cumulative effect. This raises interesting questions concerning the potential of multi-modal ethnographic research as a form of intervention in practice transitions.

### 4.4 Analysis

The three-phased data collection process generated a significant amount of data for each participant (see Figure 4.7). The multitude of different data sources generated complicated the analytical process which had to grapple with the challenge of managing a range of different analytical procedures and approaches within the one framework. The analysis process comprised several key phases or stages that adapted insights from the approaches

## Chapter Five

outlined by Witzel and Reiter (2012), Hards (2011) and Riessman (2002, 2008). Adapting the two-pronged strategy outlined by Witzel and Reiter (2012: 102), analysis of primary data relating to individuals' biographies combined detailed exploration of each individual case (vertical analysis) with an exploration of themes across cases (horizontal analysis). This was subsumed within a multi-modal, problem-centred approach that entailed drawing together disparate data sources to consider what light they bear on research questions (Hards, 2011).



**Figure 4.7: Three-stage analytical process**

## Chapter Five

Data processing and priming entailed the transformation of basic data to be ready for deeper level analysis. It occurred concurrently with data collection and commenced as soon as field work began. Strategies included transcription, rewriting and expanding on raw field notes, organising different data sources according to key categories and themes of the interview guide, and revisiting and adding to the synthesising framework in light of key themes and concepts emerging. Data processing in this way enabled me to move back and forth between thinking about the data and reflecting on method as I worked on understanding the participants' experiences and perspective. This process influenced me to pursue new directions and improve the strategies for collecting data as I continued with the fieldwork.

Initial analysis commenced during the interview process as I noted pre-interpretations and actively co-constructed the knowledge with the participant. My role as co-constructor was key here as I noted initial themes that spoke to the synthesising frame for follow up and jotted down initial pre-interpretations in field notes during the fieldwork.

Immediately or shortly after the first interview had taken place, I began the process of transforming raw field notes into expanded postscripts. These expanded postscripts form the basis for the development of participant case-files (see Stage 2). Field notes documented details relating to the interview context, structure and format, researcher impressions, methodological learning and any initial interpretations or emerging themes. See Appendix 9 for example of a postscript.

Transcription commenced as soon as possible after the first interview had taken place. Participants' interviews were transcribed in full and in

## Chapter Five

verbatim. While there was more flexibility with interview two, the full transcription of interview one took place in-between interview one and two during the period in which the participant was partaking in the diary phase. Immediate transcription of interview one was important for the identification of themes to follow up during interview two. Throughout the transcription process, initial descriptive and interpretative notes were memoed and follow up points documented. In affording a deep familiarisation with the data in this way, transcription formed an important part of first stage analysis. However, it is noteworthy that nine of the transcript hours were transcribed by an outside source. These hours were listened to thoroughly and their transcripts read and re-read when the cases files for those participants were being constructed and interpreted.

Data priming also entailed entering all the diary data into an excel spreadsheet for analysis. Some time was taken to explore and develop a systematic means by which the diary data could be analysed. Excel provided a structured and manageable approach to doing so. In addition, this stage also involved setting up participant interviews according to key themes and categories, sorting and setting up participant files and uploading data sources to NVIVO. NVIVO (cf. Bazeley and Jackson, 2013) was utilised throughout the analysis process in the effective management and coding of the multiple different sources (see Appendix 10 for screenshot of NVIVO coding). In addition, data from the demographic surveys were entered into participant files and initial descriptive statistics were explored.

### 4.4.2 Stage 2: Vertical Analysis

Vertical analysis involved an in-depth analysis of each individual case. It drew together several different strategies that involved bringing together all the data sources relating to the case to answer the key research questions. In this study, vertical analysis involved the construction of

## Chapter Five

participant case-files as well as detailed analysis of data sources in relation to each key research question.

Vertical analysis involved collating and reviewing all data in relation to a case. Following Hards, the strategy adopted involved taking a research question, or aspect of one, and asking 'what can each source of data contribute to answering this question' (Hards, 2011: 178). This included analysing narrative interview and house tour transcripts, reviewing the visual-biographic timelines and graphs, studying the diary data and consulting field notes. These different data sources were collated in treating each case as a whole and arriving at a holistic picture of each individual's life. During vertical analysis, it became quickly evident that a large amount of data was being generated per case. To effectively manage the data and navigate the analytical process, this 'raw data' needed to be reduced and refined. This was achieved through coding and the construction of a 'case-file' for each participant.

The first step in vertical analysis focused on research question one: how do practices change over time? Answering this research question required depicting and detailing the evolution of practice dispositions and careers of action for each participant. A retrospective picture of the evolution of individuals' practice careers (in this case driving a car) was established. Triangulation of practice career graphs and interview and diary data helped to construct a life path view of how practice careers developed over individuals' lives. The visual-graphic methods proved particularly useful for capturing when, how and at what rate change occurred. These tools were also valuable in structuring and aiding the analysis process. Again, following Hards' (2011) analytical approach, the direction, tempo and contexts of change over individuals' broader biographic trajectories and individual practice careers received particular attention. Upon establishing a broad

## Chapter Five

stroke perspective of change, narrative interviews were coded for descriptive, event and experience centred narratives and key factors and contexts surrounding change were recorded. Narrative interviews shed light on the nature of the biographic transitions identified and the antecedents, consequences, experiences and meanings of the key stages and transitions were documented in written memos.

The second key stage of vertical analysis focused on addressing research question two: that is, explaining the patterns and experiences identified. The focus here was on analysing the micro and macro causalities on the level of each individual's biographic trajectory. Special attention was paid to analysing the recursive interaction between structure and agency in shaping subjectivities and action, as a commitment to representing multiple temporalities complemented efforts to capture different scales of context. A method of 'zooming in and out' (cf. Nicolini, 2009) between life and daily path scales facilitated the analysis of experiences and contexts associated with key events and transitions identified. Narrative interview data shed light on the evolution of dispositions as well as the conditions and practices associated with specific periods of stability and change. Zooming in on critical turning points and transitions, narratives were explored for sequences of causally related events that shaped people's lives. Special attention was paid to the analysis of narrative segments that described periods identified as salient by participants. Here process-orientated coding ensured an emphasis on dynamics in accounts. However, non-narrative evaluative segments were also important for revealing insight into meanings associated with experiences. The method of zooming in to and zooming out of daily and life path contexts in the analysis of why practice changes over time made it possible to alternate between different temporal contexts and aspects of change.

## Chapter Five

Once initial inductive themes were developed, key synthesising concepts and themes were consulted to consider how individuals' accounts spoke to theoretical concepts and accounts. This ensured that inductive practical and theoretical knowledge generation occurred alongside a close consideration of prior knowledge. Following the generation of inductive accounts and themes, the research process involved regular deliberate movement between different theoretical lenses (lifecourse and social practice), temporalities (daily and life paths) and scales (micro, meso, and macro). If the data spoke to a theme or concept this was followed up further for analysis. Applying a combined biographic and social practice-theoretical frame, that focused on individuals and contexts during the analysis of interviews, offered an effective means for further exploring how routines are constructed, maintained and deconstructed over time. This ensured that empirically grounded concepts were embedded within prior theoretical and empirical discussions.

A final component of vertical analysis involved the construction of case-files for participants. Case-files summarised the key features and findings relating to a single case in the one document, including the key themes and findings in relation to the research questions for that case. In effect, they sought to bring together key themes and information that would otherwise be scattered across the data sources and were updated iteratively throughout the analysis process as new themes and insights emerged. Case-files were constructed using data triangulated from multiple data sources (reflective dairy, biographical interview, diary, timeline and consumption biography graphs), to include reflections and discussions on the key descriptive trends and experiences as well as inferential themes relating to the participant. Case-files initially included descriptive information but, as the analysis progressed, interpretive notes, themes and memo notes were added. Case-files detailed the key biographical events, transitions and experiences detailed within individuals' biographic narratives and how

these have intersected with energy practice careers. They documented shifts in modes and meanings of practice as the individual moves through the lifecourse and included details on key contextual themes as well as respondent's identities, interpretations, personal concerns and goals. Case-files were crucial for distilling the large data set and facilitating horizontal analysis across cases.

### 4.4.3 Stage 3: Horizontal analysis

In the generation of inductively developed knowledge, theoretical understanding advances with each case analysed (Riessman, 2008). From the analysis of the second case onwards, a process of comparison between cases ensued as each subsequent case was interpreted against the context of the cases analysed before. A key benefit of this process of iterative interpretation is openness to new information. However, a corresponding downfall of this approach is that it 'bears the risk of exponentially increasing the amount of work involved' in biographic analysis as older cases can sometimes need to be reanalysed considering insights garnered later in the analysis process (Witzel and Reiter, 2012: 109).

During horizontal analysis, cross-cutting themes and connections between cases were established and discussed in analytical memos and theoretical reflections. Analytical memos detailed reflections on the key features and characteristics of conceptual categories. Conforming and deviating cases offered various perspectives from which to consider the features and characteristics of conceptual themes and categories. The importance of considering deviant cases in category development is noted by Silverman (2008) who states that qualitative researchers must be mindful of the tendency to select cases that are likely to support their argument. In developing the content and characteristics of categories it is important to 'seek out negative instances as defined by the theory with which you are

## Chapter Five

working' (Silverman, 2008: 132). Exemplar and deviant cases which supported and challenged themes were explored in greater depth and leading to extensions of thematic categories. Case-files were a useful aid in the constant comparative method. Comparing across case-files and notes on each participant's key themes and categories in relation to the research questions, it was possible to explore in greater detail contextual patterns and processes shaped by time and space. The intersections between broader lifecourse patterns and practice careers revealed generational patterns and shed light on the ways context, lives and practices intersect.

In summary, the multi-modal problem-centred analytical approach generated a rich, multi-dimensional body of data from which to analyse how and why practice changes. In offering opportunities for triangulation, it added rigour to the analysis process. Each data source offered a different angle or perspective on the question under examination. However, like Hards (2011), I found that this approach sometimes had its challenges in that occasionally the sources did not provide perfect consistency; for example, the detail and timing of events and experiences might be represented slightly differently in graphs and interviews. However, given this study's emphasis on uncovering broad patterns, processes and mechanisms of change rather than exact detail, these inconsistencies did not pose significant challenges.

The inductive and exploratory focus of the narrative analysis process posed significant challenges as well as advantages. In contrast to thematic cross-sectional analytical approaches that dis-embed thematic categories from idiosyncratic accounts, the distinct phase of vertical analysis ensured that the integrity of each individual case was maintained in the analysis process. This holistic and temporal approach ensured that themes were analysed and considered in the context of narrative segments and accounts from

which they emerged. However, a key challenge of the approach was handling the large number of concepts and themes that emerged from the data, suggesting multiple avenues for further analysis. A significant number of themes could be not followed up in the context of this thesis. Some of the key themes that were not followed up include: Understandings of Sustainable Consumption; Reflexivity; Discourses and Norms; and, Collective Temporalities. In addition, the constant comparative method and process of iterative interpretation, although useful in adding rigour to the inductive process, increased the degree of time and work required during the analysis process. The iterative process meant that older cases were often reanalysed in the context of new information, thus increasing the amount of time dedicated to the analysis process. Indeed, on a couple of occasions, interviewees were contacted for follow up to clarify or extend discussion on key concepts that emerged during this process.

### 4.5 Ethical and evaluative considerations

All social scientific research conducted with human beings necessitates a consideration of ethics. Qualitative methods with their emphasis on entering the respondents' life world encounter ethical issues that demand special attention (Silverman, 2014). The nature of biographic research involves a particularly deep involvement of the participant in the research process, with the disclosure of vast amount of personal information on topics related to their everyday practical knowledge, understandings and actions required of them (Witzel and Reiter, 2012). The locus of the experiential everyday as a site of investigation necessitates careful consideration of issues concerning human wellbeing, emotionality and trust as well as transparency and vigour in the research process. This section discusses the key ethical concerns and an issue encountered in this research journey and gives an account of how each of them was addressed in the investigation. This study received full ethical approval from NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee in June 2013.

### 4.5.1 Ensuring participants' wellbeing throughout the research process

Although this study is not examining a traditionally sensitive topic, retrospective discussions of a person's life history have the potential to cause distress to participants. Participants were made aware that they could terminate their participation at any time if they felt uncomfortable. A protocol on how to deal with distressed participants was devised in advance of the study, which I brought along to every field-work encounter (see Appendix 11). This, combined with my previous experience conducting interviews, was drawn upon to ensure that participants' discomfort was kept to a minimum. Furthermore, participants were informed at the start of every interview that if they felt uncomfortable at any time we could stop the recorder. Indeed, one participant stopped the interview process during the discussion of childhood to disclose that they would prefer not to discuss their childhood. As such, we passed this period of his/her life and moved onto adolescence. Using my own skills of empathy and intuition, I gauged how participants were feeling and ensured to attend to their wellbeing throughout.

### 4.5.2 Managing relations throughout the research process

Another issue for consideration was recognising power relations in the research process. Potentially, interview settings produce hierarchical relations in which the 'expert' researcher enters an individual's life world to extract information. As discussed, the PCI approach recognises both the participant and interviewer as jointly active in the construction of data. In this respect, power in any research is always negotiated (Witzel and Reiter, 2012) and I made every effort to ensure that I equalised any imbalance in power relations through adopting as friendly and conversational a style as I could throughout the research process, allowing participants to set the scope and flow of the process as much as possible. In addition, I frequently stressed that participants were experts on their own practical knowledge,

that there were no right or wrong answers and that I was interested in their own experiences and understandings. Furthermore, the fact that most respondents were much older than me and embodied much more knowledge in the realm of practical knowledge helped to rebalance any initial power imbalance throughout the research process. In addition, the serial interview approach enabled me to build up trust and rapport with my research subjects. However, I had to carefully manage the balance of relating to participants and not revealing too much about my own opinions and perspectives.

The forging of a close relationship with respondents in which they disclose personal stories and information meant that disengagement after the research process was difficult for some. Many individuals expressed a wish to remain 'friends' and in contact with me after the research process and some, such as Grace, were keen to make plans to go on an outing together.

### 4.5.3 Guarding against participant fatigue

Another concern during fieldwork was the issue of participant fatigue. The in-depth, serial approach demanded a lot from participants and as such participants involved in biographic-narrative research are more likely to experience participant fatigue. The sheer amount of data sources and data generated for participants highlights this. Several measures were taken to reduce the potential fatigue on participants. Extended interviews involving a range of interviewing techniques and data generating tools could potentially tire and demand too much from participants. To account for this, several breaks were incorporated into each interview setting. The point of movement between two PCI interviewing stages offered an opportunity for this. In addition, while individuals were generally encouraged to keep diary for a two-week period, a one-week option was included for participants expressing fatigue throughout the research process.

In addition, it is noteworthy that some participants had already participated with Consensus follow-up research and this was an additional concern in relation to the possibility of them experiencing fatigue. However, as discussed, this prior-participation was a key benefit of the sampling strategy as individuals were already discursive about some aspects of their practice. In this respect, participants' prior involvement shaped their reflexive capacity. Indeed, many respondents mentioned or discussed the impact that their initial participation in the survey had on their thinking and sometimes their action. As all the participants had previously participated in the survey study and just over half in the follow-up study on food consumption (cf. Carroll, 2014, Carroll and Fahy, 2014), it could be argued that these encounters may have already shifted into discursive awareness for them their taken-for-granted routines. For example, Bridget indicated that following her participation in the food consumption study, she had made more effort to alter her food consumption and be more mindful of how the food she was sourcing was produced.

#### 4.5.4 Consent and Confidentiality

All participants were informed about the research process prior to participation and signed consent sheets (see Appendix 12). A clear and consistent means of making anonymous the information gathered was followed throughout. To address issues of consent, detailed information sheets outlining the research objectives and the methods of the study were provided in simple and understandable language to all participants in recruitment letters. Furthermore, before commencing the interview, I again discussed with participants what was involved in participation. This was to ensure that each participant was completely comfortable with and understood the methods of the study as well as their right to withdraw their participation at any stage. Informed active consent forms were employed to acquire written consent. In both the participant information and consent

## Chapter Five

documents, participants were informed that their participation could be withdrawn at any stage with no adverse consequences.

To address issues of participant privacy/confidentiality, four provisions were made:

1. Only I, the supervisory team and additional transcriber would be enabled access to field notes, transcripts and audio recordings.
2. The use of pseudonyms was employed on all documents to protect the identity of the participants. The pseudonyms were assigned through interview codes and did not resemble the participants' actual names.
3. Audio recordings containing data collected during the study were stored on a secure, password-protected drive on a computer that only I could access.
4. The intention to use audio recording and research material was highlighted to research participants from the outset and all the conditions regarding use and storage of the data were made clear to allow informed consent.

### 4.5.5 Transparency of sampling, methods and conclusions

The importance of transparency in the qualitative research process has been well discussed in the literature. To improve rigour and methodological transparency, it is advised that researchers should document and make explicit the interpretive decisions and choices they make throughout the research process (Hiles and Cermák, 2007, Witzel and Reiter, 2012). In relation to my involvement in the production of knowledge through the research process, transparency was achieved by being as overt as possible about my positionality. The development and constant iteration of a synthesising framework alongside the research process enabled me to reflect continually on the dialectical relation between my own prior

## Chapter Five

assumptions and respondents' knowledge in the co-construction of data. In addition, all key methodological decisions and choices were documented throughout the research process in my research journal. All findings and conclusions were grounded in the data and alternative interpretations were considered and discussed with my supervisory team throughout the research process. Furthermore, it is made explicit that conclusions are based on a theoretical and not representative sample.

### 4.5.6 Evaluating narrative-biographic research

There is no single way to evaluate narrative-biographic research. It does not rely on formal standards, rules and procedures but rather, like other qualitative approaches, the effectiveness of the study depends on the fitness of purpose between the narrative methodology and the research aims and questions. Because of this variability, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that it is important for narrative researchers to set out the criteria that govern the study and by which it may be judged and evaluated. Witzel and Reiter recommend that all conclusions and findings must be situated within the context of the literature. In terms of assessing the implications and relevance, it is advised that researchers discuss whether their findings challenge or support existing theories. In addition, the policy implications emerging from results should be made explicit. These evaluative dimensions have been addressed in the context of this study.

### 4.6 The benefits and limitations of the methodological approach

In evaluating the methodological approach, some key benefits and limitations emerge as important for discussion. Many of the limitations are common to qualitative inquiry in general with some specific to narrative-biographic approaches. However, the benefit of the problem-centred approach is the explicit consideration of these as well as a reflection on strategies to manage and minimise them. These relate to internal validity,

## Chapter Five

external validity and researcher and participant bias. Internal validity refers to the conduct of the study and the means by which data were generated and interpreted, ensuring that inferences drawn are justified and accurate. External validity pertains to the generalisability of the inferences made beyond the sample of the study. Each of these issues will be considered in turn.

A widespread criticism of qualitative methods is the emphasis on self-reporting of action and experiences. Narrative-biographic methods pose additional challenges in this regard, specifically in relation to the nature of retrospective recollection as well as the use of story as a methodological medium. The temporal dimension and elicitation of experiences and actions occurring in the past can pose particular challenges to the validity of the data when compared with that of cross sectional studies researching only current day actions and experiences. Thus, a common criticism of retrospective methods, including narrative, is that participants can distort the facts of their accounts, either deliberately or unintentionally. The tendency for people to sometimes over or underplay the significance of turning points and transitions when they are viewed in retrospect, can pose challenges when researching both stability and change in everyday practices (Hards, 2011, 2012). In this respect, the issue of accuracy and precision of recall is a well-established criticism of retrospective biographic approaches in general.

In relation to the issue of internal validity, a key concern is the extent to which research accounts represent an accurate description of reality. Narrative researchers differ greatly in the extent to which they believe stories and lives mirror one another (Elliott, 2005b). In addition, the taken-for-granted nature of the practices under investigation poses additional challenges in this respect. Indeed, as recognised by practice-theoretical researchers, while people can verbalise and articulate their actions and practice (cf. Hitchings, 2011; Browne, 2015), this can be imperfect. While

## Chapter Five

stories are considered a crucial means by which to explore the links between subjective experience and historicity, they are often multi-layered, contradictory and ambiguous. As explained by Andrews et al. (2004: 12), the subjective and fluctuating nature of people's representations of their experience and practice as it is told through story can pose challenges:

'Narratives come in many kinds, they are contradictory, there is no such thing as a coherent story... there is no entirely firm sociocultural ground from which to tell stories...human subjectivity itself is diverse, fragmented, and carries within it the pushes and pulls of various available narratives, which are contingent upon social and cultural positioning.'

Given the experience-centred perspective endorsed within this study, the emphasis on subjective truth rather than objective truth was considered key. Indeed, recent work has drawn attention to the heightened awareness of the fluidity of meaning in diverse lifeworlds and the limitations of standard research methods in capturing these nuances. As discussed, this research adopts an interpretivist, social constructivist approach to personal narratives. Such an approach refutes objectivity to instead privilege subjectivity and locally construed understandings of the world. Indeed, within the context of the broader cultural turn in Geography and the wider social sciences, there is an increasing recognition that achieving total objectivity in any research may not be achievable or desirable. It is increasingly recognised that all research is inherently subjective and this should be consciously recognised and dealt with throughout the research process. The difference with narrative-biographic approaches is that this subjectivity is explicitly recognised and rendered more visible (Andrews et al., 2013, Hards, 2012). Within this research context, the experience-centred, interpretivist approach has been an advantage. Narratives provide

## Chapter Five

an important means of assessing the hitherto overlooked experiential and socio-cultural dimensions and lived experience of practice.

Within narrative-biographic approaches the elicitation of information through the medium of story places the subjectivity and perception of the respondent at the forefront of the research process. While some argue that this emphasis on subjectivity obscures validity by distorting reality and a reflection of life as it is lived, others contend that narratives may offer a more valid perspective on experience. Two key aspects of narrative inquiry are the emphasis on empowering the respondent's subjective perspective and preventing their experiences from becoming fragmented. Elliott argues that, due to these aspects, interviews that attend to individuals' narratives in fact may 'produce data that is more accurate, truthful or trustworthy than structured interviews that ask each respondent a set of standardised questions' (2005: 23). By eliciting episodic narratives that prompt individuals to provide concrete experiences and examples within their accounts, narrative interviewing techniques empower individuals to use their own conceptual frameworks and description of the events significant in their lives. In this respect, narrative interviews can lead to a more 'valid' description of individuals' experiences as they offer participants an opportunity to give their account as experts of their own lives. It prompts them to reflect on their experiences, select significant characteristics and piece them together into a whole. In this respect, a narrative-biographic approach enables a better understanding of a phenomenon from the perspective of individuals themselves (Elliott, 2004). Furthermore, the ubiquity of narrative and the life story as a naturally occurring means of representation in different contexts lends further credence to the validity of narrative interviews. Narratives occur spontaneously in human communication and individuals arrive at the interview as expert narrators. In the context of this study, the use of narrative elicitation techniques

## Chapter Five

helped to ensure that data remained as true as possible to individuals' lived experiences.

A number of additional measures were taken to increase the validity of reported behaviour. First, as alluded to above, the emphasis on narrative as a means to gain access to subjective truth and experience was advocated. Second, following recommendations outlined by Witzel and Reiter (2012), a multi-methodological approach was deemed an important means by of addressing challenges associated with internal validity in narrative-biographic research. Within this study, the inclusion of multiple methods and a phased methodological approach provided participants with numerous opportunities to express their experiences, meanings and opinions on the research topic. This helped to minimise the issue of distortion or recall bias to the greatest degree possible. The multi-modal approach generated a rich, multi-dimensional body of data from which to analysis how and why practice changes. The breadth and depth of the data generated meant that many potential lines of inquiry could not be followed and the analysis presented in this thesis represents only a small portion of the useful insights that could be generated from this type of rich biographic data. The challenge was deciding upon which themes to further investigate and which to leave aside.

Another key benefit of the multi-modal approach was that in offering opportunities for triangulation, it added rigour to the analysis process. Each data source offered a different angle or perspective on the question under examination. Each tool and method employed had a different narrative generating effect. As such, the topic was explored from many different vantage points adding rigour to the process. However, like Hards, I found that this approach sometimes had its difficulties in that occasionally the sources did not provide seamless consistency; for example, the detail and

## Chapter Five

timing of events and experiences might be represented slightly differently in graphs and interviews. However, given this study's emphasis on uncovering broad processes and mechanisms of change rather than exact detail, these inconsistencies did not pose significant challenges. This study was less concerned with actual dates of events and more so with broad trends and identifying processes and mechanisms of change. In addition, including multiple methods throughout the interview process requires the researcher to be skilled in implementing and handling them and switching between different modes of data generation throughout the research process. This is further compounded by the fact that participants respond to different methods in contrasting ways. However, the benefits of the multi-modal retrospective approach outweigh these limitations. In providing multiple opportunities for participants to give their account as experts of their own lives, the methodological approach offered multiple angles on the problem being investigated. Furthermore, in prompting individuals to reflect on their experiences, select significant characteristics and piece them together into a whole, the approach enabled a better understanding of phenomena from the perspective of individuals themselves (Hards, 2011).

Other issues relating to internal validity of the data concern the issues of participant and interviewer bias. Participant bias concerns the tendency for participants to present their accounts in a socially desirable light, whereas researcher bias relates to the influence of a researcher in steering the generation of data towards their own ends (Witzel and Reiter, 2012). If not managed appropriately, both of these forms of bias have the potential to distort the data. Multiple efforts were taken to reduce the likelihood of participant bias occurring. Participants were continually reminded that there were no wrong or right answers, that the research was interested in ordinary people's experience and practice and that honesty in their response would contribute immensely to the overall success of the project.

## Chapter Five

Furthermore, the inclusion of the diary phase was intended to capture data in real time and spot inconsistencies in participants' accounts. In addition, discussion about the role of environmental considerations in directing routines was stalled until the end of the research process. This was to ensure that the effect of discussions about sustainability on participants' accounts would be minimised. Overall, there was little indication that participant bias significantly shaped or distorted participants' accounts. From my own reflections and research notes I was impressed by the level of apparent honesty in participants' accounts.

Despite every effort to maintain the neutrality doctrine, there is small doubt that interviewer bias and influences shaped the co-construction of the data during the research process. Interviews are social relations and every social relation is contextual (Reissman, 2008). As indicated previously, the starting point of the PCI is the joint, collaborative and active co-construction of knowledge between interviewer and interviewee during the research process. Within this frame there is an explicit recognition that researchers are never neutral in the research/interview process. Engaging with the iterative synthesising framework in an ongoing manner throughout data generation played a crucial role in mediating the effect of interviewer bias on the data. To address the possibility of error in interpretation, comprehension generating questions and techniques were included throughout the interviewing process to ensure that neither I nor the respondent was misinterpreting issues. In addition, every care was taken to refrain from the use of judgemental tones and be mindful of how I responded to participants. Engaging in ongoing data processing, transcription and reflection throughout the research process greatly increased my cognisance of times when I was likely to intervene or influence participants' narrative accounts. Following this process of active reflection and learning, my skills and awareness increased greatly throughout the

## Chapter Five

research process. Moreover, interpretations of data were discussed with my supervisory team which further helped to reduce bias.

Another issue relates to the issue of external validity or the generalisability of the findings. Within qualitative inquiry, conventional standards for assessing external validity based on statistical representativeness do not apply. Representative generalisations depend on insights garnered from statistically representative, random samples. Given the small sample size and in-depth, exploratory and experience-centred perspective of this research, the aim of this study is to achieve theoretical generalisability rather than representative generalisability. Qualitative studies prioritise depth over breadth, focusing on detailed description and uncovering contextual processes over more generalisable findings. The exploratory and context-focused perspective of this study, sought to uncover processes and mechanisms through a grounded, inductive and theoretically guided framework. Despite these findings not being generalizable in a statistically representative sense, following the practice-biographic theoretical framework, it is maintained that theoretical insights into the operation of social processes and contexts can be revealed by exploring the realm of the experiential and performative. As Silverman contends, 'since the basic structures of social orders can be found anywhere, it does not matter where we start our research' (2008: 134). Similarly Elliott reminds us that 'narratives become the focus of research not simply because they provide insight into individuals experiences and the meanings they make of them, but because their form tells us something about the wider cultural framework within which individuals make sense of their lives' (2005a: 28). As such, the close analysis of narratives produced by a relatively small sample of individuals may produce evidence that can advance understanding of the intersubjective meanings and experiences shared by a whole community. In generating provisional models that provide thick experiential descriptions, theories emerging through narrative inquiry aim

to generalise within bounds, remaining embedded in context (Doyle, 1997). As such, in seeking to uncover contextual processes, the findings of this study thus aim for theoretical generalisability, stressing the value and relevance of theoretical insight concepts, over the representation of a population.

Another limitation relates to the phased implementation of the methodology. Due to personal limitations, fieldwork for this study was spread out over the course of one year. In relation to the diary data in particular, seasonal effects on energy practices were not accounted for. It is questionable whether participants' routines and modes would have been more comparable if all diaries and interviews were implemented with all participants simultaneously. Finally, while effort was taken to ensure a diverse sample, it could be argued that the sample was relatively homogenous in a number of senses. All respondents were indigenous white homeowners living in traditional heterosexual households.

### 4.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the implementation of the methodological approach. Each of the fourteen respondents took part in two extended problem centred interviews, incorporating a mixture of narrative interviewing methods and visual-biographic research tools. In addition, they completed an everyday practice diary and consumption survey. A biographic, problem-centred analytical approach that drew on a range of narrative analysis and grounded theory techniques was employed to generate insights from the multiple data sources on the key research questions. Several ethical considerations were encountered throughout the research process and these were discussed in detail. Finally, some key advantages and limitations of the methodological approach in relation to questions of validity and generalisability were outlined. This concludes the

## Chapter Five

discussion of the methodology. The remainder of the thesis proceeds to discuss the research findings and their implications for policy.

## 5. Chapter five: Temporalities and performances at the daily path

'...an individual's existence can be diagrammatically described as a trajectory, a "daily-" or "life-path" of movement-a weaving dance through time-space'

(Pred, 1977:208)

### 5.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters discussed the design and implementation of the methodological approach. This chapter begins to explore patterns and processes of practice by concentrating on the scale of the daily path. The first section focuses on delineating the personal temporalities of participants' current daily routines and the practices that comprise them. Focusing on the scale of the daily path, a practice approach is employed to describe the activities and practices that take individuals through the time-space of their day. Drawing on findings from participants' diaries and interviews, the presentation of the data pays particular attention to the temporalities and relationalities of everyday domestic practice. Diarists were first asked to record an overview of what they did for the day. Participants wrote a paragraph outlining the temporal rhythm and organisation of their daily life. Following this, they detailed information on the three exemplar practices in a structured diary table. Following the temporal approach outlined by Fine (1996) and implemented by Southerton (2006; 2009), participants recorded the time they performed the practice (sequence), the way they performed the practice (mode), the time they spent on it (duration), whether it was performed concurrently with other people or in coordination with another practice (synchronisation) as well as the frequency by which it was performed (periodicity). Follow-up interviews provided a context in which to explore in greater detail the experiences of the practices recorded in the diary as well as to discuss how representative the diary data was of everyday routine practice more generally. Such

detailed analysis of practice at the level of the daily path is important for detailing patterning of rhythms and routines as they are 'made and remade every day, in micro detailed ways' (Southerton, 2009: 62) as well as for exploring how practices relate to social contexts and to each other in time and space.

Exploring the action and role fulfilments of individuals in their sequential and locational context, social differentiation among the sample in terms of the socio-economic and demographic configuration of the practices constituting daily life was observed. Analysis revealed variance in modes of performance and patterns of energy practice according to lifecourse circumstances, in particular, gender, age, employment status, and parenthood. The presence or absence of institutional commitments and roles was the most notable factor shaping variation among the sample. In this section, a description of the organisation of participants' routines and practice according to their temporal and relational configurations is presented. Throughout the discussion, illustrative reference to the key exemplar practices is made. Constructing a picture of participants' daily lives was an important precursor to exploring dynamics over the life path, which is discussed in Chapter Six.

### 5.2 Rhythms, sequences and tempo

In this study, *sequence* refers to the order in which activities are conducted throughout the day. Plotting sequences of practice entails locating when practices are performed in the day, thus giving a picture of the *rhythm* of the day. A focus on sequence serves to highlight the ways in which practices are ordered and relate to contexts and each other. *Tempo* relates to the rate or speed of activity and emphasises how temporalities of performance are experienced by practitioners (Southerton, 2006). 'Hot spots' are periods in the day characterised by a high density and intensity of domestic

## Chapter Five

practices, whereas 'cold spots' are periods of relative relaxation and calm (Southerton, 2003). Considering the sequence and tempo of practice gives a picture of the rhythm of individuals' daily lives.

Analysis of diaries revealed that the temporal rhythm of the day is sequenced around practices which hold an anchored position in daily life. *Anchor practices* were usually related to institutional commitments and roles outside the domestic sphere, the dominant examples being work and school. Work and school practices tend to assume a fixed, regular location with people's daily paths and provide a pivot point around which domestic practices are sequenced. Social differentiation in terms of the type of anchor practices that featured as well as the extent (or force) by which they configured the sequence of domestic practices in individuals' daily path was evident. Furthermore, differential experiences of the tempo of daily life indicated some participants carried a greater load of practices, and felt more rushed and pressed for time than others. In this regard, significant variation was observed among the sample according to demographic characteristics associated with employment status, family status, age and gender. Overall, the presence or absence of institutional time structures, and in particular, whether or not one's life was configured by the projects and activities of the key institutions of work and school, was the most notable factor configuring differentiation in the rhythm, sequence and tempo of practices in participants' daily lives.

For employed participants and parents of dependent children, daily path rhythms were firmly fixed around the institutional events and time structures of work and school respectively. Analysis of the diaries revealed that time spent at work was a significant factor structuring the temporal organisation of practices at home. Most employed participants (N = 7) had regular, fixed work schedules, with two balancing part-time jobs between

## Chapter Five

industry and lecturing (Michael and Tony). Because work routines hold a fixed location in the sequence of practices making up the day, employed participants' domestic practices were plotted in 'hot spots' around the institutional time structure of their work routines. For parents of dependent children, the temporal rhythm of the day was structured according to the time structure of school. Individuals who both work and had dependent children showed the greatest degree of institutional constraint in terms of the temporal rhythm of their day and the sequence and allocation of practice therein. For these participants, analysis of diaries revealed dense 'hot spots' throughout the day in which mobility, food and other domestic practice were squeezed and sequenced around the primary rhythms of work, school and childcare. Participants who were both employed and have dependent children frequently discussed the busy pace of daily life and highlighted strategies they employ and technologies they rely on (e.g. the car for mobility, preparation of food and use of freezer for food storage) to maximise temporal efficiency through the day. For these individuals, there was little room for reordering or reconfiguring their practice as the temporal organisation of domestic life was tightly bound together and sequenced according to rhythms of institutions and the routines of others. For example, Sara is a mother to three dependent children. Her car use is embedded in a sequence of densely-bound caring practices including collecting children from school and dropping them off and collecting them from afterschool activities as well as looking after her ageing father, delivering him a meal in the evening. Sara's narrative highlights the tightly bounded, institutionally sequenced allocation of practices in her day and her dependency on the car for managing co-ordination between them:

*"So looking after the shopping, ferrying the children to school and then to after-school activities, car-pooling with other parents...so yeah these would be an everyday thing. Like a lot of the things I wrote down (in the diary), like John (son) and Sandra (daughter)*

## Chapter Five

going to training in the evening, I have one child going in one direction and the other going in another direction...and there wouldn't be a bus that would get them to training and back without writing off four hours of their evening, so a lot of the day is spent in the car, do you know what I mean? I know it's crazy, but truthfully I don't think I can change that right now."

**Figure 5.1: Sara's car practice at the daily path**

Did you leave your home today? Yes  NO

If you answered Yes please fill in a row below for every trip or outing you took today

If you answered No please continue to Part 6

Time of trip	Purpose of trip	Destination(s) (in the case of multi-purpose trips pls list all the "from-to" destinations)	Mode of transport	Approx distance travelled	No. of people with you & their relation to you	Further comments/opinions
8:45	SCHOOL Run	SCHOOL DND COFFEE SHOP	CAR	5km	1 Child	
11am	COFFEE SHOP TO DUNNES	FOR FOOD SHOP	CAR	5km	-	
1:30	Home TO SCHOOL THEN	DADS HOUSE: MEAL	CAR	10km	1 Child	
5pm	Home TO TENNIS CLUB	CHILDS LESSON	CAR	5km	2x KIDS	
6pm	Home TO Camogie	CHILDS MATCH	CAR	5km	1 Child	

Similarly, James, aged 54 with two teenage children, emphasised the centrality of the car in enabling him to balance work with home life. Since his wife was diagnosed with Myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME) several years previously, she had ceased driving and his frequency of driving had increased as he had assumed her share of driving on top of his own. As a consequence, domestic driving trips relating to shopping and giving lifts to his wife and children populate his evenings after work (see Figure 5.2). For him, managing the sequence of roles and responsibilities in his life would

## Chapter Five

be unattainable without the car. Michael, aged 59, is married and has no children. He works two-part time jobs and often has to move from one job to another on the same day (Figure 5.3). In addition, he is studying part time for a Masters course. The car is essential in allowing him to manage and organise his routine according to the temporalities of these commitments. Accounts such as these indicate the configuring effect of institutional and lifecourse constraints on the sequences and modes of practices, as illustrated in in this instance with car use.

Part 5: Getting around						
Did you leave your home today? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No						
If you answered Yes please fill in a row below for every trip or outing you took today						
If you answered No please continue to Part 6						
Time of trip	Purpose of trip	Destination(s) (in the case of multi-purpose trips pls list all the "from to" destinations)	Mode of transport	Approx distance travelled	No. of people with you & their relation to you	Further comments/opinions
8:10AM	TO WORK	PORTHUNA (FROM GORT)	CAR		0	
9AM-5:30PM	TRAVEL BETWEEN PLACES OF WORK	SEE ATTACHED TRAVEL CLAIM FORM	CAR		0	
5:30PM	TO HOME	<del>PORTHUNA - GORT</del> PORTHUNA - GORT	CAR		0	
6:15	HOME → SCHOOL → HOME	PICK UP HAZEL'S BOOKS FROM HER LOCKER + TANYA PUT UP CARDS FOR JUNIOR + LEAVING GORT STUDENTS	CAR	1 mile	(WIFE) (DANCER)	

**Figure 5.2: James' car practice at the daily path**

## Chapter Five

Part 5: Getting around						
Did you leave your home today? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No						
If you answered Yes please fill in a row below for every trip or outing you took today						
If you answered No please continue to Part 6						
Time of trip	Purpose of trip	Destination(s) (in the case of multi-purpose trips pls list all the "from-to" destinations)	Mode of transport	Approx distance travelled	No. of people with you & their relation to you	Further comments/opinions
08:00	Work	Dublin Airport	CAR	3-4 km	Nil	
08:10	Meeting Southside of Dublin	Southside	CAR	21.5 km <del>42 km</del> (Round Trip)	1 work Colleague.	
10:30	Return to the office	Dublin Airport	CAR	22 km	1 work Colleague.	
14:00	Home	Southside	CAR	3-4 km	Nil	

**Figure 5.3: Michael's car practice at the daily path**

The temporalities of younger participants contrasted with those of older, retired respondents for whom the absence of institutional time structures and constraints resulted in differential rhythms and sequences of practices in daily life. Removing institutional commitments frees up of large sections of time in the day that were once populated by activities relating to working and family. Consider the mid-week dairy entries for Sara and Grace, completed respectively on a Wednesday in May and June 2014. Grace is an 80-year-old retired nun who lives alone (see Table 5.1). Sara, as noted above, is a 46-year-old homemaker with three dependent children ranging in age from 9 to 16.

Chapter Five

<b>Time</b>	<b>Grace, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014</b>	<b>Sara, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014</b>
Before 9am	Arose at 8am. Had breakfast and did my usual juicing – carrot, beetroot, cabbage, apple and ginger	7am: Up. Got dressed. Prepared school lunches for children. 7.45am Got children up and ready. Ate breakfast with children 8.20 am: Took youngest child to school by car (teenagers take the bus), then drove onto Salthill for a 5km run
Morning; 9am- 1pm	9am: went for an hour walk around the park 10am - 1pm: A beautiful morning so I packed up some tea and sandwiches for an outing to silver strand beach. Drove to Silver Strand approx. 10.30 Such a beautiful day - Spent another hour walking there and then lay in the sun for a number of hours.	10am: Drove home, Showered  11am: Drove to Salthill to meet friend for coffee (meet them every Wednesday morning)  12: Drove home 12.15: Did some cleaning
1-2pm	Had my lunch on the beach and remained there for another few hours until 4.30pm	1pm: Prepared and ate lunch with eldest child (home studying for the Junior cert)

Chapter Five

<i>Time</i>	<i>Grace, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014</i>	<i>Sara, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014</i>
		<b><i>Continued on the following page</i></b>
Afternoon; 2-5pm	Relaxing on beach  4.30pm: returned home by car	<b><i>Continuation from previous page</i></b> 2pm: pre-prepared evening meal for family 3pm: Drove to collect youngest child from school. Drove on to sports shop to buy gum shield for her football later 4.30pm: Drove Home 4.45-5.30pm: Did homework with youngest child
Evening; 5-9pm	5pm: At home Prepared a light meal for myself  6.30pm: went to town on the bus to have a look around  8.30pm: when I returned home I did some weeding. Then I drove to the local shop to get some groceries.	5.30pm: Finished prepping dinner (prepped earlier) and heated up and ate with children 7pm: Following dinner drove 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> children to sports activities and home again  8.30pm: laundry and more cleaning
9pm +	10.30pm: Watched TV	10pm: relaxed with one-hour of TV before bed

<i>Time</i>	<i>Grace, 28<sup>th</sup> June 2014</i>	<i>Sara, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014</i>

Table 5.1: Mid-week diary entries

The diary entries in Table 5.1 reveal variation in the temporal organisation and orientation of practices populating Grace and Sara's days. Sara's path is populated by more practices and is structured around the institutional temporalities of school, child care and extra-curricular activities, whereas Grace's day is free from these institutional constraints. These differences are important as they configured the modes and temporalities of performance of the exemplar practices.

This pattern was reflected among the diarists. For older individuals, anchor practices were less likely to be configured by institutional roles and caring responsibilities and more likely to be personal and recreational in nature, although childcare responsibilities for grandchildren featured in over half of the older people's diaries (Myra, Tony, Henry, Seamus). Those who cared for grandchildren commented on how this altered the typical rhythm, tempo and sequence of their practices. Routine activities were often put on hold and time and attention was refocused towards the children. The diary entries clearly reflected these alterations, with changes in mobility, food and other domestic practice reported during days when child caring was taking place.

Temporal disruptions to routine when caring for grandchildren were experienced by Maire, Tony and Timothy as increasing feelings of harriedness and tiredness. For example, Timothy and his wife were minding their two grandsons, aged 3 and 5, for two nights while their son and

## Chapter Five

daughter in-law were away. His diary entry highlights disruption and his tone appears a little stressed.

*“Had interrupted sleep last night – one grandchild cried all night and had to be taken to a separate bedroom. I stayed there with him and got very little sleep. Spent the morning assisting my wife with the boys’ entertainment. Had my breakfast and took them for a lengthy drive and then walk around the park. Continued to help keeping them entertained into the afternoon. Postponed lunch until they we had passed the two boys over to their aunt.” (22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2014)*

Similarly, Maire’s entry highlights a significant alteration in the rhythm of her day; her day is centred on dressing and washing the children, prepping food for them, entertaining them with activities and ensuring that their temporal routine is structured and *“matches the crèche”*. After the children have been picked up she notes *“need a break!...will take afternoon easy after a hectic morning”* (23<sup>rd</sup> Nov 2014).

These accounts indicate that, for older participants in my sample, the presence of grandchildren disrupts and re-configures the routine rhythm, sequence and tempo of their daily practice.

However, in general, older participants showed greater variability in the temporal ordering and sequencing of practices throughout the day as well as the type of practices performed. Again taking the exemplar of car driving, this is reflected in the frequency, orientation and sequencing of car trips across the older sample. Older people (> 65 years) reported a far greater number of recreational car journeys, with a mean of 5.5 journeys a week compared to an average of 2.5 among younger participants (see Table 5.2).

## Chapter Five

In addition, the temporal allocation of car journeys in the day represented greater variability with many taking a journey mid-morning, returning home for lunch and then going out on another errand in the afternoon before returning home for dinner. Thus, while trips were extended throughout the day, a general structuring around meal times was evident.

Purpose of trip	Average number of trips	
	< 65 year	> 65 years
Work	7	0
School Run	1.6	0.5
Lift to others	6.6	3
Shopping	1.8	2
Visiting friends and family	1.1	1.8
Recreation	2.5	5.5
Other	0.8	6.4

Table 5.2: Purpose of car trips by age group

For older people, car trips were orientated around regular recreational practices such as playing golf, attending arts classes and going out for meals. Other practices mentioned included visiting friends, attending doctor appointments, shopping and participating in community organisations and volunteering. In addition, a greater instance of irregular or spontaneous car trips were reported older people. Comments such as: *“A beautiful morning so I packed up some tea and sandwiches for an outing to beach”* (Grace, Diary entry, 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014) and *“After breakfast decided to travel to [town] or some retail therapy. Thought I would go to gold shop to “try out” a golf stick in a golf simulation (did not buy the golf stick)”* (Frank, Diary entry, 14<sup>th</sup> Nov 2014) indicate a capacity to exert agency over the sequencing and rhythm of their routine, depending on, for example, the weather or one’s

## Chapter Five

mood. In addition, participants' narratives revealed an additional temporality reality, that is the idea of the finitude of life, as also affecting how people organise their routines. In his follow up interview, Frank elaborates:

*“Mary (wife) and I, we don't plan ahead. It sounds very sort of smug to say, but if we want to do it, we do it...Feck it. If you want to do something, do it today or tomorrow or the next day because that's it. I mightn't be around here this day next week. I could be pushing up daisies, you know. And that's the reality of life”*

Accounts such as these clearly contrast with those of younger participants who frequently commented on the tight sequencing of practices and their current lack of amenability to change.

With regards to tempo, the juxtaposition between hot and cold spots was less pronounced for retired participants. In addition, strategies for maximising temporal efficiency were notably absent from their accounts and they were far less likely to report feeling harried or rushed during the day. However, an exception to this included instances of caring for grandchildren, which notably increased feelings of harriedness (Southerton, 2003) and tiredness. Differential temporalities also influenced food practices; younger participants were more likely to report missing meals, ordering take-away meals after a busy day at work, and pre-preparing food to extend time for other activities (Table 5.3). In this respect, analysis of interview data revealed qualitatively different experiences of time as it is experienced through practice. For example, retired individuals tended to speak of practices in terms of their propensity to *create and make* time and experiences, whereas those with busy lives structured around institutional

and caring responsibilities were more likely to speak in terms of practices *taking time* (cf. Shove, 2009). Such differences appear to be linked with feelings of well-being. For example, retired respondents contemplated frequently on activities to populate their day and the importance of being active and getting out of the house, indicating that narratives of active retirement are inherently bound up with everyday mobility in older age. Findings such as these indicate that a relationship exists between the institutional structuring of daily rhythms and the sequencing, rhythm and tempo of domestic practice.

<b>Food Practice</b>	<b>&lt; 65</b>	<b>&gt;65</b>
Eating out/take away	3.75	1.2
Missed meals	3.75	0.4
Meals pre-prepped	2.5	0

Table 5.3: Food practice by age group

### 5.3 Relationality: co-participation and other-orientation

Findings highlighting differentiation in personal temporalities signify the importance of roles and relationships with others in configuring practice in daily life. In this respect, the sample demonstrated significant variation with regards to the extent to which practices were synchronised and shared with other people. The diary and interviews were useful for exploring patterns of relationality in terms of how an individual's daily path intersects with, overlaps with, and diverges from the paths of other people throughout the day.

Patterns of relationality emerged in two key ways. First, *co-participation* in practice was observed. This refers to an individual sharing performance *with* other individuals, for example cooking a meal with one's spouse or

## Chapter Five

sharing a car journey with passengers. A second pattern of relationality relates to *other-orientation*, denoting instances in which an individual carries and performs a practice *for* a person other than oneself, whether or not they are also engaging in that practice for their own purposes; examples of other-orientation include giving a lift to others, cooking a meal for someone or doing another's laundry. With regards to both of these dimensions of relationality, social differentiation across gender, lifecourse and age were apparent. Gender was the most salient pattern to emerge here, with women of all ages reporting a greater degree of co-participation and other-orientation in their daily practice. Furthermore, an interaction between age and gender was evident in that older men in particular were less likely to report either co-participation or other-orientation than their younger male counterparts. In this section, patterns of relationality in practice are discussed in relation to age, lifecourse and gender.

### 5.3.1 Lifecourse and Age

#### 5.3.1.1 Co-Participation

While the diary data were important for revealing patterns of co-participation among the sample, the qualitative interviews shed light on the processes of synchronisation and co-ordination giving rise to these trends. Clear patterns associated with lifecourse and age emerged. Parents of dependent children and older people caring for grandchildren or being cared for themselves by their own children reported the highest frequency of co-participation in daily practice. Lower instances of co-participation were evident among younger and older individuals without children and those living alone.

Co-participation in practice requires synchronisation with the daily paths of others. Relationship status, family status and the presence of dependent children emerged as key lifecourse variables shaping propensity for

## Chapter Five

synchronisation of one's practices with others. Those with dependent children and responsibility towards other family members exhibited a high degree of synchronisation and co-ordination with household and family members. Some parents reflected on the difficulties in co-ordinating routines, especially as children grew older and more dependent. In contrast, being older and living in an adult-only-household was associated with fewer instances of co-participation and efforts to synchronise routines. These findings resonate with Southerton's (2006: 448) who found that the presence of dependent children 'intensified the need to synchronise the practices of household members'.

<b>Co-participation</b>	<b>Sara</b>	<b>Seamus</b>	<b>Grace</b>
<b><i>Car trips</i></b>			
With others	20	7	
Alone	3	17	16
<b><i>Food</i></b>			
Prepped with others	2	0	0
Eaten in company	14	2	2

Table 5.4: Co-participation in mobility and food

Consider the cases of Sara, a mother of dependent children, Seamus a father of two adult children and Grace an older, childless woman (Table 5.4). Sara engages in a high frequency of co-participation, predominantly with her immediate family. 19 of her co-participated car trips included her children. Co-participation in mobility involves a tight synchronisation of daily paths of household members, which, as indicated in the previous section, is sequenced around the temporalities of institutional time structures. While Sara generally prepped meals alone, on two occasions her youngest child (age 9) helped her prepare food, peeling potatoes and

## Chapter Five

vegetables for dinner on one occasion, and baking a birthday cake on another. She indicated that enrolling children in domestic tasks such as food preparation was an important means of teaching them. Out of 18 meals that Sara ate in one week, 14 of these were eaten in the company of family and four lunches were eaten unaccompanied. Sara placed a strong personal value on the importance of shared family meals as a time to connect with her family. However, in recent years some tensions have emerged in terms of synchronising meals with her growing teenagers' (aged 15 and 16) increasingly socially demanding schedules.

Seamus is married, in his mid-fifties and is a father to two grown-up children and has an infant grandchild. He works between two jobs, juggling self-employment in construction with part-time lecturing in an IT. While he reports a relatively high frequency of co-participation for mobility, this contrasts with his food practice for which co-participation is low. With regards to car trips, Seamus is accompanied by others for ten of seventeen trips. Seven of these instances include giving lifts to family members. These trips are usually combined with his commute to work. The remaining three occurrences of co-participation comprise giving lifts to a labourer he hires for his part-time construction work. Because Seamus' work schedule changes from week to week, these instances of co-participation are synchronised and planned on a weekly basis. Because he moves between two jobs, he spends a lot of time on the road, referring to his car as "*my home on the road, my toolbox*". Depending on how busy he is, Seamus alternates between eating lunch alone in the car, at his work desk or in a restaurant. Because he and his wife have different schedules and interests, their paths generally do not cross in the early evening. He never eats with family members and every evening he orders a take away for himself ("*I would rarely eat at home, maybe for a take away*"). Over the course of a week, Seamus reported eating a meal in the company of others twice. On one occasion he ate a take away in the company of his wife and on another

## Chapter Five

he prepared and ate food with his grandchild while he was babysitting. The lack of synchronisation of routines around meals is due to an absence of a personal concern on the value of shared meals and his busy work schedule. Seamus emphasised a sense of freedom in evading synchronisation with other's paths and contrasts this with a more rigid and synchronised meal time schedule when his children were younger:

“Meal times would be much more regimented when the children were young, and then for us as well. They had to be fed at 1 o'clock, they will be fed at 6 o'clock. Whereas now I eat when I want and sometimes if I'm very busy I mightn't eat all day.”

Grace is 81 years old and lives alone. All of her sixteen car trips were taken alone and she reported no instances of being accompanied by others. Of the nineteen meals she consumed in one week, eighteen were prepped and eaten alone. She attended a communion celebration over the weekend the diary was recorded and on this occasion enjoyed a meal with others. However, such occasions would not feature regularly in her routine. Because she lives alone and does not have any immediate family living nearby, she does not co-ordinate her routine with any other household or family members.

### *5.3.1.2 Other-orientation*

Across all exemplar practices, younger adults were more likely to carry out practices for other people. For example, the average number of weekly car trips oriented towards giving lifts to others was eight (combining giving lifts and school runs) for those under 65 years old and three for individuals over 65 years old. The overwhelming majority of these lifts were given to family members, with parents of dependent children and grandparents with regular child-caring responsibilities recording the greatest number of other-

## Chapter Five

oriented car trips. With regards to food preparation, the mean number of meals prepared for others was six for younger participants and 3.5 for those over 65 (Table 5.5). Similarly, younger individuals performed a greater load of laundry for other people. However, these numbers must be read with caution as an age and gender interaction was observed. Differentiation according to gender within each age group was evident, with women of all ages reporting a greater frequency of other-oriented practices in a week (Tables 5.6 and 5.7).

	< 65	>65
Car		
Giving lifts to others	8	3
Food Preparation		
Meals for self	10	12.8
Meals for others	6	3.5
Meals by others	2.9	7.2
Laundry		
Performed by oneself	2.5	0.5
Performed by another	2	2
Average cycles	4	2

Table 5.5: Other-orientation in weekly practices by age group

## Chapter Five

Variation in > 65 age group						
Food prep	Billie	Mairead	Grace	Frank	Tony	Henry
Meals for self	18	20	19	7	12	8
Meals for others	18	9	0	1	0	0
Meals by others	1	0	1	13	8	13

Table 5.6: Other-orientation in weekly food prep in > 65 years age group

Variation in < 65 age group								
Food prep	Bridget	Sara	Marth	Triona	Daniel	James	Seamus	Michael
Meals for self	16	18	14	5	5	5	3	14
Meals for others	7	15	12	7	0	1	1	5
Meals by others	4	2	6	1	1	7	0	2

Table 5.7: Other-orientation in weekly food prep in <65 years age group

### 5.3.2 Gender

Social differentiation in terms of gender was starkly evident across the sample. Women conducted a greater number of practices with other people (co-participation) and performed a greater number of practices *for*

other people (other-orientation). In addition, they allocated a greater amount of their time to domestic practices in general. Furthermore, updates about other people were more likely to feature in the qualitative comments of women's diaries and their interview narratives were more likely to emphasize obligations towards children and other family members. Qualitative nuances highlight a strong gendered dimension to relationality.

### *5.3.2.1 Co-participation*

Women reported a greater number of car driving trips accompanied by others; most of these were likely to be with family members or a close friend. Similarly, women were more likely to report engaging in activities with friends, such as meeting for coffee or having lunch, which explains the higher number of reported recreational car trips. However, there was little difference between men and women in terms of the average number of meals eaten in the company of others. Age, family and working status intersect with gender here in that retired older men were more likely to report eating meals with their spouses, whereas younger men were more likely to eat at least one meal a day alone or with work colleagues (Table 5.8).

### *5.3.2.2 Other orientation*

In terms of other-orientation, women carried a far greater number of practices for other people. This finding was observed across all of the exemplar practices and for women of all ages. For example, in terms of car driving, women reported giving a lift to others an average of eight times in a week, compared to five for men. Many of these trips were oriented around school runs and dropping children to activities. As a consequence, women reported a greater number of instances of carrying passengers over the weekly period. In relation to food, they reported a greater frequency of grocery shopping, spent over double the amount of time on food preparation and prepared a far greater number of meals for others in the

## Chapter Five

weekly period reported. In addition, they were more likely to carry out the bulk of the domestic chores and carry out laundry for other people in the household (Table 5.8).

In contrast, men were likely to carry out practices for themselves, with fewer tendencies to perform practices for others on top of that. In addition, men were more likely to report having domestic practices, including shopping, food preparation and other domestic tasks such as cleaning and laundry, performed for them, in each case by their spouse. For all of the men in the sample, with the exception of Michael, nearly 100% of main meals reported were either prepared by their spouse or eaten out. In general, the only meal prepared for themselves by all men in the week reported was breakfast. Furthermore, the older men in my sample expressed strongly gendered understandings in terms of the allocation of practices, according to gender roles. An outlier who diverged from this trend is Michael, who works full-time hours and partook in cooking and domestic chores to a far greater extent than other men; for example, he spent 340 mins on food preparation in one week compared to the male average of 119 mins. As will be discussed in the following chapter, Michael attributes this to his socialisation and the role of his father in instilling a balanced and egalitarian ethos towards women and sharing the burden of labour with them in the home.

Similarly, James reported a relatively high periodicity of housework practices, which he indicated is the result of a re-allocation of practices between his wife and himself following her diagnosis with ME. However, it is important to emphasise that in some instances there was indication that to a degree gender roles balanced out, with men emphasising their role in carrying other household tasks, notably DIY and other 'masculine' domestic chores:

## Chapter Five

*“Yeah Margaret does most of the domestic stuff... She looks after the food, shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning and all that....Now look it I would sometimes give a hand... I’d do a bit of hovering and stuff like that. Ironing wouldn’t be top of my skills list but eh I don’t know. Or maybe perhaps we balance it out. I’m always doing DIY stuff.”*

The diary revealed that Frank engaged in DIY tasks around the home nearly every day (five out of seven) and also prepared snacks for his wife during the week (two out of seven days) which to some degree indicates give and take in terms of the load of domestic practices carried while maintaining gender roles. The theme of gender is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Five

Purpose of trip						
Work	2.8	5	8	12	0	0
School run	2	0.5	10	14	0	0
Lifts to others	6	4.5	20	9	0	0
Shopping	3	1.5	5	4	1	1
Visiting family and friends	2	0.8	4	4	0	0
Co-participation						
With others	13.5	7	20	12	0	0
Alone	7	11.5	16	17	0	0
Food						
No. grocery shops	4	1.3	6	5	3	0
Time in mins	296	119	490	340	205	25
Meals for self	15	8	19	14	5	3
Meals for others	10	1	18	5	1	0
Meals by others	2.5	6	6	13	0	0
Eating out/take away	1.5	4	3	14	1	0
Meal eaten in company	12.5	12.5	21	17	2	2
Missed meals	2	3	9	9	0	0
Pre-prepped meals	2	1	8	4	0	0
Laundry						
Performed by oneself	2.5	0.85	4	4	0	0
Performed by another	0.3	3	2	5	0	1

Table 5.8: Domestic practice for one week by gender

### 5.4 Chapter summary

In summary, analysis at the scale of the daily path has revealed that the personal temporalities of the respondents in my study are configured and shaped by institutional, relational and lifecourse contexts. While all individuals have the same number of hours in the day, some participants' time is not simply their own. Lifecourse circumstance, relationship constraints and institutional constraints have an important role in bounding people to carry specific practices, the performance of which limits their capacity for other ways of doing things. In this way, commitments to work and family-related practices configure the field of possibilities as well as the rhythm and cohesion of performances during the day.

Previous research has drawn attention to the institutional scripting of domestic practice around the temporal time structures of organisations and key societal institutions, highlighting for example interconnections between practices at work to temporal experiences at home (Hoshchild, 1997, Southerton, 2003, 2006, Spurling, 2015). The personal temporalities of my respondents resonate strongly with these studies. Their daily domestic practices are immersed in complex and variously malleable sequences that are structured around key anchor practices, variously configured by institutional time structures. Intricate patterns of interweaving practices revealed by the dairies and interview discussions show how domestic practices such as private car use and food preparation, are embedded and sequenced in an enmeshment of practices, routines and contexts, with clear patterns of social differentiation among the sample in terms of capacity to reorder and alter rhythms related to these. These findings attest to the importance of situating environmentally significant practices within the context of daily life. However, in order to fully understand current day practice, an appreciation of how current day routines are rooted in

## Chapter Five

biography is necessary. This is especially pertinent for exploring differentiation among individuals who would emanate from a similar socio-economic background. The following chapter considers this question of how individuals' domestic practice develops and evolves throughout the lifecourse.

## 6. Chapter Six: Careers of participation over the life path - patterns and contexts

### 6.1 Introduction

Analysis of current daily paths revealed that everyday practice is intricately embedded and entangled in relational and biographic contexts, with social differentiation in modes and patterns of performance evident across gender, age and lifestyle groups. Extending this discussion, this chapter explores patterns and contexts of practice over the scale of the life path. While analysis at the scale of the daily path entails an examination of activities that comprise daily life, analysis over the life path involves an exploration of the longer-term patterns in practices and roles embodied by individuals over time. As discussed in Chapter Two the concept of career brings into relief the dynamic relationship between the status of individuals and the practices they carry and embody. Over their lives, individuals are engaged in multiple, concurrent practice careers, with work and family careers intersecting with mobility, food and laundry careers as commitments and roles shift and change throughout biographical time.

This chapter offers an overview of the evolution of individuals' practice over the scale of the life path. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to addressing research question two, that is, 'how does practice change over the lifecourse?' To this end, a descriptive account of patterns of career development over the lifecourse is presented. Attention here focuses predominantly on dynamics in modes of performance, whereas a more nuanced consideration of the processes and mechanisms underpinning the patterns observed is conducted in the following chapters. Triangulation of practice career graphs and interview data helped to construct a life path view of how practice careers in the key exemplar energy practices developed over individuals' lives. The visual-graphic lifecourse methods

## Chapter Six

proved particularly useful for capturing how careers developed and when, how and at what rate change occurred, while accompanying biographical narratives shed light on the contexts and mechanisms associated with patterns of career development observed. By embedding practice dynamics in their biographic and socio-historical contexts, it was also possible to demonstrate the role of time and space in creating or foreclosing the circumstances for the development of practice careers.

Within this chapter, dynamics at the scale of the life path are discussed from a number of perspectives. First, broad patterns of participation are outlined. Gender emerged as a master status configuring life pathways and the development of energy practice careers. As such, Section 6.2 gives an overview of the gendered patterning of practice careers. Following this, Section 6.3 describes periods of relative stability and change occurring at different stages of the lifecourse. Here, critical periods of change in gendered lifecourses are identified and discussed. Section 6.4 considers patterns of change in further detail. It examines trajectories and turning points in energy practice careers and the experience, tempo and contexts of change that accompanied them. Analysis revealed multiple intersecting factors and contexts shaping practice careers ranging from the micro-level scale of individuals' development through the lifecourse to broader transitions in socio-technical contexts. Finally, Section 6.5 concludes the chapter.

### 6.2 Gendered and age-structured practice careers

Analysis revealed that long term trajectories of career development in the exemplar practices were closely linked to the institutional roles and pathways individuals pursue, with these being heavily structured according to gender and age. As outlined in Chapter Two, Pred discusses the dialectical relationship between the longer term institutional roles and

projects in which an individual is invested and the activities of their daily path, which he refers to as the 'daily/life path dialectic'. Analysis of participants' careers revealed this dialectic as being highly gendered. Whether one is born female or male is the most significant factor shaping the type of social positions they will hold within public and domestic fields, with these positions and their evolution over time having important implications for trajectories of energy practice careers. In terms of the dominant fields structuring individuals' daily lives, men's adult lives and social identities were strongly orientated around public and institutional work roles, with many men delineating phases in their lives according to their employment role and context. In contrast, with the exception of Grace, women's working careers were truncated with long periods of absence for child rearing and their roles were overwhelmingly orientated around the domestic sphere and family relationships.

### 6.2.1 Gendered pattern of career development in food and laundry careers

The gendering of lifecourse roles and fields of interaction was reflected in the energy practice careers of men and women. Overall, in contrast to women in the sample, men were far less likely to develop continuous careers in energy practices associated with the private domain, such as food-related practices of shopping and cooking as well as laundry and cleaning. Gender differences in terms of the key phases and transitions identified within practice careers, as well as the goal orientation of practice over time, emerged strongly from the data. In this respect, the intersection between family, work and energy practice careers was apparent.

From an early age, during childhood and the initial commencement of careers, men and women developed differential patterns of performance that evolved throughout the lifecourse. As discussed in Chapter Seven, processes of career development are intricately bound up with the

## Chapter Six

construction, reproduction and transformation of gendered identities, with men and women socialised to draw on gendered cultural knowledges, resources and standards in developing different career trajectories. The presence or absence of participation in domestic tasks during childhood was an essential part of individuals' gendered socialisation. Women's participation in activities such as laundry and food preparation during childhood featured more commonly than men, the majority of whom reporting participating very little in the performance of food and laundry tasks.

With the exception of Michael, periods of non-participation in laundry and other domestic activities were noted by all men in the sample (Table 6.1). Non-participation is used here to refer to periods of absence or infrequent and irregular participation in a practice. During these periods, a practice is carried and performed for the non-participant by another individual or institution. The longest period of non-participation identified was in the laundry practice careers of the oldest men; Tony and Frank both reported non-participation in laundry spanning the entire lifecourse. In this respect, they were never directly enrolled in laundry practice and had not developed a career of participation over time. The shortest period of non-participation identified was a period of four years following marriage in the laundry practice career of James. For all men in the sample the carrier during periods of non-participation was their female spouse, or, prior to marriage, a female relative, most commonly their mother, sister or aunt.

Life stage	70s To ny	60s Henr y	60s Fran k	50s Michae l	50s Jame s	50s Seamu s	40s Danie l
Childhood	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	NP
Young adulthood	NP	NP	NP	P	P	P	P
Married Life	NP	NP	NP	P	NP	NP	NP
Later married life	NP	P	NP	P	P	p	p
<b>Legend</b>							
Non- participation	NP						
Full participation	P						
Small participation	p						

Table 6.1: Men's' participation in Food and Laundry over the life path

Within the male category, differentiation in career trajectories was evident across the cohort groups. Older men were more likely to identify periods of non-participation in private domain energy practices during childhood as well as later in life, and these periods of non-participation were likely to be reproduced throughout the entire lifecourse. For example, both Tony and Frank did not participate in private domain energy practices during their childhood. Practices such as cooking, laundry and cleaning were performed exclusively by female members of the household. Both men lived in the domestic home until they moved into accommodation with their spouse, and responsibility for domestic practices was passed from their mother to their wives. In contrast, men in younger generations, such as James and Michael, were more likely to report being enrolled in domestic practices during late childhood and perform practices independently for a period

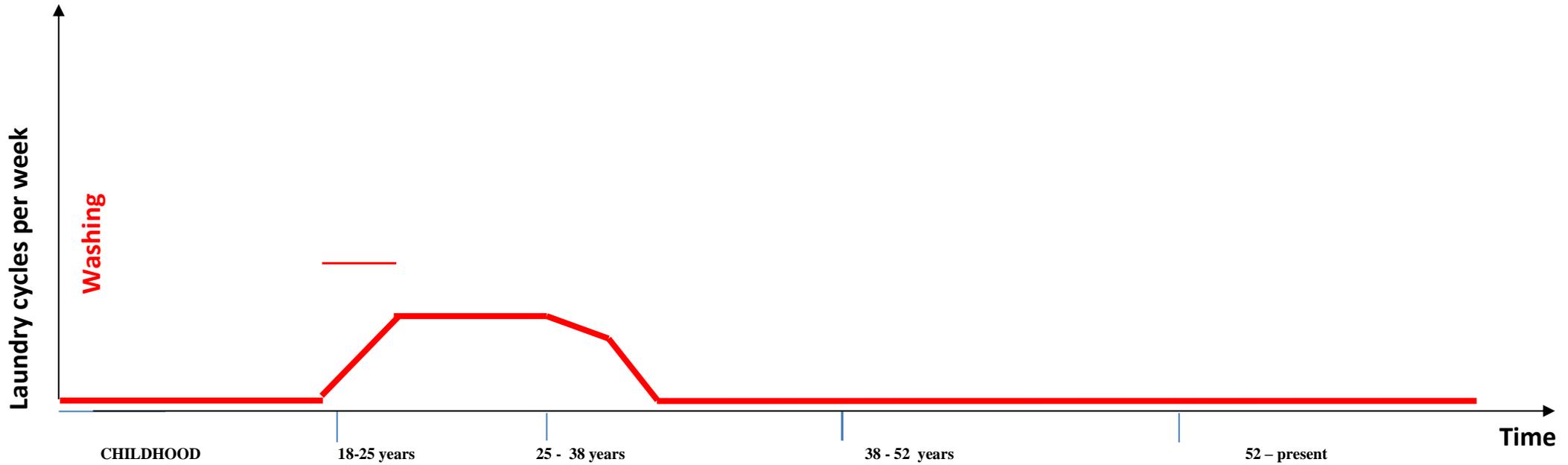
## Chapter Six

before settling down in a relationship. As such, they were more likely to identify periods of independent participation prior to marriage which proved crucial as a time of recruitment and learning.

Generational variances in gendered practice-based subjectivities and meanings accompanied the differences in reported practical action. The older men in the sample consistently expressed strongly gendered dispositions regarding the allocation and performance of practice while younger men were keen to emphasize more egalitarian perspectives in this regard. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these differences appear to be implicated in a changing contour of the relationship between masculinity and domestic practice. However, despite these generational differences in expressed subjectivities and actions, as indicated in Chapter Five, diary data revealed that for men of all ages, their spouses continued to carry the bulk of the responsibility for domestic practices.

The transition to marriage incurring a change in status from single to married was a crucial turning point deflecting domestic energy practice careers for men and women. For men, a transfer of practices to their spouses occurred following marriage as tasks became segregated within households according to traditional gender roles. With the exception of Michael, for all men in the sample the event of forming a relationship with a woman and getting married resulted in declining participation in laundry and food practices, including food shopping and preparation activities. Figure 6.1 depicts the typical trajectory of declining participation delineated by men in the sample.

Chapter Six



Feelings, opinions, values etc	Practicalities	Living independently; Bringing clothes home to be washed. Gradually increasing amount washed independently	Met wife; gradually reducing amount of washing as she starts to do it. Significant reduction following marriage from which point wife looks after the laundry. Occasionally put on a wash or transfer clothes to tumble dryer	Stable low participation for the remainder of married life to present Wife looks after the laundry	

**Figure 6.1: Male laundry career**

## Chapter Six

Despite differences in early career development across male cohort groups, convergence was noted following marriage and fatherhood; except for Michael, periods of non-participation were noted by all men following this life event (Table 6.1). In contrast to women, for most men in the sample parenthood did not bring about a significant shift in performance of laundry and food practice, with men's careers remaining relatively unaffected by family dynamics. The degree to which gendered boundaries were permeable as well as the extent to which they were reproduced indefinitely was, however, shaped by cohort. Men in the two oldest cohorts noted the strictest segregation in this regard, with energy practices such as food shopping, preparation, laundry and cleaning activities carried out more or less exclusively by their wives and this pattern reproduced throughout their lifecourse. An exception here is Henry. The event of his wife returning to work later in life stimulated his re-recruitment to laundry and food preparation practices for him.

Younger men (< 65 years) - James, Michael and Daniel - reported greater permeability regarding gendered segregation of tasks and reported more instances of participation in food, laundry and cleaning activities. For these men, forms of competence developed during phases of independent living were carried through to the phase of marriage. However, a stalling of the pace of skills development was noted for these men following marriage after which point their wives had begun to carry practices for them. Thus, while all men indicated phases of non-participation in private domain energy practices, men in younger generations were less likely to have these phases reproduced throughout their whole lifecourse. For many of these men, a pattern of non-participation was often noted during the early years of marriage. For example, both James and Seamus reported little to no participation in laundry and food practice activities in the period following marriage and parenthood, with their wives assuming responsibility for these tasks. Seamus has recently begun participating in some food

## Chapter Six

shopping, cooking and laundry activities when he is looking after his grandchild. However, his engagement is peripheral in this sense as his wife still assumes more or less full responsibility for these tasks. As discussed in Chapter Five, James' wife's diagnosis with ME has stimulated his involvement, which led to an incremental increase in his participation. He now shops for food every week and participates equally in laundry activities.

Thus, following the transition to marriage and parenthood, men's participation in food and laundry practices was overwhelmingly shaped by events in the life of their spouse. Patterns of non-participation tended to be reproduced until they were disrupted by an event in the female spouse's life, such as returning to work (Henry) or illness (James). Younger men were more likely to have a spouse in employment. Michael, Seamus and Daniel's wives have all continued to work full-time following marriage. Despite this, as diary data revealed, women still assume the bulk of responsibility for these private domain domestic activities. Narrative data highlighted that most men conformed heavily to traditional gender segregated norms which shaped their perceptions regarding their role in the home and their performance of energy practices. However, a notable exception here is Michael who actively sought to resist traditional norms. Michael stood out as a deviant case in that he was the only man in the sample whose laundry and food preparation practice careers extended throughout the whole lifecourse. As discussed in Chapter Seven, these differential patterns of participation are associated with different personal images and perceptions of how energy should be performed in one's daily life. The biographic experience shaping Michael's differential pattern of engagement is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six

Conversely, all women in the sample reported being proficient and regular practitioners in domestic practices, such as food, laundry and cleaning, with this pattern developing over a lifetime of socialisation into gendered roles. Only one period of non-participation was identified across the female sample in the life of Grace, a nun who had lived in religious institutions throughout her entire adult life until retirement. For all other women, laundry and food shopping and preparation careers extended throughout the lifecourse, with all women reporting enrolment and socialisation into domestic practices during childhood (see Table 6.2).

However, differences in enrollment experiences emerged across female age groups. Women of the oldest generation were enrolled in domestic practices in the home earlier and spent the most time participating in these practices during their childhood period as well as carrying practices for male members of the household. Throughout their childhoods, Billie and Martha experienced socialisation into gendered domestic practice roles. Within both of their homes, practice was segregated according to gender divisions and their accounts of socialisation emphasised their early enrolment into domestic practices by their mothers. These women noted a stark segregation of tasks according to gender within their natal homes and their narratives emphasised their participation in indoor domestic practice activities as a central facet of their socialisation as a girl. Gradually increasing participation in tasks and practices was evident as they reached adolescence. For example, Billie discusses her experience growing up:

*“The women, my mother and the older girls did everything for the running of the house. So as soon as I was able I was expected to help out and the older girls would have had to teach me all the things I had to know, like learning to cook, wring out the laundry and the older you were the more you had to do. So all of those things, they*

## Chapter Six

*were our jobs, the girls and the women. The boys were outside with my father on the farm.”*

Younger women, although participating in tasks to a certain degree and emphasising the gendering of everyday practice, reported lower levels of participation during the childhood period. Crucially, individuals' narratives revealed that intersecting technological and services developments and advancements in laundry, food storage and preparation technologies, as well as changes in the provision of services, had reduced the amount of labour required by girls and women, thus freeing up their time for other activities. For example, while from the age of nine Billie spent a significant amount of time every day helping her mother washing clothes by hand, from the age of thirteen Sara was encouraged to start doing her own laundry once a week in a washing machine. The role of technology in reconfiguring temporalities of performance over individuals' lives is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

As female members of the house were customarily responsible for carrying practices for male members of the household, older women were more likely to report periods of other-orientation in childhood as well as later life. In contrast, younger women when enrolled in childhood were likely to only perform practice for themselves and emphasised their enrollment as orientated towards learning and development rather than being directed by necessity. Following this, younger women tended to demonstrate more similarity in career development patterns in young adulthood to their male counterparts, being recruited later and highlighting the period of independent living in young adulthood as a crucial learning period.

Chapter Six

	80s	80s	60s	60s	50s	50s	40s
LIFE STAGE	Billie	Grace	Alison	Martha	Bridget	Triona	Sara
Childhood	P	P	P	P	P	P	p
Young adulthood	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Married Life	P	NP	P	P	P	P	P
Later married life	P	P	P	P	P	P	P

Table 6.2: Women's participation in food and laundry over the life path

## Chapter Six

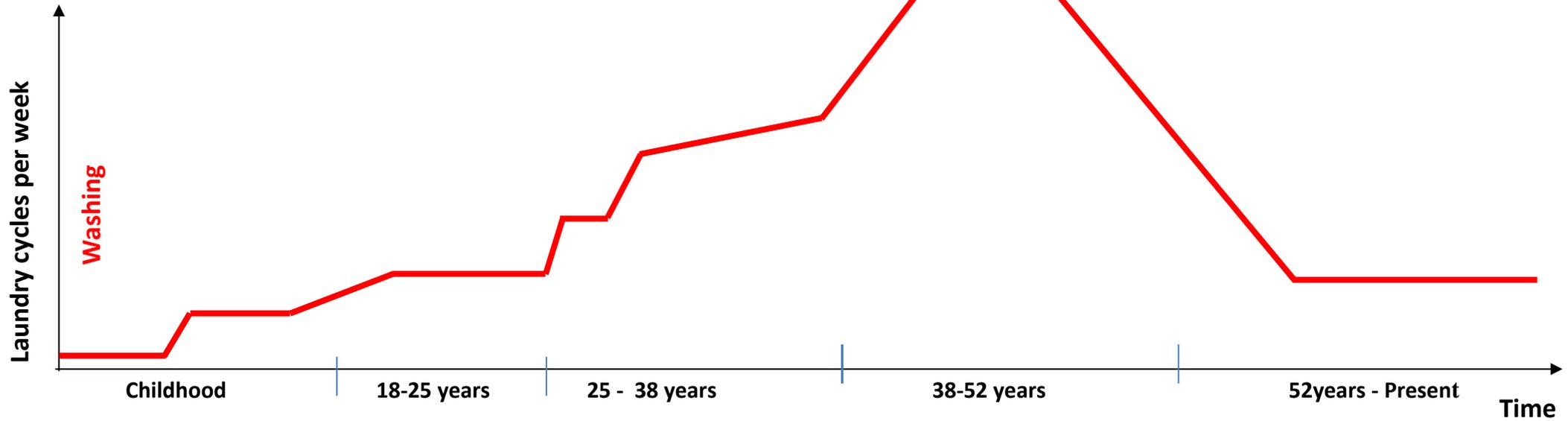
However, as with the men in the sample, patterns of career development among women converged during the transition to marriage and parenthood. Following marriage, women's daily paths were largely reconfigured around the domestic sphere and the routines and lives of spouses and children. In contradistinction to the men, all married women in the sample reported an increase in time dedicated to domestic energy activities following marriage and during child rearing. Across all three exemplar practices, motherhood was associated with an increase in performance of car driving, laundry and food preparation activities as women became carriers of practices for spouses and children. Children's development and changing routines were noted as a source of incremental change within women's careers. For women, a bell curve pattern of gradually increasing participation within practices was evident during childrearing, as participation gradually increased and declined in accordance with the family cycle. Figure 6.2 illustrates an example of a women's laundry practice career which highlights this 'bell curve' trajectory.

Following marriage and motherhood, all women in the sample indicated extended phases of other-orientation, periods during which an individual regularly performs practices for other people, namely spouses and children. In contrast, phases of other-orientation were scarce in the careers of men; only two men, James and Michael, reported extended phases in their practice careers during which they carried practices for others and both of these instances were shaped by trajectories and events in the lives of their spouses.

Again, the time frame by which these gendered patterns were reproduced within women's lives was shaped by cohort. Like men, older women were

## Chapter Six

likely to reproduce gendered segregation of practice throughout their whole lifecourse, while younger women highlighted more participation by their spouses. For example, within Billie's home the gendered segregation of practice has been reproduced throughout her whole lifecourse from the point of childhood to today. Billie did not return to work after marriage. Younger women were more likely to highlight returning to work after a period of absence for childbirth and rearing. This transition often led to a change in the temporalities and relationalities of practices in terms of how they shared and coordinated with male spouses in the home. For example, following Martha's decision to return to work in her late forties, her husband Jack was recruited to food and laundry tasks for the first time in his life. However, despite his increased participation she continues to carry the responsibility for most tasks. The role of socio-historical events, such as the removal of the marriage bar, in delimiting opportunities for increased participation in public sphere featured in the narratives of younger women. The role of socio-historical processes in the configuration of careers is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.



	<p><b>Practicalities</b></p> <p>Always had clean underwear but outer clothes changed 2-3 times a week</p> <p>Started doing own laundry at about 13, c. one wash a week</p>	<p>More concerned about appearance</p> <p>Changed clothes more often</p> <p>Washing for self approx. two washes a week</p>	<p>Increased as kids arrived, c. one wash a day</p> <p>Relying on tumble dryer more</p>	<p>Growing family</p> <p>Often two washes a day</p>	<p>Only myself and partner</p> <p>c. two washes weekly</p>
<p><b>Feelings, opinions, values etc</b></p>			<p>Thank God for pampers!</p>		

Figure 6.2: Female 'bell curve' laundry trajectory

### 6.2.2 Gendered patterns of career development in car driving careers:

Patterns and modes of food and laundry practices have important implications for individuals' energy consumption. Knowledge about gendered patterns of participation, in terms of who carries out practices and to what ends, is important for planning interventions to reduce energy demand. Car-driving constitutes another key practice with significant consequences for energy. In comparison to private domain energy practice careers, reversed patterns emerged in relation to car-driving careers in which women were more likely to reveal later recruitment to car driving and periods of non-participation than the men in the sample. Again, within each gender category, experiences and contexts of patterns of recruitment were structured according to age. Older women tended to be recruited later, in their late twenties and thirties. One woman, Billie, was never recruited (see Table 6.3). Younger women were recruited to car driving earlier, usually in their early to mid-twenties.

In terms of the contexts of recruitment, women were more likely to become enrolled following motherhood. In terms of factors shaping their motivation to learn to drive, women's narrative revealed experiences of mobility isolation during early child-rearing years perpetuated by the gradual expansion of a car-centric infrastructural landscape. As a consequence of their later recruitment, women practiced multi-modality for longer than men. The practice of multi-modality persisted for a number of women even after they had learned to drive. For example, Billie, Triona and Martha practiced multi-modality continuously or intermittently throughout their mobility career. Furthermore, across age groups, women from lower socio-economic backgrounds tended to be recruited to car driving later and indicate periods of non-participation and multi-modality. In addition, in terms of personal ownership of a car, relative to men, most women did not own a personal car until much later in their lifecourse, with women from

## Chapter Six

lower socio-economic groups in particular more likely to car share using their husband's car. It was only around the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s that most driving women in the sample reported full recruitment to driving. These patterns mirror broader patterns in the expansion of driving in Ireland, reflecting the growing number of cars and licenses per capita (see Table 6.4 for national data of the increasing number of driving licenses and cars per capita over the last number of decades).

In contrast, all seven men in the sample were recruited to car driving in their late teens and early twenties. Most men stressed their recruitment as an important part of realising success in the public sphere, with many being recruited for work purposes. The role of work institutions in men's recruitment to driving is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight. Male drivers quickly became loyal recruits, with driving becoming their dominant mobility mode much earlier in their lives than women in their respective cohorts (Table 6.3). For all men in the sample, the transition to adulthood was framed as synonymous with achieving mobility independence and, relative to women, men's mobility careers indicated a greater range of mobility during the period of young adulthood.

	<b>Mean</b>		<b>Max</b>		<b>Min</b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Age recruitment</b>	18	27	23	37	16	18
<b>Age of first car</b>	22	30	28	51	18	24

Table 6.3: Age of driving recruitment and first car by gender

## Chapter Six

<b>Cars and licences per capita</b>							
	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>New cars licensed</b>	27941	52947	91728	83420	225269	84907	92361
<b>Irish population</b>	2832100	2949900	3401000	3505800	3789500	4554800	4609600
<b>New cars per capita</b>	0.01	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.06	0.02	0.02
	<b>1960</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
<b>Total cars</b>	169681	384273	646609	796408	1314059	1872715	1943868
<b>Cars per capita</b>	0.06	0.13	0.19	0.23	0.35	0.41	0.42
					<b>1993</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Passing driving test</b>					52062	93315	222145
<b>Population</b>					3574100	3789500	4485100
<b>New licences per capita</b>					0.01	0.02	0.05

Table 6.4: Cars and driving licences per capita

## Chapter Six

However, like women, a pattern across age groups was evident among male participants. Different work career patterns among older and younger men during the young adulthood period intersected with differential patterns of mobility. Younger men reported undergoing a greater number of transitions in work roles and positions before settling down in a stable work career. Conversely, older men were more likely to report more contextual continuity in their working career, with Tony, Henry and Frank all remaining in the same institution from their early twenties and progressing to senior roles within these institutions throughout their lifecourse. These differences in working careers reflect broader macro-economic developments associated with the movement from Fordist to neo-Fordist labour relations and the associated destandardisation of lifecourses more generally (cf. Brückner and Mayer, 2005). With work representing the most significant factor shaping men's car driving careers, these differences in working career trajectories intersected with men's car driving careers. Men in younger age groups were more likely to indicate a greater number of transitions in their mobility careers during this period of young adulthood, with the purchasing of a car delayed for those who took time out during their twenties to travel abroad and work. For example, the younger men, Michael, James and Daniel, all travelled and engaged in multiple career changes before settling down in a job and becoming routine car users. These experiences did not feature in older men's accounts.

In addition to differences in patterns of recruitment and participation, there were marked gender differences in terms of what car driving was used for over men and women's careers. As stated above, men's car driving careers were overwhelmingly configured around work and were largely unaffected by dynamics in family life. However, more participation among younger men, in particular Seamus and James, was evident in terms of child-caring activities. Women's car use, on the other hand, was overwhelmingly orientated around relational and domestic activities such as child rearing,

## Chapter Six

food shopping and giving lifts to others, with these patterns continuing even after the period of child rearing. However, following the work-retirement transition, Tony and Henry reported an increase in family and domestic-related trips, especially in the context of caring for grandchildren. In addition, women were more likely to report using the car for personal activities once their children had gained independence. Nevertheless, women's car driving careers were intertwined within family development dynamics to a much greater extent than men's.

In the context of Pred's (1981a) internal-external dialectic, the patterning of individuals' practice according to generation and gender brings into relief the role of socio-historical context in shaping or foreclosing the development of different types of subjectivities and forms of practical action. For most individuals, daily activity is patterned and pre-structured according to traditional gendered roles, with the expectations and norms governing these gender roles changing historically over time. However, despite the gendered patterning of practice careers, as discussed in Chapter Seven, in-depth narrative accounts revealed that gendered roles are not just passively performed but are subjectively personified, with these idiosyncrasies shaping for how energy is done in everyday life. Furthermore, career analysis highlighted the intricate interconnectedness of different biographies, especially with regard to men's reliance on women and women's role as carriers of practices for others, highlighting the relational embeddedness of daily activity and the transformation of patterns of relational dependency over time. However, the emergence of institutional work commitments amongst younger women appears to be reconfiguring gendered daily-life path dialectics, with this having implications for how energy is performed in everyday life. As discussed in Chapter Nine, these findings have consequences for consumption policy, which should adopt gender-sensitive approaches in the design and implementation of methods.

### 6.3 Periods of stability and change: changing tempos and rhythms of daily life

In addition to highlighting broad patterns of participation in careers, analysis at the scale of the life path revealed relative phases of stability and change in careers. Certain periods of life were characterised by frequent and manifold transitions in modes of practice whereas others were represented as periods of relatively uneventful change. Narrative interviews revealed that periods of stability tended to correspond to distinct phases within a life in which institutional roles and routines were held stable, or when lifecourse circumstances represented significant social constraints on the ordering and rhythm of daily life. The periods of childhood, parenthood and older age stood out as relatively stable in comparison to other phases of life. However, even during these apparently stable periods, incremental transitions in meanings and modes of performance were evident. In contrast, other periods of life, in particular emerging adulthood, the transition to empty nest and the work-retirement transition, were characterised by manifold and frequent transitions and turning points in practice careers. During these periods, a reorientation of goals, personal concerns and changing routines made these periods particularly dynamic. These biographic phases were identified as critical periods during which key life decisions, events and milestones had the effect of shaping the trajectory of practice careers thereafter. These findings substantiate those of Jones (2013) who identified 'sensitive periods' in walking and cycling careers coinciding with the transition to adulthood and the work-retirement transition.

As outlined in Chapter Two, the concept of biographical availability (McAdam, 1986) discussed in social movement literature suggests that the lifecourse acts as a social constraint (Southerton, 2003) shaping individuals'

propensity to engage with pro-environmental action. Analysis of participants' life paths revealed that this concept can also be usefully applied in the context of biographic explorations of energy practices. Certain phases of the lifecourse are characterised by a greater degree of personal constraints on practice. Shifting institutional and familial responsibilities and commitments at the life path intersect with the configuration of temporalities and relationalities of practice at the daily path. As was observed during daily path analysis, contexts such as employment, marriage and parenthood hem in individuals' daily paths around institutional responsibilities which shape one's propensity to change and alter their practice.

### 6.3.1 Childhood

During childhood, individuals reported structured and organised routines configured around the temporalities of school and home. During this period, the development of individuals' practice was strongly influenced by the logic of their domestic and school context. The role of adult figures and schools as socialising agents, crucial in the formation of individuals practice careers, is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Overall, a pattern of relative stability was reflected in the practice careers of men and women during the childhood period, with abrupt transitions featuring to a lesser extent in this life phase in comparison to others. Incremental transitions featured more commonly during this period and were associated with processes of learning and children's gradual recruitment to practices such as cycling and food preparation as they grew older. However, some individuals experienced disruptive life events during this period of life that shaped their engagement with practice. For example, James' father suffered a period of unemployment which James remembers as impacting on family life and everyday practice. While prior to this James

## Chapter Six

received a lift to school every day on his father's commute to work, following his father's redundancy he cycled to and from school every day. Furthermore, during his childhood, James' mother suffered prolonged ill health and was unable to be active for most of his childhood. This led to his increasing enrolment in food preparation activities in the home.

For all individuals, the period of adolescence was characterised by gradually increasing agency, resulting in a corresponding increasing range of mobility as individuals were afforded more opportunities to go out by themselves. The bicycle was a crucial mode of transport for all individuals during this period. However, relative to boys, girls' mobility tended to be more restricted during adolescence. In addition, during adolescence individuals were increasingly permitted to perform practices unsupervised. For example, Sara emphasised the excitement about eventually being "*allowed into the kitchen to help*" and to do things like "*go in and bake a cake*" in the evenings, even when her mother was out.

However, despite the limited biographical agency characteristic of this phase, the agency of individuals even in childhood was evident. From a young age, individuals subjectively personified their gendered roles and placed symbolic capital on practices differently. For example, a common thread throughout Triona's biographical narrative has been her longstanding resistance to the traditional gendered female role imposed upon her. Growing up the youngest of then children on a poor farm in rural Roscommon, Triona described herself as a "*tomboy*" who actively challenged the gendered segregation of domestic practice in her natal home. In contrast to her sisters who helped her mother inside the home, she challenged this and as a result was permitted to spend most of her time helping her father and brothers on the farm, although she still participated to a lesser degree within traditionally feminine practices in the home. Thus,

despite the structuring effect of their socialisation, individuals subjectively personified and embodied their identities from an early age, with this having implication for their engagement with energy practices later in life.

### 6.3.2 Emerging adulthood

Emerging adulthood was identified as a particularly dynamic period in energy practice careers. The transition to adulthood and the phase of emerging adulthood often provided the first context in which individuals lived independently and developed personal agency as practitioners of their own domestic practice outside of adult supervision. For all participants, regardless of cohort, young adulthood was characterised by multiple, overlapping life events and transitions which were noted as impacting upon energy practice trajectories, including living independently for the first time, experiencing subsequent multiple residential relocations, relationship formation and achieving education and employment milestones. The clustering of life events during this transitional period made it a particularly critical period of change in practice trajectories; sudden transitions associated with breaks in contexts featured alongside more gradual transitions associated with skills development and transformation of personal meanings:

*Henry: "The transition of moving into flats was a fairly major one from a food point of view anyway because then you were responsible for obviously doing all your own shopping, your own cooking of which we didn't know a hell of a lot about and you were completely independent shall we say of any other source, you had to look after yourself, no one else was going to do it for you."*

The stage of young adulthood was framed by all participants as a time of independence and unstructured routines which shaped images of specific

## Chapter Six

practices, such as car-driving and food consumption, as associated with risk taking, convenience and fun. This period was also considered to be a crucial time of enrolment and independent learning in energy practice careers and many highlighted it as an opportunity for learning, development and indeed deviation from the logic and contexts of one's domestic home. Moreover, clear ideas about the appropriate timing of achievement of specific practice milestones, such as learning to drive and becoming proficient at cooking for oneself, were evident with achievement of such milestones framed as essential components of a successful realisation of the role transition from childhood to adulthood. For example, James believed he was a late recruit to driving at the age of 23: *"I was late enough actually learning to drive, I was 23 when I actually passed my test."*

Participation in multiple new social fields of interaction, including university, work and living independently with peers, provided multiple opportunities for exposure to new ways of perceiving and doing energy, with these experiences representing a rich context for learning and development in individuals' accounts (discussed in Chapter Seven). For many individuals, despite being enrolled in tasks during childhood and adolescence, this period represented the first time when practices were performed independently on one's own terms without adult supervision. For example, while Sara was enrolled in food and laundry practices during childhood, the transition to emerging adulthood and university was still a steep learning curve in terms of developing her own independent competence. She deviated heavily from the patterns of performance that characterised her routine in her natal domestic context. Comments such as *"I had somehow not absorbed the recipes"* suggests failure to fully inculcate modes of performance characteristic of home. The distraction of arriving into and living in a completely new social field combined with a desire to be independent and a lack of motivation for developing independent skill and know-how for living on one's own during this life stage were evident. During

## Chapter Six

emerging adulthood, this lack of structure was reflected in Sara's other energy practices as well; she discussed letting laundry build up as she enjoyed the freedoms of increased agency, taking trips away whenever she pleased and being messy if she wanted to be. Generally, it was a time during which she could live according to her own wishes.

Similarly, during his college years, James discussed that in the context of his increased agency he could now make his own choices. He noted that his vegetable, fruit and wholefood intake dropped significantly around this time and his consumption of processed and fast foods, such as pizzas, chips as well as meat, increased. Furthermore, the temporalities of his practice changed. Falling into the habit of sleeping in late, James stopped eating breakfast and today still only has a cup of black coffee every morning and lasts on that until lunch.

However, while this period was experienced as an opportunity for claiming independence and autonomy, for many, particularly men, this transition to achieving competence in independent living was also experienced as challenging. Experiences during childhood were important for equipping individuals with knowhow, skills and competence on which to build during young adulthood. Those who had little experience of enrolment during childhood, most notably men, reported the greatest difficulty with this transition:

*Daniel: "the first year (of college) I used to go home every weekend, most of my friends were in Tralee. I didn't know that many people down in Cork and it was pretty lonely so I was going back to Tralee every weekend. Then in second year I went back less...so (the first*

## Chapter Six

*year) I brought a lot of it (laundry) home quite regularly. I used to get it washed...that happened a lot."*

Analysis across the sample revealed that the experiences of transitions in young adulthood were patterned according to age. Reflective of broader patterns in destandardisation of lifecourses (cf. Bruckner and Mayer, 2004, Levy and Widmer, 2013), younger individuals, especially those who identified university as a discrete life phase, were more likely to have lived independently for an extended period before marriage, have a more mobile youth period and report a greater number of transitions and turning points within their practice careers relating to relocation, education, employment and romantic relationship during this period. For younger individuals, the transition of leaving home tended to be more drawn out and periods of returning to live at home following a period of living independently were noted in practice careers. Iteration in modes of performance was noted for some during this period. While older individuals tended to move linearly from their natal domestic context to independent competence over time, a pattern of iteration in younger individuals' careers during emerging adulthood was noted. Periods of returning to live in the natal home often resulted in a return to modes of performance with mothers once again often becoming carriers of food preparation and laundry activities. For example, both Sara and Daniel returned home for a period following living independently during university, with this significantly impacting on their food, mobility and laundry careers. Living at home, they now had access to the parental car with the result that their car use increased during this phase. Furthermore, food practices returned to that characteristic of childhood while, for Daniel, laundry activities were once again performed by his mother.

## Chapter Six

Some older individuals moved straight from the parental home to the marital home, with both Tony and Frank following this pattern. Others, such as Bridget, lived in 'digs' for a period before living independently. In these circumstances, domestic practices such as laundry, food procurement and preparation were carried for these individuals during this period and as such, independent performance in early adulthood was delayed. In addition, within younger groups an extension of the period before one settled down in a fixed job or abode was noted. These patterns in increased contextual discontinuity among younger age groups emerged as important in shaping dynamics of practice as young adulthood was identified as a crucial period in the commencement of individuals' own independent practice careers.

### 6.3.3 Marriage and Parenthood

Unlike the period of young adulthood, the phase of life following marriage and parenting dependent children was represented as a time of structured routines, obligations towards institutional roles and commitments and a reorientation of focus around the domestic sphere. This period of life is generally characterised by a reduction in the variety of social fields in which one participates. The daily paths of both men and women become hemmed in around their domestic and institutional roles. During this period of life, car driving, food and laundry practices tended to remain relatively stable or else increased incrementally in association with family growth and development. Many individuals, especially women, discussed the personal constraints on agency that characterised this life period. Sara's reflection on these changes epitomises that of other women in the sample:

*Sara: "Your twenties...the freedom! Your money's your own, you've no worries really, nobody is depending on you!... I think your twenties are a magical time. You have a bit of an income, you're free,*

## Chapter Six

*you can eat at any time you want, you can go anywhere at any time...But then you become a parent, those initial years, you certainly are thinking 'where's my life gone'. Your whole life is taken up with household stuff and looking after the kids...But it does get easier again... as the children start growing up a bit."*

The gradual growing up of children was an important source of change, with women's degree of biographical availability slowly increasing over time in the context of the development of children's agency. Narratives oriented towards the future, reveal imagined, envisioned future perspectives, selves and possibilities. Participants emphasised changing possibilities for practice in the context of the availability of less or more agency, shaped by dynamics relating to household composition and availability of different forms of capital (e.g. material, social). For participants who have children, the envisioned transition of their children leaving the home was perceived as a time when everyday circumstances would be more amenable for them to exercise agency in practice, and, if they expressed environmental concern these envisioned changes would often be framed in terms of a time to realise existing environmental values that they felt could not be realised in their current circumstance:

*Sara: "It's so cyclical, isn't it? You know what you're doing now really is for a patch of your life and then things will change. Like once the children are gone I'm going to be back on my bike and using my washing machine once a week."*

### 6.3.4 The transition to empty nest:

Transitions towards empty nest during which adult children began to move out of the natal home were a source of incremental and iterative change in meanings and modes of practice, as individuals, predominantly women,

## Chapter Six

grew accustomed to reorienting their routines. During this transition, women's daily paths were gradually disconnected from children's routines and schedules. For many women, this transition entailed reclaiming a personal identity outside the family unit as well as time devoted to caring and performing practices for others. Personal time and attention once consumed by moral obligations towards family members were gradually redirected towards other activities, with some women returning to work around this time:

*Martha: "...as the boys grew up and started moving out I started to feel that I needed to find myself as an individual again.... I made the decision to go back to work. I found a great sense of freedom in that....to find my own identity again without being identified as being someone's wife, someone's mother..."*

Within women's food, laundry and mobility careers, a general pattern of gradually declining participation was noted during this transitional period:

*Bridget: "Our eating habits definitely changed when I went back to work, doing shift work and we weren't all, people (her children) were going different directions at that stage, you know the family structure with everybody being in here from school doing homework had all changed."*

Thus, this transition was associated with a reconfiguration of the temporalities and relationalities of performance in the home.

## Chapter Six

In terms of impact on practices, narratives revealed that incremental declines in participation were accompanied by an ongoing period of adjustment associated with a gradual progression through role transitions. Some women discussed the initial difficulty in forfeiting routinised practices that had become an integral part of their performance of their identity as a mother and care giver. Often a period during which women continued to perform old ways of practices led to increased wastage and consumption, for example, by shopping too much or continuing to wash bedclothes even when they are not needed. For example, Bridget has four adult children ranging from twenty to twenty-six years of age and over the past five years has gradually undergone the transition to empty nest. During this time she has adjusted the tempos and sequences of her modes of performance. Her car driving has gradually reduced as she no longer has to transport her children back and forth from school and to extra-curricular activities. In addition, she now eats out more as she does not have to be home to cook, wash and clean for them. For the first time in two decades Bridget has all this free time to herself, a process that she's slowly adjusted to over time:

*Bridget: "We're at a different stage of our lives now...our kids have left and they're fending for themselves... So there's been a lot a readjusting... which sometimes feels very strange. From having four kids to all of them living out... And you sort of think 'God I have to learn to do other things'...I mean I have an open house, you know...I like if they give me a little bit of notice to say "look, Somebody's coming home" so I can buy enough meat or....But if I haven't I say look, whatever I have I'll divide. You're not going to get as much as if I knew you were coming but, you know, you're welcome to share."*

Bridget's account reveals how attachment to practices constitutive of one's identity and role can sometimes be reinforced in the context of transition

and change. For example, despite her children moving out, Bridget indicates that she continues to keep the freezer stocked and beds made as the children frequently come home to visit and stay the night. Thus, it appears that maintaining attachment to practices and modes of performance during life transitions is important for mitigating a possible sense of psychological loss that can accompany role transitions. Grove et al. (2016) indicate that attachments to practices perform a psychological function during life transitions and my participants' accounts support this. A more in-depth discussion of the crucial role biographic attachments to practice play in the constitution and performance of identity is presented in Chapter Seven.

### 6.3.5 The work-retirement transition:

The period of later working life and the work-retirement transition represented another critical period of dynamism in practice careers, with increasing biographical availability associated with a reorientation around the self. While only three individuals in the sample had undergone the transition to retirement, as Bridget's narrative reveals, many others discussed their plans and visions for this transitional period. Furthermore, in addition to a reordering of temporal rhythms and patterns of performance of daily life associated with a removal of institutional time constraints and obligations, the period of late middle age to early old age represents a dynamic period of change during which life events cluster, including work-retirement transitions, the onset of health conditions, the arrival of grandchildren and the continuation of adult children leaving the home.

Generally, retirement led to a reduction in car use, although on occasion it led to increased use. For example, Henry has replaced his work commute with a commute to a golf course which is located approximately thirty kilometres from his home. The work-retirement transition was also

associated with an increase in long distance travel. For example, Frank, Tony and Henry all reported multiple annual holidays abroad following the transition to retirement, travelling to places such as the USA and Australia. Other participants discussed their plans for these types of trips revealing how energy is embedded within lifestyle aspirations, with many individuals attaching to societal discourses of active and healthy retirement. Recent research in a UK context (Day et al., in press) has reported a normalisation of long distance leisure travel in the travel aspirations of contemporary retirees. The accounts of participants in this study support these findings. In terms of food practice careers, there was a general trend towards an increasing emphasis on healthy eating during this period of life. Many individuals discussed making changes to their practice. As discussed in Chapter Eight, the role of health institutions as mediators of change emerged as crucial in this regard.

### 6.4 Transitions, tempos and contexts of change

Upon delineating broad phases of relative stability and change, the tempos and contexts of change were explored in greater depth. Within individual practice careers, transitions and turning points were noted for the direction of change in terms of levels of participation as increasing (positive slope), decreasing (negative slope) or stable (flat line). Furthermore, the gradient of the graph reflected the tempo or rate of change, with participants drawing sharp inclines or decreases to represent periods of rapid and sudden change and more gradual slopes to represent periods of slower transition. While life graphs were useful for giving a broad overview of key phases of transition in practice careers, the interview data was crucial for eliciting more detailed accounts of the experiences and contexts associated with different temporalities of change, which are built upon and explored in greater detail in the following chapters.

## Chapter Six

As the previous discussion has indicated, transitions characterised by differential temporalities of change were evident across the exemplar practice careers. Within car driving, laundry and food careers, individuals' delineated periods of incremental change from more sudden transformations. In studying and categorising transitions according to differential temporalities, it was revealed that the categories of sudden and incremental transitions were associated with factors or contexts of change operating at various scales of emergence, from the micro scale of emergence through the individual lifecourse through to the broader socio-technical contexts that frame this process. Detailed analysis of the changing contexts and logics of individuals' lives during transitional periods helped to shed light on the ways in which individual experience, biographic and societal contexts intersect to shape differential dynamics during transitional periods.

Sudden transitions indicate an abrupt change in a practice career and were taken to denote changes that occurred over a period of less than approximately one month, whereas incremental transitions refer to gradual changes in performance that operate over extended temporalities ranging from a period of one month to several months to years and decades. Sudden transitions in practice careers were strongly configured by distinct breaks in context in the material or physical environment, involving, for example, relocation or the integration of a new material appliance into a practice. However, relational contexts were also sometimes associated with sudden transitions. For example, transitions in relationships such as the birth of the first child were noted as the source of relatively sudden changes in food, laundry and car driving careers. Sudden transitions tended to be readily recalled by individuals and were nearly always recollected during construction of graphs.

## Chapter Six

Incremental transitions were more insidious and gradual in character. Sources and contexts of incremental change ranged from experiential learning and development through the lifecourse at the micro scale to gradual shifts in relational contexts at a meso level scale, to broader shifts in the socio-cultural and techno-material contexts which operate at the macro scale and frame individual behaviour. Narrative data revealed that, even in periods of apparent stability, incremental change is always ongoing, especially regarding dynamics in experiential learning and broader socio-cultural dimensions of practice. In this respect, incremental transitions were sometimes not recalled as readily as sudden transitions and sometimes emerged as a function of narrative interviews rather than graphs. A methodological lesson to emerge from this is that life graphs may be more suited to exploring micro-level processes at the scale of an individual's development through the lifecourse rather than for investigating macro-level changes which often remain embedded within participants' narrative accounts. In this respect, combining life graphs with narrative interviewing techniques offers a holistic methodological approach for investigating processes operating over a range of contexts from the micro to macro scales of analysis.

Comparative analysis across the exemplar practice careers revealed differences across practice careers in terms of the overall number of transitions as well as the relative frequency of sudden and incremental transitions, with car-driving careers showing the most dynamism and food shopping careers the least. To ground these observations in data, the tempos and contexts of change observed in laundry and car driving careers are now discussed.

6.4.1 Transitions in laundry practice

Across laundry practice careers, transitions representing increasing use were more common than transitions representing decreasing use. Across the sample, the average number of positive transitions was 2.5 relative to 1 for negative transitions. Furthermore, sudden transitions were more common than incremental transitions, with 2.75 and 1.33 respectively.

In terms of social differentiation across gender groups, women reported more dynamic and consistent laundry and food practice careers and indicated a greater number of transitions within these careers, with an average of 4.5 compared to 2.7 for men (see Table 6.5. for a comparative analysis by gender).

Gender	Mean		Max		Min	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>No transitions</b>	2.7	4.5	6	6	0	3
<b>Increasing</b>	1.5	4	3	4	0	3
<b>Decreasing</b>	1	1	2	2	0	0
<b>Sudden</b>	2	3	4	5	0	2
<b>Gradual</b>	1	1.5	2	3	0	0

Table 6.5: Transitions in laundry practice careers by gender

Initial recruitment to laundry was often experienced as an abrupt transition. For some, this occurred during childhood, while for others, predominantly men, it was synonymous with the transition to living independently. However, Daniel is an exception here. He was recruited to laundry incrementally as he initially continued to bring his laundry home and

## Chapter Six

gradually progressed towards independent performance. The transition to cohabiting with a partner was often associated with a relatively abrupt transition in performance, with this event connected to a decrease in performance for men and an increase in performance for women. Another source of a sudden positive transition in laundry was the birth of the first child. While graphically most individuals reported a relatively sudden decrease in time spent on laundry following the arrival of the first washing machine and tumble dryer, narrative data revealed that this was often experienced incrementally as it was dependent on concurrent changes in systems of provision, such as the production of synthetic clothing (see Chapter Eight).

Across the gender groups, incremental transitions featured to a lesser extent in men's careers than women's, which reflects the intersection of women's careers with relational and family dynamics. However, men's careers were also embedded in relational dynamics. Henry's laundry use increased incrementally in the context of his wife returning to work. James' increased gradually during the period when his wife began to fall ill, while Seamus' has recently increased gradually in the context of caring for his grandson.

Incremental transitions associated with family growth and development featured predominantly in women's careers, with increases in the number of children within a family unit being a key source of incremental change in women's laundry careers. Life transitions often occur incrementally with the result that this leads to incremental amendments and changes to practice over time. The lifecourse concept of linked lives illustrates how changes in the life of one person bring about changes in the life of another (Mayer, 2008). Linked lives and relationships were frequently identified as source of incremental change in practices. The nuances of relationships as

## Chapter Six

a source of incremental change in practice careers are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

While laundry was generally only performed once or twice a week during the phase of young adulthood, most women indicated that during the period of parenting dependent children laundry was performed once or even twice daily. The period during which children entered the phase of adolescence was often associated with an incline in the slope of increasing transitions on women's graphs highlighting the amplified tempo of change during this life context. Adolescents' growing concerns about cleanliness and a surge in the amount of clothing owned by children during this phase of life were cited as key sources of incremental increases in laundry, with some reporting that children would only wear clothes once and expect them washed. For example, Trish and James who have two teenage children indicate that in recent years their weekly cycles have increased from eight to approximately 14 a week.

### 6.4.2 Transitions in car driving careers:

Across the sample, car practice careers showed the greatest dynamism with the greatest number of overall transitions. In terms of social differentiation, men delineated the greatest number of transitions in car driving careers, indicating an average of seven compared to four for women (Table 6.6). Across car-driving careers, transitions representing increasing use were much more common than transitions representing decreasing use. The average number of transitions representing an increase in use was 4.2 compared to 2.3 for a decrease. Furthermore, a greater number of sudden transitions were evident in car driving careers relative to incremental transitions, with an average of 7.8 relative to 3.2 respectively. Indeed, comparison across practices revealed that a greater number of sudden transitions were evident in car driving than other exemplar practice careers

## Chapter Six

which is related to the significant role of structure and the built environment in shaping car-driving careers.

Life events that stimulated sudden transitions in car driving careers were associated with events that involved a distinct break in the context of everyday life, such as relocation and commencing a new job. The transition to university led to a sudden reduction in car use for both James and Daniel and a modal shift from the car to public transport. For some individuals, the birth of a child was associated with a sudden increase in car use. Other life events associated with abrupt changes include illness and being involved in a car accident which were both linked with a sudden decrease. Two individuals were involved in car crashes and for both this event brought about a sudden decline in use and a period of non-participation. A source of relatively sudden change in car-driving performances was the forging of a new romantic relationship. For example, many women noted a relatively sudden change in their mobility practice following commencing a new relationship with a partner who was skilled in car driving and owned a car resulting in a sudden increase in their level of car use as a passenger. Furthermore, gaining or losing a car as well as the event of retirement were both noted as sources of sudden transitions in car use.

	Mean		Max		Min	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>No. transitions</b>	8	4.5	10	8	5	3
<b>Increasing</b>	5	3.5	9	5	3	2
<b>Decreasing</b>	2.5	1	4	3	1	1
<b>Sudden</b>	5	2.5	8	6	2	1
<b>Gradual</b>	3	2	5	4	1	2

Table 6.6: Transitions in car practice careers by gender

## Chapter Six

Incremental transitions in car use were associated with the experience of learning to drive, which was noted by all drivers as leading to a gradual increase in car use. On average men were recruited to car driving more quickly than women, with the average learning period from commencing driving to receiving driving licence approximately three to six months relative to a minimum of a one year for women. This difference was often related to the fact that men's recruitment was often a crucial element of participating in work related roles and posts. Processes of ageing and development were also noted as a source of incremental change in car driving careers. For example, for Tony and Grace the period of old age was associated with an incremental decrease in car driving over a period of several years as they gradually reduced their use of the car for longer journeys and inner city travel. A modal shift towards using the bus, train or receiving lifts from friends and family was noted for these trips. Furthermore, over the space of several months Daniel made an intentional modal shift from using the car to using the bike for commuting to work. This transition occurred incrementally as he gradually increased the amount of days per week that he commutes by bike.

In relation to life transitions, dynamics in socio-cultural dimension of practices over time emerged as a source of incremental change. For example, gradually changing norms regarding what the car should be used for shaped an incremental increase over time as the car became linked with an increasing array of practices and activities constitutive of everyday life. Individuals in older cohorts highlighted a gradual linking of the car with an increasing range of domains and practices in social life, reflecting the broader advancement of the car culture in Ireland. For example, interviewees revealed that the car was initially considered an exclusive activity reserved only for men and orientated around use for work domains. However, over time, the car became linked to new practices such as food

shopping, bringing children to school and an increasing range of recreational activities. In addition, planning and development, the gradual spatial distancing between sites and services and the increasing normalisation of the car in everyday life were noted as key dynamics leading to a gradual increase in car use over time. Incremental changes in broader structural, infrastructural, economic and policy contexts emerged within participants' accounts as important sources driving gradually increasing trajectories in car use over time. A much smaller number of macro-level drivers were noted as stimulating a gradual decrease in use. The issues of increasing cost of inner city parking and congestion were noted by Michael and Tony as gradually reducing car use for trips to the city centre which led to an increase in their use of the bus and train for these purposes.

### 6.5 Summary

This chapter has sought to offer an overview of career development at the scale of the life path to reveal how individuals' patterns of participation evolve over time. The concept of career has been employed to explore changes in practice from several vantage points, including trajectories, phases and transitions. The intersection of gender with career development and energy use over the lifecourse was revealed. Furthermore, the analysis identified a range of factors shaping practice dynamics, ranging from events and transitions at the scale of individuals' development through the lifecourse to broader transitions in the socio-technical contexts that frame this process. Extant lifecourse research on consumption has tended to focus on more sudden changes associated with life events and transitions. However, descriptive analysis revealed that many transitions in practice are incremental in nature and shaped by broader transitions in biographic and societal contexts. The remaining two results chapters seek to offer a more nuanced account of the experiences and mechanisms underpinning the patterns observed. Chapter Seven begins with an exploration of processes operating at the micro-level scale of the individual lifecourse.

## Chapter Six

## 7. Chapter Seven: “Doing Energy” - Mapping experiential processes through the micro-level lifecourse

### 7.1 Introduction

The results chapters to date explore how performances of practices develop or change throughout the lifecourse. They do by offering a detailed descriptive analysis of patterns of practice at the scales of daily and life paths. While some inferential analysis accompanied this discussion to suggest how practices change, the following two chapters seek to offer a more nuanced exploration of processes and mechanisms shaping the patterns observed. Individuals’ narratives revealed that their practice is shaped by complex interacting processes operating at a range of intersecting scales, from an individual’s emergence through the stages and phases of the gendered lifecourse, to the broader societal structures that frame this process. As such, two chapters address the question of why practice changes, each focusing on a different scale of analysis: the first focusing on the micro-level scale of individuals’ experiential development through the lifecourse, and the second focusing on the scale of macro-structural change.

This chapter focuses on micro-level dynamics operating in the context of an individual’s biographic experience. Focusing on the experiential scale, narrative analysis revealed that individuals’ engagement with energy is intricately bound up with continually evolving identities, roles, social contexts and relationships. Crucial to understanding individuals’ changing relationship with energy is a consideration of how energy is understood, as well as how personal meanings and practice intersect with changing relational and lifecourse contexts. The relational conception of the subject

that underpins this thesis recognises the crucial role of relational contexts in shaping individuals' lives in the formation of dispositions, meanings and forms of practical action. In contrast to a rational-individualist approach that conceptualises individuals' deliberation as largely protected from social context, individuals' narratives revealed that they draw on values, meanings and interpretive frames of their social context, with their conduct strongly influenced by their relationships with others. Through processes of social comparison, interaction and learning, individuals come to form dispositions and images that shape what they do, with implications for energy consumption. As discussed in Chapter Six, processes and mechanisms operating at the experiential scale to shape individuals' careers often occur incrementally and insidiously rather than representing more abrupt disjunctures. While sometimes these processes are related to significant life events, such as role transitions, in many cases they are associated with experiences of a more mundane and banal character.

Section 7.2 begins by considering the intersection of energy with identity. Narrative analysis revealed that attachments to practices are intricately intertwined with the performance of moral and gender identities, with these attachments rooted in biography. Section 7.3 discusses the role of socialisation and experience in the formation of dispositions and careers. A consideration of the intersections between energy, identity and socialisation reveals the importance of linked lives in shaping individuals' practice over time. Thus, Section 7.4 draws on the lifecourse concept of linked lives to explore the role of evolving relationships as a source of change in practice. Finally, Section 7.5 explores the role of material capital, ageing and health as factors shaping individuals' relationship with energy over time.

## 7.2 Energy, morality and identity:

Narrative analysis revealed that even apparently mundane and taken-for-granted practices are implicated in the constitution and performance of identity. Individuals' narratives about their energy use revealed that practice is understood in moral terms and often rooted in deep and complex emotional connections. Within participants' narratives, practice is often portrayed as meaningfully emerging from, and governed by, sets of personal values and morals that are deemed important to the individual's subjectivity and sense of self. In this way, practices and the doing of energy is intricately bound up with the reflexive construction and performance of gendered and moral identities.

Individuals constructed their identity by distancing from or associating themselves with certain practices deemed salient to their sense of self. For example, individuals often identified and positioned themselves as the 'type of person' who cares for others, engages in DIY, is pro-environmentally committed and so on. Often attachments to practices seen as constitutive of one's identity were rooted in biography, developing and enduring over time. For example, Frank, aged 70, constructing himself as a traditional male, depicted himself as someone who has always had an interest in mechanics and DIY work and his narrative detailed the evolution of his career as a DIY man from young adulthood to the present. Daniel a committed cyclist, who cycles a thirty kilometre round trip to work every day, describes the evolution of his engagement with cycling:

*Daniel: "We all had bicycles growing up...my uncle was a keen cyclist he would do big cycles every summer...even though we didn't cycle to school, I developed an interest, and once I went to college it really took off ... so I was always doing a bit of cycling I suppose but in the*

## Chapter Seven

*year 2000 I became aware that the Ring of Kerry cycle was going on and since then I do it every year. So that began a deeper interest in it. And then I bought a good bicycle and I used to cycle, I don't need the car every day at work, so I used to cycle (to work) for a lot of those early 2000, 2002, 2, 3 all those years...(and now) I cycle to work every day from here".*

The importance of biographic experience for the formation of longstanding attachments to practices has been noted by Henwood et al. (2015) and Grove et al. (2016), with my participants' accounts substantiating these findings. Furthermore, providing support for a performative conception of identity, individuals' narratives revealed that they naturalised practices they were emotionally connected to, positing them as reflective of their fundamental nature and identity. A common theme traversing participants' accounts was that they emphasised their practice as reflective of their underlying values and emerging from a set of dispositions. This reflects Bourdieu's claim that routinised practices are often naturalised as taken for granted. For example, James' wife Trish is keen to stress that their pro-environmental orientation reflects who they 'naturally' are, stemming from their inherent dispositions:

Researcher: *"And then if you had to say what are some of the factors that would help you behave more sustainably in your everyday life then?"*

Trish: *"...well it's our own attitude that was... kind of, I suppose... bred into us to a certain extent. And it's just the way we are....you find that a lot of this consumer attitude of everything can be used and you can throw away everything, we find that hard to take, you know that kind of way. It doesn't come naturally to either of us, that notion that you just keep on wasting and not thinking about the*

## Chapter Seven

*impact it is having...Disposable world, you know, buying things that have like built in obsolescence almost, you know, so I suppose even things like picking your dish washer, you think, "well this should last longer" so that would just be a natural way we would approach things."*

Many older individuals related their socialisation in a less wasteful and consumer-orientated era as crucial in the formation of frugal or simplicity dispositions. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter Two, Bourdieu (1990) has highlighted the crucial role of socialisation in the formation of long-lasting dispositions and this has been corroborated by recent biographic research on environmental action (Hards, 2011, Butler et al., 2014). Habitus functions as an internalised and embodied life world that shapes an individual's propensity to act in routinised ways that are in synchronisation with the norms and expectations of their socialisation experience, with these dispositions internalised and naturalised in participants' accounts (Bourdieu, 1990). My participants' narratives support these claims. The role of socialisation in the formation of careers and dispositions is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.3.

As Trish's account highlights, people make sense of their own and others' practice, by placing themselves on a spectrum of practitioners by associating with lifestyle groups with which they seek to align, or conversely, dissociating themselves from lifestyle groups from which they want to detach themselves. Most individuals, however, distanced themselves from pro-environmental commitment which they saw as deviating too far from the norm. As Sara indicates:

## Chapter Seven

Sara: *“I don’t consider myself very environmentally friendly because there’s something about thinking that oh “that’s such a hippy kind of thing...”that’s for the tree huggers”, you know, that kind of thing. But I think the gap between hugging a tree or laying down so a road can’t be built and actually doing something daily yourself in a small way to help the environment, I think there is a huge gap there.”*

Similarly, despite his wife suggesting they had pro-environmental orientation, James seeks to dissociate them from extreme or radical environmentalism which appears to be attached to stigma:

James: *“But like we’re not fanatical...like the activist element is not there – so we would be more than somewhat concerned but then that would be different from how active you are, you know people we wouldn’t be like... there are people who level a good bit above us...but we’re not, you know, looking at it at that level so, you know...you have to live a little as well.”*

Here, Sara and James are constructing their practice-based identities by placing themselves on a spectrum of possible pro-environmental commitment, disassociating from anything that deviates too far from the norm. In doing so, they distance themselves from environmental ‘fanatics’. As their narratives reveal, notions of normality were generally attached to unsustainable practice.

The relationship between normality and sustainability has emerged in other research. Shirani et al.’s (2015: 57) study of participants’ narratives of their energy practices revealed that ‘sustainable lifestyles continue to be positioned as unusual or unconventional... [and] subject to wider negative

## Chapter Seven

perceptions'. Supporting these findings, analysis of my participants' narratives revealed that pro-environmental practices were more likely to be attached to stigma among individuals who did not identify with extremely pro-environmentally committed people. Social psychological processes, such as identifying with an in-group and devaluing the practices of the out-group appear to be at play in this respect (cf. Hards, 2013, Hargreaves, 2016). For example, environmental issues featured minimally in Sara's account and throughout her narrative she identified herself as a kind of "*girly girl*", "*a shopper*", and she actively sought to distance herself from radical pro-environmentally committed groups, which were represented within her narrative as constituting a spoiled identity label.

Furthermore, individuals' notions of what it means to live a worthwhile life shaped how people deliberated decisions during key transitional periods in their life. For example, for James the decision to relocate to the countryside following marriage was bound up in images of the good life and attached to his identity as an alternative, creative person. Following the birth of their first child, the couple made the decision to move out of the city to a rural location to realise their artistic dream of renovating an old period property and raising their children in a non-urban environment. This led to a significant increase in the family's energy demand as their car use increased fourfold, which led to his wife learning to drive and the eventual purchase of a second family car.

Thus, individuals' identification with and attachment to lifestyle aspirations and social identity groups appears to shape what practices they perceive as stigmatising or status-enhancing. For many individuals in my sample, energy practices perceived as status-enhancing are attached to high energy-consuming lifestyles and notions of a worthwhile life. For example, for Seamus, holding several driving licences and owning a high-performance

## Chapter Seven

motorcycle was an important symbol of status, especially among his male peers:

Seamus: *"I bought a motorbike when I was 17."*

Researcher: *"And what was your main reason for buying that?"*

Seamus: *"I was 17! I was a bloke and I was 17, you know, what can I say?! It made me feel good and all my friends would've had motorbikes as well ...Boys' Toys, you know. We used to drive around on them to festivals and go camping...I hold a HGV licence, Motorbike, car, tractor, HGV licence. I changed that motorbike a while later and bought another two motorbikes."*

Analysis of individuals' narratives revealed that, for many, high energy-consuming practices are associated with status, and pro-environmental practices bear the risk of stigma. However, certain practices were posited as more stigmatising than others. Practices that were conceptualised as deviating too far from normal conduct, such as those that increase inconvenience, or interfere with what is viewed as 'normal' participation within society, such as choosing not to fly, drive or eat meat, were framed as the most stigmatising. For ordinary individuals who engaged in little pro-environmental action over and beyond what is required by policy, energy practices that are perceived as deviating too far from normal or socially legitimised conduct bear a stigma risk that is too high to transverse. For most individuals in the sample, pro-environmental practices that have been legitimised in society, such as three-bin scheme recycling wastage and reusing plastic bags were socially acceptable. For these people, it appears that certain levels and forms of energy consumption are maintained to preserve an appearance of 'normality' and avoid social embarrassment. Practices that deviated too far from those practiced in the mainstream bore

the risk of stigma being associated with spoilt identity labels such as a 'hippie'.

However, for a smaller number of individuals, 'radical' pro-environmental conduct held strong symbolic capital and was conceptualised as status-enhancing. For these individuals, the range of acceptable pro-environmental practices was much wider than that prescribed by policy. Pro-environmental practice was emotionally attached to their sense of self and identity and they reported feelings of personal and social worth when engaging in such conduct. Analysis of these individuals' biographies revealed that they tended to have a counter-cultural orientation since adolescence, with experiences and relations in alternative social contexts in which reflexive critique and resistance to mainstream images and practices, more common. A crucial factor separating these individuals from others was that they reported belonging and interacting within social networks and communities of practice where environmental issues featured centrally and pro-environmental practice was legitimised and discussed. This supports the notion that status and stigma are intricately bound up with social norms and are heavily context dependent (cf. Hards, 2013; Hargreaves, 2016). Interestingly, individuals who dissociated with pro-environmental conduct did not report involvement with environmental groups and indicated that they rarely or never discussed environmental issues with friends or family members.

For Michael, pro-environmental practice holds strong symbolic capital. Practices of sustainable consumption were portrayed within his narrative as status-enhancing and he aligned himself with pro-environmentally committed individuals. Environmental and moral considerations featured centrally in Michael's narrative and he revealed a very critical stance on issues such as the role of the markets, corporations and governments in

## Chapter Seven

perpetuating contemporary sustainability challenges. For Michael, pro-environmental commitment forms part of a larger life project of living reflexively and ethically, with his domestic practice strongly directed by these goals. From his food consumption to his DIY practice, Michael's practices are directed by sustainability concerns and to this end he had implemented several renovations in his home, such as installing a new boiler and building a fireplace out of recycled wood. Michael's narrative revealed many instances where he sought to display his ethical-environmental stance to others, for example acting as an environmental champion at work. Indeed, the house-tour was taken as an opportunity for him to showcase the many pro-environmental projects and practices he was engaged in within his home.

However, while individuals who engaged in pro-environmental practice conceptualised it as status-enhancing, they were also aware of the risk of stigmatisation attached to their conduct, and reported employing strategies to manage the identity-threats associated with this. For example, Daniel is a committed environmentalist, who cycles a 30 kilometre return trip to work every day, participates in a local environmental group and has chosen a career in environmental science. His narrative revealed that in certain social contexts he actively mutes the expression of his values and modifies his pro-environmental practice:

*Researcher: "You suggested earlier that you feel, to a certain extent, that when you are in certain contexts, like when you are around people who are not interested in environmental issues...that you feel and act differently?"*

## Chapter Seven

Daniel: *“Well yeah I guess at work, the fact is that a lot of people I work with are environmentally conscious because they work in the environment anyway so I couldn’t be sloppy I would have to show that, but it’s good because they are on the same page as you, you know, whereas in other contexts when I am around people who aren’t interested in this stuff, I try not to think about it when I’m there... We were in Letterkenny recently, there was a party up there...but they were just throwing everything into the one bin and that kind of stuff. I didn’t say anything as I knew I wasn’t going to get anywhere by saying anything. But I did think about it, certainly, you know. I would get kind of disappointed, yeah, I suppose disappointed is the word, like I wouldn’t get angry or anything but disappointed. But I suppose I just try not to think about that... but if they could see me doing how I do my business and they say “why do you do it that way?” I would certainly explain it to them. Or even if they were to live with me in my house then it has to be done my way and I could behave the way I wanted...So yeah, there is a difference depending on what group I am with. Sure. They are not all the same by a long shot...I do find it a struggle sometimes you know. It would be easier I guess if more people were involved in things like cycling to work and I suppose seeing more people doing stuff...”*

Daniel’s account illustrates the highly contextual nature of the situated meaning of energy practices and the social politics of environmental conduct. Participation within a social context in which pro-environmental norms are salient seems to be a crucial element determining performance. In this way, social and relational contexts shape the salience of practice norms and configure performance. Indeed, social psychological research suggests that individuals who perform practices that risk stigma artfully employ strategies that enable them to minimise, constructively challenge or dodge these stigmatising processes (Link and Phelan, 2001, Hards, 2013).

The experiences of pro-environmentally committed individuals in my sample support this claim. Their narratives suggest that in many social contexts, pro-environmental conduct is conceived of as deviating from normality and they are not typically rewarded for giving the impression of being environmentally conscious to others. Shove has pointed to the importance of 'envirogenic environments' (Shove 2010) for the promotion of sustainable practice, while others have drawn attention to the crucial importance of social interaction in shaping environmental norms and identities (Hards, 2013; Hargreaves, 2016). As my participants' narratives suggest, the lack of envirogenic contexts in contemporary Irish life appears to be hindering the widespread recruitment of individuals to pro-environmental conduct.

As the above accounts illustrate, individuals' attachments to practices are deeply intertwined with complex identity and emotional connections. Images and meanings about energy use are intricately bound up with personal and social notions of what it means to live a good and worthwhile life. The connection between lifestyle aspirations and attachment to certain practices was a common theme traversing participants' narratives. Henwood et al. (2015) also found that the symbolic capital placed on practices intersected with lifestyle aspirations and individuals' notions of what living a good and worthwhile life entailed. While for individuals such as Michael and Daniel, notions of worthwhile living were attached to ethical and sustainable lifestyles, for many others notions of good living were complexly enmeshed with energy-intensive practices.

### 7.3 Gender and energy

In addition to broader moral positions, identities and notions of worthwhile living, attachments to practices are also strongly configured by gender, with energy fundamentally intertwined with the performance of gendered

## Chapter Seven

identities. Lending support to a performative conception of identity, individuals' narratives revealed that their relationship with energy is intricately intertwined with their sense of what kind of man or woman they are. Men and women draw on different cultural scripts and resources in their talk about their practice. For example, many men in the sample equated masculine strength to energy-intensive practices such as eating meat and driving high performance cars, whereas women were more likely to attach meaning to their role as caregivers. For example, James and his wife Trish's discussion about their food practice reveals the relationship between masculinity, strength and meat consumption. James and his son engage in competitions to challenge each other on who can consume the most meat:

*James: "I would be very high on the protein, you know, like I'd have a much higher level of meat than the average person."*

*Trish: "You'd give up anything else if you got your meat."*

*James: "I think it just keeps me going longer or something...Every time I eat I would have some sort of meat. ...and since the gluten thing it's gone up more..."*

*Trish: "Yeah he is all about the meat... it's like a meat feast here most nights. I mean it's almost as much meat as I can cook. Between James and Sam (son) they take it as a challenge to out-eat each other. "*

While a common theme across participants' narratives was the naturalisation of gendered practice as doxa, social differentiation within each gender category was apparent. Multiple ways of embodying and subjectively personifying masculinities and femininities were evident across the sample, with these differences appearing to have implications for

## Chapter Seven

disparate trajectories of energy practice careers within gender categories. Participants' narratives indicated that differential perceptions of normative prescriptions about gender identity roles shape varying patterns and degrees of motivation and engagement with practice over individuals' careers.

Sociological literature on gender has drawn attention to hegemonic and non-hegemonic gendered identities to recognise the plurality of gender and its variance across individuals, culture and time (cf. Connell, 2002). Hegemonic masculinity has been defined as a culturally idealised form of manhood associated with patriarchal gender arrangements such as heterosexuality, male bread-winning, psychological toughness and economic and social success. Non-hegemonic masculinities encompass alternative forms of masculinity that depart from this hegemonic model (Beasley, 2008). Similarly, a distinction can be drawn between hegemonic and non-hegemonic or alternative femininities, with the former ascribing to traditional assumptions of the family-orientated, domesticated female homemaker and the latter encompassing a range of femininities that deviate from this (Holme, 2008).

Within this study, men ascribing to a traditional hegemonic masculine identity actively distanced themselves from perceived feminine activities, such as laundry, housework and cooking. In doing so, they often posited their wives as the domestic expert and saw the segregation of roles and space as a natural occurrence. Analysis of these men's narratives suggested that participation and proficiency in traditionally feminised energy practices holds little symbolic value and even bears the risk of stigmatisation.

## Chapter Seven

For example, Frank, aged 70, constructed himself as a traditional male. He described himself as a keen sportsman, “*DIY guy*” and “golfer”. He is the kind of guy who reads “*the paper back to front, sports section first, as a lot of fellas do*”. For Frank, hegemonic masculine activities hold strong symbolic capital. Frank discusses the transformations and segregation of practice within the household when they moved into their marital home. Frank constructed his role as DIY masculine provider and his wife, Carol, assumed her feminine role within the home. Frank frames his wife as an expert in domestic practice, while simultaneously distancing himself from the realm of traditionally feminised domestic knowledge:

Frank: “*When we moved in, as I told you I'm a DIY person so I did the lot for us, put in the wardrobes, shelving, all that, even built the extension there about ten years ago... From Carol's point of view, obviously, you had kitchen utensils for cooking, cooker, all of that. An ironing board... She obviously had a drift on what she needed. I wouldn't have much knowledge in that area.*”

Similarly, Henry’s narrative about his work colleagues highlights the gendered meanings and patterns of performance characteristic of his cohort:

Henry: “*Most of the men at work, they just don't see those tasks as part of their role, It's woman's work, you know....I used to hear young women in work, you know, who have got married and they were giving out reams that their husband doesn't do the ironing and this, that and the other.*”

## Chapter Seven

These accounts highlight the intersection of masculinity with domestic practice. Indeed, recent research in a UK context suggests that, while people often profess to hold gender-neutral values about domestic practices, in large part they continue to be framed by many men as 'women's work' (Beagan et al., 2008, Pink, 2004, 2012). My participants' accounts support these claims.

However, men reflecting a non-hegemonic masculine gender identity were more likely to attach symbolic capital to participation within traditionally feminine practices such as food and laundry. For example, for Michael participation within domestic practice was portrayed as status-enhancing. Michael's feminist positioning was framed as forming a part of his overall project of ethical living, with an egalitarian sharing of practices in the home deemed important:

Michael: *"I do the dinner, the laundry too. I know how to separate the whites and everything, I know what setting to use on the old washing machine here. The only thing I can't do, well I can, but not as good as her, ironing I can't do, not as good as her. But the rest of it I can do no problem. I have no problem in taking the Hoover out and hovering the house and dusting. I have no problem with that. I don't see why some men have a problem with that. ...I know colleagues of mine in work... fellas in work who would get finished at 2 o'clock. They would go home and if it's a winter's night like that (points outside) they would sit and watch the television and wait for their wife to come in to make dinner. And I'm looking at this going "Do you know how to peel potatoes?" "That's her job". "Oh ok". No that's, from day one that was never going to be the case with Mairead and myself. No. No. It was always a shared responsibility in the house."*

Contrasting Frank and Michael's accounts, it is possible to explore the ways in which notions of masculinity are symbolically reproduced or challenged through domestic practice. Indeed, for some younger men, such as James, participation in cooking was framed as status-enhancing suggesting a changing relationship between domestic practice and masculinity in Irish society. Indeed, research in Canadian (Szabo, 2016) and UK contexts (Pink, 2004, Meah, 2014) has drawn attention to changing cultural scripts of masculinity and men's symbolic attachment to domestic practice. However, due to the small sample size, further research is needed to explore the changing intersection of gender, stigma and energy practices in an Irish context. As discussed in the Section 7.3, analysis of the biographies of men reflecting alternative masculine practice identities revealed that they were enrolled in domestic practices during early life and exposed to alternative ways of doing gender in the home, suggesting that early participation and socialisation have a crucial role to play in the formation of practice meanings and identities.

Conversely, for many women in the sample, energy use and participation within practice careers was intricately bound up with their performance and expression of their domestic identity and feminine role in the home as mothers and carers. Again, social differentiation within the female category was observed in accordance with those who expressed a connection to hegemonic and alternative feminine identities. For women reflecting hegemonic feminine identities, proficient performance of domestic practice held high symbolic capital, conceptualised as a key indicator of their successful realisation of their domestic and family roles. These women often developed domestic practice trajectories that moved towards 'expert' competence and skill in what is understood as traditional housewife activities and knowledges, and were likely to orientate their identity

## Chapter Seven

predominantly around their domestic role following the transition to marriage.

For example, following marriage and motherhood, Sara's domestic practice underwent a significant change with path-dependent effects on the trajectory of her careers thereafter. Becoming increasingly proficient, even 'expert', in housewifely knowledge was foregrounded as an important means by which she could realise her role as a caring mother and a 'savvy' housewife:

*Sara: "That period was the start of when I started going very purist... I became very conscious of how I was doing things, thinking more holistically and purist you know...thinking about your own and your family's well-being.... Media-wise, I started paying a lot more attention and learning as much as I could, like cookery and housing programmes...and health, like your five a day, but more vegetables than fruit...I've reduced my use of chemical cleaning products, I mean you're just hammered you know by information these days... I do try to follow all of that."*

Through her narrative, Sara emphasises a disposition of a caring, nurturing, supportive and self-sacrificing homemaker and mother. Proficiency in "purist" approaches to domestic practice was conceptualised as status-enhancing for Sara and intricately bound up with her notions about what it means to be good mother and wife. In her pursuit of 'expert' proficiency, Sara turned to a range of contemporary and traditional knowledge sources as she has learned how to be a "savvy shopper", become a proficient cook and develop other skills of home management which have shaped how she does energy in the home. It is noteworthy that these changes were framed

## Chapter Seven

in terms of narratives of health, wellbeing and the fulfilment of her domestic role rather than by sustainability. This “purist” approach to her housewife role also extends to her parenting practices. She engages in a ‘helicopter’ parenting approach characteristic of middle class parenting style, spending most weekly evenings attending to her children, driving them to extra-curricular activities and orientating her daily path around their activities and events. Thus, Sara’s prescriptions regarding her feminine identity and role are intricately bound up with the evolution of her domestic practice.

In contrast, other women reflecting alternative femininities actively distanced themselves from a traditional gender identity and role in the home with this intersecting with how energy is used and performed. These women were less likely to stress motivation to engage with ‘expert’ and ‘purist’ knowledges or to frame proficiency in domestic knowledge as an important component of their identity. Furthermore, they draw on different sources of cultural knowledge, attach their practices to different images and employ different strategies when negotiating their practices in the home. They are not willing to be fully engulfed by their domestic role as wife and mother, actively disassociate from a traditional housewife identity and employ strategies of boundary setting to place explicit limits on the degree of other orientation they were willing to engage in, with this having implications for how they do energy in the home.

For example, Triona actively distances herself from a traditional hegemonic domestic role. In contrast to Sara, who emphasised a whole re-orientation of her life around the domestic sphere following the transition to marriage, Triona emphasised that despite her changing role and commitments, she would not allow this to detract from her independence or lifestyle and she

## Chapter Seven

puts boundaries around the practices she is willing to engage in as part of her role:

*"I have things I refuse to do, small things... I don't iron duvets, I refuse to iron them, and I don't iron towels or tea towels...I'm not going to be slaving over a dinner all evening after I get in from work so we do use the ready-made sauces and that kind of things a lot...lately he (husband) has been on about installing winter harvesting systems and this system and that system and I would be going 'And who is going to look after these systems?' ..I'm fucking telling you I'm going to be left doing all this... You can come up with all the bright ideas that you want ...but I refuse to be doing it."*

In recent years, Triona's husband has become increasingly concerned about sustainability matters. However, Triona is reluctant to support his ideas about implementing new technologies and practices in their home because she feels, that as the carrier of most practices in the home, she will be left to look after it. An important distinction between Sara and Triona's cases is that Sara is a fulltime homemaker, while Triona works full time in an administrative role. It is thus plausible to suggest that their alternative embodied femininities could be attributed to this distinction. However, an examination of their biographies revealed that their attachment to their feminine identity emerged early in life, continuing to evolve throughout their lives, with these attachments having implications for how they engage with and perform energy in the daily lives.

Martha, who was a fulltime homemaker until her sons moved into adulthood, is also a woman who actively distances herself from a traditional

## Chapter Seven

hegemonic domestic role and placed boundaries around her degree of other-orientation:

*“I was very conscious of not being the Irish mammy, running around doing everything for them... the boys would have always had jobs from the time they were little, from the time they were toddlers they had to set the table and as soon...as they were old enough they were using their bikes and taking the bus themselves to school... so things like that.”*

These women’s narratives show how energy is intricately bound up in negotiation and performance of gender identity roles in the home. For both Triona and Martha, their energy use is reduced as a function of their strategy of placing boundaries around their role as mother and care giver in the home, for example by encouraging children to use their bikes or refusing to iron clothing. This contrasts with accounts from women such as Sara who hold different perceptions on their role expectations and requirements with this shaping how they engage with energy in their daily lives. Variance and social differentiation in the performance of gendered identities among the sample highlights the fact that individuals do not just passively perform roles, but rather subjectively personify them in their own way, with this having implications for how individuals engage with energy in their everyday lives. These findings highlight the ways in which women and men locate and create their identity within the shifting sites of the domestic everyday (cf. Pink, 2004), a process which intersects with trajectories of career development in energy practices.

### 7.4 Socialisation

#### 7.4.1 Experiential learning and the formation of dispositions and attachments

As the previous discussion has illustrated, dispositions and attachments to certain practices intersect with identity, with these intersections deeply rooted in biography. As Sara indicated *“you’re a product of your past”*. Supporting this, many individuals’ narratives revealed entrenched dispositions stemming from their socialisation. Early socialisation experiences provided individuals with natal context experiences that were crucial for setting individuals on domestic practice trajectories and inculcating deep-seated preferences, dispositions and images about practices that acted as references points for comparison in later life.

The concept of socialisation refers to ‘the ways in which individuals learn skills, knowledge, values, motives, and roles appropriate to their position in a group or society’ (Bush and Simmons, 1981: 134). As discussed in Chapter Two, Bourdieu emphasised early socialisation in particular as crucial in the formation of habitus and the long-standing dispositions that shape conduct throughout life. Furthermore, he introduced the concept of practical mimesis as a conceptual tool to understand processes of socialisation (Bourdieu, 1990). Practical mimesis is a form of cultural learning that involves inculcation of norms and practices in habitus through embodied practical participation. Through memetic processes of observation, imitation and action, individuals come to embody and reproduce their external reality. This embodied conceptualisation of socialisation stresses the role of corporeal participation to emphasise how individuals’ subjectivity develops alongside their involvement in practice.

## Chapter Seven

Norms about appropriate conduct, what is understood as moral or profane practice, often stemmed from socialisation experiences. Individuals' narratives revealed that they made sense of their current conduct in the context of their past conduct, especially that relating to the natal context. As discussed above, many of the older participants stressed a frugal disposition from being socialised in eras with much less emphasis on consumption. For Sara, a suite of "*principles from home*" shaped her moral and emotional engagement with her daily practice long after she had left her natal home. These "*principles*" included dispositions toward certain practices that were performed by her mother, such as purchasing meat only from butchers, valuing home-cooking, home-growing food, as well as holding certain attitudes towards technologies, such as distrusting the microwave and valuing the gas hob over electric cookers. Sara has reproduced these practices and attitudes as they are perceived by her as the appropriate form of conduct. For all participants in my study, principles and attachments laid down in childhood represent a moral guidebook for appropriate ways of doing what feels right. Individuals' narratives about practices of the natal context were often presented in nostalgic and romanticised terms. The theme of seeking to emulate the practices and conditions of socialisation was a cross cutting theme traversing participants' accounts:

Michael: *"Most of our food tastes were sedimented from growing up...It's been the same all the way through. Like you grow up with the wholesome kind of three meals a day, eggs or cereal for breakfast, sandwich or soup for lunch, meat and two veg for dinner and that's stayed the same the whole way through really, it's what we know, except in recent years the occasional pizza or Chinese but very occasionally...The way you're brought up influences you. There's no two ways about it."*

## Chapter Seven

In addition, to practice-specific dispositions, socialisation provided a crucial context for the inculcation of expectations and norms regarding fulfilment of roles and ways of doing family, which acted as a reference point for judging the appropriateness of conduct in later life. For the most part, participants inculcated, imitated and emulated the gender roles performed by their parents and other socialising agents, the structuring of which was shaped by the socio-historical and normative context in which their lives evolved. For example, Sara's deliberation in the context of her decision to forfeit her career as a nurse to become a fulltime homemaker was based on her own experience growing up:

*Sara: "My mother would have been a mom who was at home baking and cooking, very much that kind of thing. That's how I grew up. So that's what I wanted for my kids...and I have no regrets...I've known when they've been off form, I've known what they've eaten, where they've been, when they've been sick...You can really keep an eye on them. And I think they've done well out of it."*

Sara's reflexive deliberation concerning this key life decision occurred within the context of her original gendered habitus. Becoming a housewife was symbolically valued by her as the right thing to do for her children and her family. Sara's perception of how to be a good mother and wife was rooted in her socialisation experiences and bound up in the reproduction of a hegemonic feminine role in the domestic sphere. These dispositions were re-activated in the context of the transition to the domestic field. For her, becoming a good mother and wife meant forfeiting her trajectory and career in the public sphere and reorienting her full attention around her children and husband. This decision had clear implications in the trajectory of Sara's energy practice careers, enabling her to devote her time and attention to the pursuit of 'purist' proficiency outlined above.

## Chapter Seven

During socialisation, assumptions regarding gender role expectations and the place of men and women in the home had an impact on participants' practice images and forms of action. In addition to observing the roles of others, early socialisation provided a crucial context for the formation of practice careers. Direct enrolment and participation in practices during this time was a crucial determinant in the long-term trajectory of participants' careers. Individuals' socialisation as gendered beings was intricately bound up with their participation or absence from enrolment in tasks in the home growing up.

All participants' narratives of their early life emphasised highly gendered field conditions and most individuals highlighted segregated gendered practice in their natal home. Housework was carried out almost exclusively by their mothers and female members of the household, and narratives emphasised the taken-for-grantedness of the gendering of practice. As Henry noted, *"the female role and the male role were preordained at that stage"*. Practices were segregated according to traditional gender roles and these boundaries were structured spatially in the home, with feminine activities, including cooking, cleaning, laundry and so forth, circumscribed to inside the domestic site and traditionally masculine activities, such as farm work and outdoor activities, bounded to the outside domains. Participants' narratives indicated that this gendering of practice was widespread in the cultural field. Michael's description of the context epitomises the conditions expressed by others:

*"When I was a child, fathers would be responsible for what went on outside the house. So cutting the grass, doing the garden, painting, all that sort of stuff. That was man's work. That was not seen as women's work, you don't do that! Now, inside the house, men, you*

## Chapter Seven

*know, we don't cook, we don't Hoover, we don't clean, we don't set fires, that's woman's work, we don't make beds. That's woman's work."*

Mobility was also highly gendered. Stark differences in the mobility patterns and practices of men and women were noted by all participants. Only one participant (Daniel, age 47), had a mother driving in childhood. For others, mothers generally used buses or walked to the shops for groceries and their daily mobility path was configured in the locality around the home. In contrast, most individuals noted that their father drove and owned a car but that this was used by him almost exclusively for his activities in the public sphere, largely centred on work. The car was attached to images of masculinity. Claire's account illustrates this:

*"My mother never learned to drive, so she would walk us to school in the morning. Dad would be gone with the car and she didn't drive...It was always Dad's car. You know it was that very old fashioned "it's Dad's car". It was just very standard at the time. It was just the way it was."*

Later, reflecting on her own experience of learning to drive in the late 1970s, Claire stated:

*"I ensured I got driving lessons because I saw how disadvantaged my mother was by not being a driver, d'ya know what I mean...But by then it was just kind of run of the mill. It was, kind of, just what everyone was doing. Everyone had a car, or had a boyfriend who had a car, you know. It was just kind of routine."*

## Chapter Seven

Here, Claire's narrative suggests that, for her, driving as a practice derives meaning and intelligibility from the socio-historical context in which it was performed. Discussing this data, Greene and Rau (2016: 16) note:

'In the context of car driving - a culturally situated, mediated, and power laden activity - dynamics of gender and wider socio-economic contexts in Ireland such as labour relations and property ownership shaped normative understandings of the practice as well as the conditions of possibility for participation...gendered forms of exclusion regarding car ownership and driving were evident in Irish society until the latter half of the twentieth century, with traces remaining to date. In the past, women's exclusion occurred across all three elements of the practice: driving a car was understood as a predominantly male practice (meanings), with driving skills being largely taught to male practitioners (competences) who were also expected to own a car (materials).'

The significance Claire places on becoming a proficient driver herself in the 1970s was strongly associated with this gendered history of practice; she was motivated to learn how to drive in part due to her observations of the constraints that her mother experienced.

Following the gendered patterning of mobility careers, the nature of women's attachment to the car was qualitatively different from that of the men in the sample. In their earlier lifecourse, many older women had experienced mobility restriction and isolation prior to learning to drive, with many indicating they were essentially housebound during early years of childrearing as their husbands took the car to work. These experiences

## Chapter Seven

shaped their attachment to their car in later life, with many women stressing it as a fundamental symbol of their independence that they were unwilling to ever forfeit. For example, in recent years, Martha and her husband had toyed with the idea of downsizing to one car. However, Martha's experience of isolation during her early motherhood years and hard-worked path towards achieving mobility independence as a woman led to deep and complex emotional connection to her car:

*“Having lived with no car to having two cars, we do consider two cars in the house here to a certain point a luxury, yes I do, but it's kind of that and then...you know even though the conscience niggles at me from time to time, like since James has retired I was weighing up and toying with the insurance and petrol and everything else, you know, considering giving it up....But in the end I decided against it and you know it boils down to that I couldn't possibly face feeling that housebound again, that's something I just couldn't give up now... it took me a long time to get a car. It was a huge thing. If I gave it up I think I would have felt I have sacrificed something, like a part of myself because it took me a long, long time to get it. It was a real mark, sense of....I wouldn't say a goal but you know when you strive for something and you get it?”*

Martha's experience was typical of the experiences of older and middle aged women who were recruited to driving later in their lifecourse. The commonality of this theme across the women's accounts shows how what is a subjective experience is in fact historically structured, as similar patterns in meanings and attachments to practices are configured by shared gendered biographic experiences. Chapter Eight discusses the role of context in configuring women's driving careers in greater detail.

### 7.4.2 Socialising agents

In the context of individuals' socialisation, the role of socialising agents as conduits for the development of images and skills was a key theme to emerge. Parents' biographic experience, know-how and personal dispositions were crucial in the formation of individuals' practice dispositions and forms of competence during childhood. Parents played a key role in teaching children values, acting as role models through example setting, and were the chief agents enrolling children in practices, transferring competence as well as enforcing norms about appropriate conduct. These roles were also carried out by grandparents, older siblings as well as experience in school.

The crucial role of parents as socialising agents was brought into relief when considering divergent accounts of socialisation. Michael stood out as an individual whose domestic field context and socialisation experience during childhood was very different to other men. In contrast to other men in the sample, he was enlisted in traditionally feminine practices at home. Michael's father actively sought to resist doxic logic and challenge the reproduction of the gender order by socialising his sons differently. Discussing his enrolment in traditionally feminine domestic practices, Michael indicated that:

*“My Dad insisted on me doing that. He'd actually come in and supervise it, Mom teaching us to cook and sew and things like that...he was very much a visionary in his own way because he always said it didn't matter if you were male or female...He'd say “You're going to learn everything”. And we did. Unknowns to us we learned everything. We learned how to sew buttons on shirts, cook, the whole lot. And things like, he would never allow my Mom to press*

## Chapter Seven

*his or my uniform. I ended up pressing his bloody uniform by the way!...But, simple things like that...and we used to always say "Oh for god's sake Dad, that's sissy work!" and he always said "No it's not because one of these days you're going to have your own home and you should be in a position to help out"...so the values that he had, he gave to us when we were growing up."*

Michael's account of socialisation revealed the critical role his father played as a socialising agent, shaping the development of his reflexive disposition towards domestic practice. By engaging with him in conversation that elicited critique and opened up the taken-for-granted doxic character of gendered practice for their interrogation, Michael's father created a space for him to develop discursive awareness. This was accompanied by practical action and example setting which, as Michael noted, was considered unorthodox at the time:

*"A thing that really stood out for me was a time that my Mam took ill and she was confined to bed for quite a while and we were all thinking OK how is this going to work out and you know we were only kids and we were thinking OK what are we going to do... But my Dad stepped into the role as both father and mother to us and we were watching this as kids growing up and we were saying wow you know this is what it's about, this is what Dad's been telling us you know he's doing it rather than saying ok that's not my job, that's women's work."*

Later Michael indicated that the *"skills I learned in childhood I brought with me into my marriage"* highlighting how these formative experiences had a path-dependent effect shaping the trajectory of his energy practice careers.

## Chapter Seven

This experience contrasts starkly with other men's accounts of socialisation. In Frank's home growing-up, practices were segregated according to traditional gender roles. Frank's father did not like to see him participating in traditionally feminine activities and had a strong influence over his recruitment to traditionally 'masculine' practices, including DIY and sports. Others have also highlighted the crucial role of social and relational context in shaping the degree to which men will hold symbolic capital for participation in domestic work (Hochschild, 1987, Szabo, 2016). My participants' accounts suggest that the reception of praise, encouragement and observing others act through example setting appear to play a particularly crucial role in the formation of dispositions, as developing individuals internalise ideas about what practices hold capital from their social environment. These early experiences had a crucial role in the formation of dispositions that shaped very different career trajectories in Frank and Michael's lives. Michael went on to develop an overarching disposition towards reflexivity, characterised by a critical perspective on the world and the persistent pursuit of ethical and moral ideals in his everyday practice, whereas Frank reflected a disposition towards conformity and followed a traditional hegemonic male trajectory of non-participation in such practices. Thus, experiences during childhood and adolescence set individuals on path-dependent trajectories that shaped how they responded to and embodied roles during later life transitions, with this having important implications for how they engaged with energy practices over time.

### 7.5 Relationships

The themes of identity and socialisation highlight the importance of relational and social contexts for the formation of skills, meanings and practice careers. Throughout an individual's life, their understanding and use of energy is shaped by their evolving relationships with other people. As discussed in Chapter Two, lifecourse theory emphasises the importance of linked lives, highlighting how transitions in the life of one individual can

## Chapter Seven

have implications for the lives of others, while the relational conception of the subject that underpins this thesis recognises the crucial role of social and relational contexts in shaping individuals' lives. Individuals draw on the values, meanings and interpretive frames of their social context, with their conduct strongly influenced by their relationships with others. Supporting findings from Henwood et al. (2015), participants narratives revealed that relationships with others are often sources of change that are incremental, unplanned and unintentional in character, although on occasion they are the source of more abrupt changes in practice.

Relationships have a temporal dimension, shifting and evolving as people move through new social contexts, roles and stages in life (Henwood et al., 2016). Roles and obligations towards family members change as one moves through life stages and role transitions. Participants' accounts indicated that these changes in obligation shape how energy is used and understood, shaping for example, the degree to which individuals carry and orient their energy use and practice around the needs of others, for example in giving lifts to elderly parents or ferrying children around to after school activities:

*Michael: "I often think about it, Mary, that when you look at the circle of life, how life changes...as time went on we saw that two cars were going to have to be got, a second car, Mairead had to get a second car. Because like tonight now she's looking after her (elderly) mother. Now if she didn't have a car it means that I have to go and pick her up and when my own Mam and Dad were alive they got, like as the parents got older we kind of started stepping in to do things for them ....my Dad wasn't inclined to go off in the car because traffic and the volume of traffic and the speed had become too much for him. So where he was dropping his driving amount, I was picking it up for him. So I was taking him and my Mam wherever they wanted*

## Chapter Seven

*to go. So a second car then became a vital tool....transport became a big thing, the two cars became a big thing for a good part of twenty years. Now it's again changing the other way. I tend to use public transport a lot more now."*

Michael's account reveals the intersection of lives and relations of dependency as well as how these dynamics shift over time. When energy use is bound up in moral obligations towards others, it is often considered non-negotiable as individuals' moral and emotional commitment binds them as carriers of practices for loved ones who are dependent on them. The findings from this study lend strong credence to the importance of a relational approach to understanding energy practices.

While relational dynamics emerged as a source of change in all individuals' accounts, the lives of women in my sample are more complexly embedded in relational networks of dependency. As discussed in previous chapters, as carriers of practices for others, women's lives and practice are more likely to be influenced by transitions in the lives of children and other family members. Within women's biographies, the phase of parenting was identified as the period with the greatest degree of relational dependency, significantly intersecting with their laundry, food practice and mobility careers. As discussed in Chapter Six, participants emphasised changing possibilities for practice in the context of the availability of less or more agency, shaped by dynamics relating to household composition and networks of relational dependency. Those with dependent children frequently envisioned their relationship with energy changing when children began leaving the home:

## Chapter Seven

While parenting was associated with increased energy and resource consumption in all cases, social differentiation in parenting styles shaped engagement with energy. For example, as illustrated with Sara's case above, within middle class families a general theme of not denying children opportunities for their development and advancement legitimised high energy consumption and car use. For example, higher car use in relation to taking children to extra-curricular activities was documented by middle class parents (e.g. Sara, James) in comparison to lower class parents (e.g. Martha, Triona) whose adolescent children were more likely to be expected to make their own way to school by bike or bus to activities. Different ideas of what it means to be good parent within different social groupings thus appear to be linked to different patterns of energy use. Furthermore, this implies that processes of stigmatisation associated with bad parenting may be diverge among social groups, with this having implications for how energy is consumed.

In addition to the implications of role transitions, relationships acted as vehicles for the exchange of images, knowledge and skills. For many men, their female spouse was the greatest source of influence over their practice trajectories, acting as sources of knowledge and images in relation to what constitutes healthy and ethical living. Men's spouses were often identified as the basis of more concrete changes in practices such as transitioning to a healthier diet, reducing meat consumption and increasing walking in later life:

Henry: *"My wife has joined a gym now and again she would get nutritional advice and all that sort of things there which then she would impart to me as well so when she is eating healthy basically I'm eating healthy, when she's out walking she'll have me out walking, that's the way we are at the minute."*

## Chapter Seven

Female spouses acted as sources of concrete learning of new skills and practices, such as learning to cook in later life. However, this process sometimes acted bidirectionally as male spouses were identified as source of learning for female spouses about more technical aspects of practices, associated with for example DIY and material purchases:

*Michael: "Now I'm learning stuff from Mairead (wife), like I made scones there a couple of weeks back...both of us kind of learn off one another in doing different things... I'm pretty handy at doing things in the house and I've built on that from learning from Mairead. But she learns from me too. If I'm working around the house doing repair work, she'll come out and go "Oh that's how you do that" and "that's how that's done", so yeah we're always learning and improving like that."*

Outside of family relations, peer groups, communities of practices and work networks all emerged as important sources of change in individuals' practice over time. At any point in their lives, individuals are embedded in a web of networked connections, each with their own moral and practical cultures that exert an influence on participants' relationship with energy. Through processes of social interaction, learning and observation, images and skills circulate, are shared and transferred between people as individuals gain new knowledge and are exposed to new perspectives and ways of doing and understanding energy. This process often has an unintentional and incremental character as new sources of inspiration for change occur in an ad-hoc and unplanned fashion over time. However, certain contexts such as that of the share house in young adulthood emerged in participants' narratives as particularly sensitive contexts for change. The share house appears to offer an especially rich context for

## Chapter Seven

learning as individuals with different biographic learning experiences, images and skill-sets come together to interact for an extended period in one domestic living space. Many individuals discussed experiences of living in a share house as an accelerated time of learning new skills and meanings:

*Bridget: "When I started cooking for myself... I had done some at home but I had to learn from scratch really. I mean I knew the basics but ...at that stage I lived with some lads that were great cooks and I learned a lot from them. And we, they did all sorts of different meals...like spaghetti bolognaise and that kind of thing, so I learned a lot from them."*

*Henry: "I was living with friends who might have been a stage further along the cooking parameter than we were and if say, I always remember like this guy...he cooked a curry and we were asking him how he did that and he explained and, you know, he told us how to do it and how to cook it and once he, like we had a couple of friends who were interested in cooking something more than just fried eggs and rashers so we gradually, by talking to them, by looking at them, by observing them, we sort of got a bit more adventurous in our cooking exploits shall we say at that stage."*

As Seamus' discussion of his recruitment to motor biking in Section 7.2 revealed, peer and friendship networks have a particularly significant influence in adolescence and early adulthood. Processes of peer-to-peer comparison during this life period seemingly have a strong influence over individuals' developing identity and sense of belonging, with these shaping patterns of energy and resource use. Daniel discussed the changes in his diet during early adulthood as strongly influenced by his peer group:

## Chapter Seven

Researcher: *“Was there any change in your diet since when you were a student?”*

Daniel: *“I went through a brief period of being a vegetarian.”*

Researcher: *“What was your decision making behind that?”*

Daniel: *“It was a cool thing to do, again, it was influential at the time. One of my friends was living in England at the time and he was a vegetarian and you know his friends over there were vegetarian and that was an influence all right. ...I was pretty influenced by more radical ideas back then and doing what I thought it was cool (laughing). I got a vegetarian cookbook... I did actually a cooking course... as well on vegetarian cooking. So a lot of it was rice and beans, I remember.”*

Seeking to emulate the practices of one’s social peer group is a common theme in adolescence and early adulthood. This is consistent with research suggesting that it is during this life phase that individuals construct and forge their own independent identities (Thompson, 2011). Daniel was influenced by his social circle, the meanings and norms of which led him to reformulate his personal concerns around vegetarianism and animal welfare. These changing personal concerns led him to seek out new resources and standards. However, Daniel admitted that he cheated a lot and *‘was never really good at it, if you know what I mean’*. In this respect, the salience of Daniel’s social context and his identification with a peer group was identified as the significant factor shaping his practice.

While the most noteworthy sources of influence on practices tend to be trusted individuals to whom people are emotionally connected, new friends or acquaintances also act as sources of inspiration and knowledge about

## Chapter Seven

possibilities for doing energy. Furthermore, work relationships were identified as an important basis of change. Many individuals discussed a work colleague who, acting as an example setter for how to live more ethically or sustainably, was identified as important source of inspiration for change. Social exposure and interactions such as these often lead to gradual shifts in values but sometimes lead to more tangible changes in practices:

*Bridget: "One of the girls at work she has got me big into salads and eating more vegetarian things....Like yesterday, I brought in most of the stuff ... we fried up some mushrooms and we cooked some potatoes and we had chickpeas, cucumber, tomatoes, beetroot, mixed it altogether and some seeds and nuts. And I sort of felt you know this is dinner, I don't really need a dinner when I go home tonight, it was, you know it's great to know you can be so fed well with something like that."*

On other occasions, individuals themselves acted as example setters, for example by challenging authority figures to implement structured changes within the work place. For example, Michael discussed his attempts at bringing about change in his workplace:

*"But in work, yeah we would be very conscious in work of environmental issues. We'd be really conscious of that. We had to pressure them on it and now we've ...all the printers...are set to double sided now, whereas before fellas were going in and running a 200 page document off on one side, now it's done on two sides. If you run a document off and it's single sided we recycle it back in through the machine, just put it back in and print off the other side. What's wrong with it? There's nothing wrong with it. So just use it*

## Chapter Seven

*up! Very conscious of disposing of printer cartridges, photocopying cartridges, all that kind of stuff. Whereas before that was dumped...now there's a fella that comes in and collects them and recycles them all off'*

Capitalising on these existing relationships could offer potential conduits for changing practices in contexts such as workplaces, schools and other communities of practice.

Outside of these contexts, a whole variety of instances in which relationships acted as contexts for change emerged in participants' narratives. Influences on practices through linked lives with others also occur in a more ad hoc fashion through everyday encounters such as conversations with work colleagues, friends and family members. Informal conversations with trusted friends and confides were important sources of inspiration and advice. For example, conversations about shopping, or recommendations for buying new appliances were often garnered through friends:

Researcher: *"So you mentioned there that recently your friends have influenced you to change your shopping habits, can you tell me more about this? In what way have they influenced you?"*

Sara: *"Well I suppose it's a bit like the add, it sounds so cliqued, but "Oh you don't go to Aldi? Oh my god!" Like I use a lot of tinfoil because let's say the packed lunches, I bake, I bring Dad's dinner down to him, I just go through a lot of tinfoil and my sister would say "You're not buying Dunnes tinfoil are you?" You know, very humdrum conversations, and she'd say "Aldi's tinfoil: it's this and that and it's really cheap, you've got to get into Aldi". So you kind*

## Chapter Seven

*of...one or two conversations like that, you know, somebody saying about their jam and then you hear about their olive oil and some of their meats and then you go "honestly, I better check this out"."*

Accounts such as these highlight the often unintended and incremental character of change. Indeed, the incremental, insidious and unplanned nature of relational drivers of change may make them difficult to define and measure in any predictable way (Henwood et al., 2015). Others indicated that merely seeing other people with whom they have no personal affiliation engage in pro-environmental practice was an important source of social legitimisation:

*Daniel: "...more people doing this stuff, like bringing bags to shops for instance, seeing more people doing that so yeah ok there's Johnny doing it as well so, I find that helpful."*

Indeed, on occasion, a chance encounter and conversation with a stranger was noted as a source of change in values, images or sometimes concrete practices. However, the degree to which an encounter with an environmentally committed individual is likely to bring about a shift in values or practices appears to be dependent on the individuals' biographic background and existing values. Individuals expressing environmental concern and a disposition towards a pro-environmental orientation tend to be more likely to take up new images and practices from these encounters, whereas those less sympathetic or who do not attach their identity to these concerns appear less likely. For example, Seamus, who responded that he was "not concerned" about environmental issues indicated that social encounters were likely to have little to no impact in shifting his values and practices.

### 7.6 Resources, capitals and health

#### 7.6.1 Material resources

Perhaps in their effort to distance from economic approaches to analysing energy demand, practice-theoretical accounts have paid little attention to how monetary resources shape and constrain what people do and the energy demands that result from it (Hansen, 2016). However, analysis of differential patterns of recruitment and career development as they relate to material resources and capability is important for understanding how inequality intersects with energy (Walker, 2013). Individuals' narratives revealed that, throughout the lifecourse, dynamics in monetary resources and material capital significantly shape an individual's relationship to energy and their engagement with the elements of practices. Certain life stages, such as young adulthood, were marked by low material resources that placed a significant constraint on practices. For example, during young adulthood, all individuals indicated a general lack of money which placed constraints on the kind of food they ate, where they shopped as well as how they travelled. Furthermore, the phase of parenting and child rearing was noted by many as particularly restrictive in terms of available money, with many individuals indicating that this led to a general feeling of being unable to make changes to practice during this time. Bridget's discussion epitomises that of other participants:

*Bridget: "I would like to buy more organic food but I don't because it is expensive..... But when there's less to feed and you have more money it's easier to think organic and to think that way. But when you are feeding a family of four kids, you have to be practical."*

Discussing the transition to empty nest, Bridget adds:

*"So it's definitely a time of change, within constraints I suppose....see we're at a different stage of our lives now. Some of our kids have left*

## Chapter Seven

*and they're fending for themselves which means we have more money...you know, we had to pay a mortgage and there were bills and if you wanted a quality of life, you know. There was never, you know, surplus money."*

While for most individuals a cumulative increase in material wealth and monetary resources occurred over their lives, for others, periods of redundancy and economic hardship occurred intermittently throughout their lifecourse. Individuals from less wealthy backgrounds were more likely to have much more truncated work careers with this intersecting with their energy use. For example, Martha's husband Jack experienced redundancy and job shifts several times and they generally had little disposable income. This intersected with their car driving careers:

*Martha: "All the way through, it all depended on Jack's (husband) income, like eventually things picked up and we had more money, but you see before that for like twenty years, we had a car and then we had spaces when we had no cars. And that happened a good number of times. ...so we had a car, then when that eventually gave out, we had no car for a long time, until we saved it up again, then, you see there was various stages where we were buying tracked out cars and they just crashed and then we had to save up another couple of hundred quid and buy another one."*

Analysis indicated that social differentiation in terms of the accumulation of resources and wealth shape different patterns of engagement with energy among people from different economic backgrounds. Participants' narratives revealed that individuals from lower classes had less energy-

## Chapter Seven

intensive expectations. For example, despite having a car at times, Martha's expectation was that her sons would make their own way to school:

Researcher: *"And what would you do when you didn't have a car?"*

Martha: *"Oh we would go back bussing it and walking. Like Jack would double bus it to work. But the boys (sons) they all cycled regardless of whether we had a car or not, they all had bikes and were cycling from as early as they could. Oh no, there was no way I was driving them around. Off on the bike you go! But when they were too young I would be cycling with them on the back and I did that for a long time when we didn't have a car."*

For others, such as James, a sudden period of redundancy led to reformulation of expectations and practices. Following the recent economic recession, in 2009 James experienced a two-year period of redundancy, which led to a significant change in how his family conceptualised and approached their daily practice. The significant reduction in their income led them to reformulate their meanings of what constituted a necessity (*"the nice cheeses and things are off the list these days"*) as well as adapting and developing new routines and skills. Regarding their shopping practice, the couple described how they developed new food practices, becoming more innovative in how they approached their food consumption in a way that balanced between flexibility and routine. In terms of food shopping, they shifted away from smaller, more specialised shops, towards larger supermarkets, Lidl and Aldi, and they became more sensitised to following deals and special offers:

Trish: *"So you know, fruit is better in one place, meat is better in another, there are certain things that you know other supermarkets*

*don't have or if they do they're not as cheap. So yeah we kind of work it."*

These changes led to increased flexibility and innovation in terms of how food was prepared and consumed; Trish discussed changes to her cooking, indicating that cooking on a lower budget *"takes a bit more imagination"*, for example accommodating lower quality produce using a range of herbs, spices and culinary tricks to improve taste.

These cases illustrate how monetary resources intersect with practice, for example in terms of the expression of resourcefulness and innovation. They also illustrate how subjective experiences are deeply connected to wider socio-economic shifts and transformations. The role of macro-economic contexts in configuring practice is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight. From the perspective of an individual's progression through the lifecourse, social differentiation in terms of the accumulation of resources and wealth shape different patterns of engagement with energy among people from different class positions.

#### 7.6.2 Ageing and perceptions of quality of life

Changing meanings of quality of life over an individual's life shape how they do energy in their daily lives. In this sense, changing personal concerns are associated with ageing, with these interacting with individuals' relationship to energy. For example, many men in the sample highlighted a strong materialistic orientation in young adulthood that lessened over the course of their lives:

*James: "Growing up we were a poor family so we never had a fancy car so...sometimes when some of my friends would drive me to a*

## Chapter Seven

*rugby match in Edinburgh, for example or something, I suppose there would've been an element of jealousy about the quality of vehicles that they were getting to be driving around in....As a young lad of course you have kind of those desires for material things."*

For many men, young adulthood was posited as a time of strong materialistic desires and pressures with this often taking on a new quality in the context of the transition to marriage:

*Daniel: "I was close to 30 at this stage... at that stage a number of my friends had got children and had got mortgages and that so things were changing there for them certainly and I was thinking maybe the same should happen to me. So the focuses were certainly changing at that stage. So I certainly felt big pressure during that period. I wanted to get a secure job, a mortgage for us and I wanted to get all material things. I guess up to that point in my life material issues were not really important, and I don't see myself as being very materialistic person, but it took on a different emphasis. Yeah. That happened really when I moved into my thirties and thought about getting married and all."*

Daniel's description of the social pressure he felt to advance himself materially in anticipation of the transition towards marriage was characteristic of many of the men in the sample. Tony discusses how this transition stimulated him to become a better provider and more orientated around the needs of his family:

*Tony: "As a relatively young man, I was easy-going I'd say. I wasn't too compelled about advancement, I would think. But it was only*

## Chapter Seven

*when I got married that changed. I got more drive in me to be a better provider, which in a sense converted into me becoming better. It was a time of trying to get up on the ladder really and provide materially for my family”.*

Men described that as they aged they became less competitive and concerned about material advancement:

*Seamus: “There was a time I worked very hard because I wanted it all and I wanted it now. Now I don’t work so hard because I don’t place so much emphasis on that now and I’m much less competitive like that and I’m quite happy to relax a bit. Ok. And if I was given a choice between going out and earning two hundred euros for four hours work or loosing ten euros playing cards for four hours, I’d play cards for four hours and loose the ten euro (laughs)...I mean at thirty years of age money is very important and it’s endless. At nearly sixty time seems different and my quality of life is much more important.”*

Each man in these narratives reveals that his changing perception of quality of life has affected his relationship to monetary resources, with this having direct implications for his consumption and energy use. Instead of working around the clock to accumulate money for consumption of material goods, Seamus is now more content to direct his attention to less energy-intensive practices such as spending time with friends and family and playing cards.

### 7.6.3 Ageing and health

Ageing and changing health status emerged in many narratives as a source of change. Most participants had experienced some sort of health diagnosis over the latter part of their life, with this often shaping how they do things,

## Chapter Seven

all of which has direct implications for their consumption and resource use. Following a health diagnosis, individuals were often prompted to transform their practice and, in the process, engage with new resources and standards. For example, both Bridget and James were both diagnosed as coeliac in their forties. For Bridget, this stimulated a radical transformation in her food procurement and preparation practices, following which she reskilled herself to become a better cook and expanded her range of knowledge:

*Bridget: "Another life changing event – I discovered I was a coeliac. So I'm cooking far differently than I used to. ..I would have used a lot of, my style has completely changed...I (now) make everything from scratch. I used to use a lot of jars, sauces...it would be handy when the kids were young you could just throw a jar of bolognese sauce into your meat. I wouldn't dream of doing that now....it's always homemade, made from scratch."*

For James, however, instead of learning new cooking skills and techniques, he has adapted his diet by removing gluten bread and grain and increasing his meat and dairy consumption, leading to an increasingly energy-intensive diet. In addition, he has altered his food preparation practices as he now brings a gluten free lunch to work every day. Engaging with individuals during these transitional periods offers potential opportunities for change. As discussed in Chapter Eight, health institutions also played a crucial role in reconfiguring individuals' relationship with their practice following a health diagnosis and offer a fruitful avenue for challenging interventions.

### 7.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided an overview of some of the key factors and processes shaping individuals' changing relationship with energy over time.

## Chapter Seven

It has revealed that how individuals perceive and do energy in their everyday lives is intricately bound up in the expression and performance of identities and roles, with the nature of the connections between practice and identity rooted in biographic experiences and relational contexts. Socialisation plays a key role in the formation of dispositions and careers of action that have long-lasting implications on how an individual engages with energy throughout the lifecourse. Furthermore, relationships are a crucial source of change in practice careers, acting as a conduit through which social learning occurs and through which images and skills are exchanged. Finally, ageing is associated with evolving perceptions of quality of life, shifting material resources and changing health statuses, all of which have important implications for shaping what individuals do and the energy demand that results from it. This chapter has thus revealed some of the processes and factors shaping change at the scale of an individual's development over the lifecourse. However, moving beyond the experiential scale, other factors and mechanisms are important for providing a holistic picture of why practice changes. The following chapter considers broader contextual processes that shape individuals practice over time.

## 8. Chapter Eight: Socio-technical contexts and dynamics in practice

### 8.1 Introduction

As indicated in previous chapters, individuals' lives do not exist in a social vacuum but are intricately bound up with the biographical and socio-technical contexts in which they are embedded. This chapter moves beyond the micro and meso scale of analysis to consider the macro contexts that shape and delimit action over individuals' lives. In doing so, it focuses on exploring the ways in which socio-technical change has intersected with lives and practices to shape, directly and indirectly, how energy is demanded. It is noteworthy that most contextual biographic accounts of social change pay little attention to the materiality of social life, focusing instead on political and institutional changes and how these intersect with lives (cf. Giddens 1991; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). While these latter aspects emerged as crucial forces steering domestic practice both directly and indirectly, participants' accounts also revealed the crucial importance of techno-material transformations in reconfiguring the fabric of daily life and shaping demand over time.

Three key contextual categories are discussed in this chapter, these comprise: energy infrastructures and technologies; socio-economic change; and, institutions and policy. Within each of these categories, contextual processes that have shaped conduct by altering the temporal dynamics of everyday life and intervening in the meanings, material and skills elements of intersecting practices over time are discussed. While for purposes of analytical clarity, these categories are treated separately, participants' accounts reveal the complex co-evolution of interconnected macro

processes in shaping conduct and provide important experiential insights into the ways in which everyday life has become increasingly embedded within and reliant upon an progressively complex and energy-intensive socio-technical system.

### 8.2 Energy infrastructures and technologies

As discussed in the Chapter Two, a key value of a practice-theoretical frame relates to the direction of attention towards the materiality of social life, with the role of the technologies and appliances in reconfiguring everyday social practices receiving growing attention in recent years (cf. Hand and Shove, 2007, Shove et al., 2012). The narrative interviews paid special attention to the impact of materials and technology as mediators in this group of individuals' changing relationship with energy over time. Individuals' accounts revealed that the gradual technologisation of every practice has reshaped how energy is used, understood and performed in the home. A gradual process of increasing dependency on technologies characterised careers over time as practices became increasingly intertwined within, and dependent upon, complex energy-intensive socio-technological infrastructures. In this respect, a path dependent trajectory towards increasing reliance on resource-intensive technologies and an associated decline in traditional forms of embodied skills and competence emerged in participants' biographic accounts.

#### 8.2.1 The gradual technologisation of daily lives

The biographic-narrative methodology elicited reflections from participants on the changing material landscape and infrastructures in which their domestic lives have evolved. Individuals' narratives revealed the gradual technologisation of their everyday lives in line with wider socio-technical transformations, with the incorporation of technologies into practices occurring gradually over time. Often there would be several years between

## Chapter Eight

each new purchase. Social differentiation in terms of access to infrastructure and in the rate of accumulation of technologies was evident across social class, with individuals from wealthier families indicating earlier access to electrification and incorporation of technologies into practices than others. Often these individuals had help from wealthy parents in this process. Claire, growing up in a middle class family and attending a private school, compares her situation to that of others of her cohort:

*“My mother had, my grandfather bought them for her, she had an old American fridge, you know the roundy ones? We had a fridge when nobody had a fridge. She had a washing machine when people didn’t have washing machines. Like it’s only now, when I talk to other people, like when you’re growing up you wouldn’t know that nobody else had them. And we had a television, and there wouldn’t have been many televisions in Ireland at that time.”*

Individuals from less well-off families incorporated technologies into their practices more slowly, often saving for months and taking years between each purchase, especially for significant purchases such as the fridge and the first car. Poor access to credit was mentioned by several participants who all indicated that saving gradually was the chief means of accumulation. Several individuals highlighted the introduction of schemes such as ‘hire purchase’ as enabling them to buy more appliances over time. Individuals frequently reported relying on social capital, waiting for ‘hand-me-downs’ from relatives or friends, or buying machines second hand. Often marriage provided a crucial time of accumulation as people received gifts of technological appliances such as the fridge, microwave, cooker or washing machine. Furthermore, geography and location was a crucial determinant in the process of uneven accumulation. Henry, for example, grew up in a rural home in the West of Ireland with no electrical appliances

## Chapter Eight

whatsoever as rural electrification had not yet arrived: *“We had no fridge or anything like that growing up no...that was before there was electricity, believe it or not, rural electrification hadn’t hit that part yet”.*

However, even within the same geographical area, access to electrification was unevenly distributed according to wealth. For example, Maria (pilot study), a wealthy middle class woman, compared her situation to that of her neighbours in Donegal in the 1950s. While her home had been connected to mains electricity, the homes of other less well-off residents on her road had not yet been electrified, with this having implications for how practices were performed:

*“We were never without electricity. But it wasn't the same for everyone, like next door to me they hadn't got electricity when we had it and they were still cooking over the fire.”*

Thus while appliances and technologies were gradually incorporated into all individuals' practice over time, this process was socially and temporally differentiated by factors such as social class, access to material and social capital and geographic location.

In terms of the reception of technologies, the introduction of new technologies into the home was often met with great enthusiasm and anticipation. Domestic appliances such as the fridge, washing machine and, most significantly, the event of purchasing the first family car were often met with huge excitement:

*Bridget: “That was a big, big deal getting the fridge...”*

## Chapter Eight

Grace: *“There were no cars that time! Donkey and cart it was everywhere travelling. There was no cars! Jesus you never saw a car. Well maybe you’d see an odd car on the road for a funeral or... when one family got a car up the road and wow, you’d all be out watching the car. And you’d say “Jesus look at the car going up the road!...it was a big, big thing to see a car back in the day!...Big deal! It would be like an aeroplane landing now here out in my garden.”*

However, domestic technologies were also sometimes met with resistance and mistrust. Intergenerational differences in acceptance and use of technologies as they arrived in the home was a theme to emerge in some individuals’ narratives that highlighted older family members’ mistrust of new technologies and their reluctance to change entrenched modes of conduct. Often, new technologies were bought for older generations by younger members of families who played a role in persuading them to incorporate them into practice. Billie discusses her mother's response to a new vacuum cleaner she purchased in the 1950s:

*“My mother was shocked when she saw the Hoover, she’d no idea what it was like to go taking up the dust off the ground without sweeping it! And I was telling her that when you sweep...you raise a certain amount of dust and... you still don’t get rid of it all...that a certain amount goes with the brush and that. Whereas with the Hoover you pick it all up and it is gone! But she was shocked by that! That’s the one thing I will never forget! She was standing looking at it and she was shocked (laughing). God rest her.”*

Some participants indicated that technologies were more readily accepted by female members of the household. For example, Bridget discusses her

## Chapter Eight

father's response to a new washing machine being purchased by her brother for her mother in the late 1960s:

*“My father would have been a little bit old fashioned saying god can’t you do with what we have...not realising, well it wasn’t him that was doing the washing. So he was slow to change. My mother wouldn’t have been so slow. She would’ve taken technology and got on with it.”*

Certain technologies, such as the microwave, had a common theme of mistrust attached to them, with some individuals expressing that they still approach their use with caution today. In contrast, others were much more enthusiastic and quick to incorporate them into their practice. Interestingly, differential acceptance of certain technologies today such as microwaves often stemmed from socialisation. Individuals who mistrust microwaves often indicated that their mother expressed a strong distrust of them in childhood too. For example, Sara’s mother did not trust the microwave and never incorporated it into the family’s food practice during her socialisation. Today Sara does not trust microwaves and doesn’t have one in her home.

The incorporation of new appliances into practice was often described as a gradual, iterative process that involved a phase when old and new modes of performance overlapped. Often a period of transition was noted as individuals and families became accustomed to new ways of performing practice with the appliance. This process was often dependent on the links between practices, as the change in one practice affected practices connected to it. For example, Sara noted that her mother's transition to the washing machine was a gradual process. The washing machine was seen initially for use on occasion and many things were still hand-washed. Sara

## Chapter Eight

discusses that the transition to machine washing was a gradual process and that a lot of clothes still needed to be washed by hand:

*“You’d still be doing a bit by hand. I mean you still did a bit of handwashing back then because Mom would be saying do it by hand and don’t be putting on the machine you know that it was expensive and that...and a lot of things needed it, they were designed for hand washing and Mom would say you can’t put those clothes in the machine, you know, wash it by hand.”*

Aside from the general view that it was an energy-intensive device that should be used sparingly, Sara notes that many of the clothing materials were initially unsuitable for use in the washing machine. Gradually, new types of washing machine-friendly synthetic clothing emerged and consumers’ reliance on the washing machine increased slowly over time.

Furthermore, narratives revealed that technological appliances were used differently at different stages of an individual’s career. For example, for many women a heavy reliance on the tumble drier was noted during the childrearing phase with this being phased out over time as children aged and some women returning to natural drying later in life. This complicates the notion that the technologisation of practices is a path-dependent, linear process. Moreover, individuals’ narratives revealed that they adapted how they engaged with and used appliances during incremental life transitions. For example, Bridget developed a concern with conserving energy and always ensured that the washing machine and dishwasher were fully loaded before she turned them on. However, in the context of undergoing the transition to empty nest she has found that is harder to always have

machines full and now sometimes turns them on when they are only half or three quarters full.

### 8.2.2 Changing routines and relations between practices

Individuals' narratives revealed that the gradual incorporation of labour-saving technologies into practices released bodies from laborious domestic chores, altering the temporalities and rhythms of daily life and distancing practice from the rhythms and constraints of the natural world. These changes had the most impact on the lives of women whose routines were altered most significantly over time. Participants' accounts indicated that in the past women were bound to the home in order to keep on top of domestic practices which demanded much more of their embodied time and labour. Practices, such as laundry and food shopping, were performed most days of the week, generally every day with the exception of Sunday, and procuring the family's food and cooking meals often consumed a large part of the day's activity. As new labour-saving technologies were gradually incorporated into practices, individuals' time was directed to other activities. Children's lives were also reconfigured by arrival of new technologies such as the washing machine:

*Seamus: "I remember as a child, you know, there always had to be, on laundry days there always had to be somebody in the house so that they could run out and bring in the clothes if it started to rain, you know. Bit like babysitting because it all had to be looked after."*

*Billie: "The laundry, that would be going on nearly every day, cut out Sunday maybe. Other than that we'd wash every other day....we had was a big basin, several of them actually, and a big galvanised bath for doing a lot of clothes if they had to be steeped...And then there'd be a big pot for something that had to be boiled, boil the water and*

## Chapter Eight

*put the clothes into it, and a washboard of course and then we'd a big clothes horse hanging over the range for winter for drying them...It was very hard work then, when you come to think in comparison, the facilities we have now! People worked very hard, they hadn't a minute free. The washing machine, when that came it was just great. A huge relief!"*

Henry's discussion of the impact the fridge had on his mother's daily routine is resonant of the experiences of participants throughout the sample:

*"I mean it was such a big change that, you know, she didn't have to be watching the milk or watching the butter all the time like... just the fridge would keep everything nice and fresh. If somebody say was sick or was doing something else well then...the shopping it didn't have to be done every day because there was always enough in the fridge to take care of it. And from a visitor point of view it was handy as well because obviously when we didn't have a fridge and, you know, visitors called that you weren't expecting, there might be nothing there for them if you know what I mean."*

Narratives revealed that the arrival of the fridge enabled a degree of forward planning, freeing up women's time for other activities. Technologies such as the fridge and freezer shaped the temporalities of other practices such as shopping, procurement and food preparation practices (cf. also Hand and Shove, 2007). The fridge brought about a progression from daily shopping to less regular shopping, with this being extended again in the context of the arrival of the freezer as most individuals noted a move towards bulk buying and engaging in practices of pre-preparation.

## Chapter Eight

In addition to altering the temporalities of practice and everyday routines, it was evident that new technologies drove a demand for new types of produce, with the washing machine leading to a demand for new types of clothing and appliances such as the microwave driving demand for processed food products that could be cooked quickly:

Henry: *“The microwave made a huge difference because prior to that like everything had to be prepared the long way around, say potatoes you’d put them in a pot and you’d boil them and that took a certain length of time...It impacted on the purchases as well because obviously you could buy stuff that you could ram into the microwave and if you wanted a quick snack away you go...the microwave certainly was a big change and that coincided with more supermarkets arriving and more processed foods coming out as well.”*

Henry’s narrative highlights the ways in which the incorporation of materials into practices drove demand for new forms of produce and shaped the iterative relation between practices of consumption and production.

Seamus discusses the impact the fridge had on his mother’s shopping practice. Rather than changing practices immediately, the co-evolution of technological change with wider transitions in the provision of services is noted:

## Chapter Eight

*“I remember the fridge, that was a big change but thing wouldn’t have changed immediately. When the fridge came in there was no need to go to the supermarket every day... so after a period of time the milk man died away. And shopping changed as well. Supermarkets changed. Like on our road here we would’ve had about 2 bread deliveries a day, two different companies, three milk men, a vegetable man once a week, and then there were other occasional hawkers selling fish maybe or meat...over time all that died away.”*

The incorporation of technologies into practices drove new means of production, highlighting the iterative intersection between demand and wider transformations in the socio-economic landscape. This is discussed in greater detail in Section 8.4.

The role of technologies in freeing up women's daily paths is evident over time but is most apparent in cases where a female spouse pursued a work career outside the home. Mairead, Michael's wife, continued working after their marriage. Technological appliances were crucial in enabling the couple to manage the temporal constraints placed on their daily paths by the joint institutional commitments:

*Michael: “I remember when we got married... but from my childhood we kind of, both Mairead and myself, we kind of brought our eating habits into our married life...it nearly followed exactly how our food consumption was as kids ...like stews and all that sort. Now as I say both of us were, Mairead was working, I was working, so it meant, because we didn’t have the time to be doing it all from scratch, it meant that pressure cookers were the big thing because they, you*

## Chapter Eight

*put food into them, you heated it up, couple of seconds and you had a piping hot dinner. Great Idea!"*

Technologies such as the pressure cooker, slow cooker, microwave, fridge and freezer were crucial in enabling Michael and his wife to live busy lives and configure their daily pathways around institutional commitments outside the home while still eating foods they were accustomed to and socialised with (stews etc.). In this way, technologies can also enable continuity in the consumption of traditional meals in the contexts of changing personal and collective rhythms of life.

Furthermore, in instances when women returned to work later in life after a period of child rearing, the increased reliance on technologies to accommodate changes in food preparation practices was noted by a number of participants. The transition of women returning to work meant that some male spouses, often for the first time in their marriage, began to participate more regularly in domestic practices. Henry discusses the impact that his wife's return to work had on their food practice. While initially she continued to carry the bulk of responsibility for the couple's food practice, upon his retirement Henry purchased a slow cooker and started to participate more:

*"Well I suppose from her point of view we probably would have eaten out a bit more because obviously she was coming home from work and you couldn't expect her to lash into preparing a meal every single night. She did more preparation and freezing of food rather than just cooking from scratch when she came in...But I also learned some things myself. I got myself one of these slow cookers...I got one of them and then I actually got quite interested in recipes and stuff*

## Chapter Eight

*for them and used the internet to, you know, get recipes...it was helpful when my wife was working like that; I could put one of these stews or dishes on and it would be ready when she would come home and save her doing all the cooking.”*

In cases such as Henry's, technologies provided a crucial mediatory role in enabling a transfer of responsibility from a more skilled practitioner (female spouse) to a less skilled practitioner (male spouse) in the context of a life transition that involved a reorientation of personal temporalities around institutional commitments. In this way, technologies enabled men's participation in accounting for their lack of biographically accumulated knowledge and skill.

### 8.2.3 Reconfiguring space and relations in the home

Infrastructural and technological developments also had an influence on layout of the built environment of homes as well as how space was used within them. Individuals discussed having pantry rooms in the past where all the cold foods would be kept. With the arrival of the fridge and freezer these rooms gradually lost their function and were no longer needed. The advent of central heating was noted by several participants as having a crucial impact in reconfiguring how space was used in homes:

*Billie: “Before we had central heating, the heat was mainly in the kitchen and you'd light a fire in the living room, or the parlour room... But there was no heat in the bedrooms in my very early days, so you'd be all huddled around the fire in the evenings...And when bed time came you'd make a dash for the bedroom, and you just got in with your hot water bottle, and sometimes you might hop in with your sister and warm up.”*

## Chapter Eight

Michael: *"...everybody would be in one room, and that was the back room in our house, and the kitchen. So you would just be between those two rooms."*

Prior to central heating, during the winter seasons, individuals were confined to certain spaces in the home to keep warm. These contexts were often presented nostalgically in participants' accounts as providing a time in which family members and friends interacted together, telling stories, engaging in production-orientated activities such as knitting, playing traditional Irish music and playing cards. With the arrival of central heating, people began to disperse throughout the home thus reconfiguring the use of space and social interaction within the home. However, this nostalgic and romanticised account of a better past most likely obscures the fact that family relations were also marked by ambivalence and conflict.

In addition, the arrival of central heating and improved insulation was noted by Michael as creating a need for fridges:

Michael: *"When we didn't have central heating you could leave a bottle of milk out and it would still be fresh the next day because the house was so frecking cold, you know, particularly in winter time, it would just, compared to today where you have double glazed windows, triple glazed even."*

### 8.2.4 Shifting expectations and rising standards of living

The gradual technologisation of everyday domestic practices has shaped changing expectations about what constitutes a comfortable and

## Chapter Eight

worthwhile life. Martha's account epitomises that of other participants, and highlights the intersection between materialisation of domestic life and changing norms and expectations about what is normal and convenient in everyday life:

*"I was quite comfortable when all we actually had was a dining room table, a fridge, a bed and a three-piece suite. Then I remember thinking, as I said we went through phases with no cars and we got on fine and it was such a treat, we had friends who were really good to us and if they were going away on holidays or they weren't around they would give us their car and it was such a treat to have the car, and then we got the car and then after some time that wasn't enough and we needed two cars, and at one stage I remember thinking a tumble dryer would be the ultimate and on it went."*

As Martha's narrative reveals, convenience-driven and labour-saving technologies have reconfigured ideals about comfort, convenience and norms about standards of living. While technologies were originally met with excitement and awe and appreciated for their function in relieving hard-working people of laborious tasks and chores, over time they have faded into the background and have become taken-for-granted aspects of the fabric of everyday life. Alongside the increasing dependency of everyday practices on an ever more energy-intensive and complex socio-technical system, changing technological and normative contexts have co-evolved. Individuals' narratives revealed shifting standards and notions of happiness over time associated with the technologisation of daily life. Although past lifestyles would be considered privation by contemporary standards, Billie points out that the lived experience was not considered so:

## Chapter Eight

*“The comfort we have now in comparison, none of the modern facilities that we have now...we didn’t have any of them in my childhood. Even though when we were in childhood we didn’t realise that they were hardships; we used what we had and made the best of it. But there is so much facilities now like the cooking and the kettles and the heater and dryers and all the other facilities that are available and central heating and all the rest. They are vast in comparison to what we had in childhood you know.”*

Participants’ narratives revealed that changing expectations and dependency on technology have co-evolved. As technologies accumulated and practice changed so too did expectations and norms about what is considered comfortable and convenient in everyday life. In this way, what people understand as an acceptable quality of life has changed historically in tandem with technologisation of everyday practice.

While many participants highlighted the huge benefits accrued by convenience-driven technologicalisation of everyday life, others were more critical, stressing the detrimental effects of increasing reliance on technology in reducing resilience, driving spiralling resource consumption and the loss of important forms of embodied skill and know how:

*Billie: “I suppose they’re (appliances) good in a way but there was a lot to be said for the old way of doing things, the way you did everything your own way, using your own hands and that.”*

Some older participants related these changes to a general loss of morality in society and a decline in appreciation among younger generations for the true costs of production. An increasing disconnect of everyday domestic

## Chapter Eight

practice from the rhythms and constraints of the natural world, while posited by some as bringing about increases in quality of life, was viewed by others as a dangerous path-dependent route of increasing dependence on resource-intensive technologies. In this respect, several participants discussed the impact that technological disruptions have in reminding them how reliant we have become on appliances in everyday life. In doing so they highlight the continued importance of traditional embodied forms of competence and skills when such circumstances arise:

*Michael: "Life has changed so much, like all the things we have now, the convenience, all of that does make life easy for us. But it's when things start going wrong that those conveniences become a total inconvenience and you realise how reliant we've become ...We've become too much into the commodity thing."*

Others were keen to emphasise the many benefits of improved standards of living in terms of the increased control afforded to women over their lives, the huge increases in quality of life, the controllability of routines and their protection from the constraints of natural rhythms of fluctuation. For most individuals, technological appliances have become constitutive elements of what a good and worthwhile life entails. Many were keen to emphasise that they would not like to return to living the way of the past, with certain appliances and technologies, such as the car, washing machine, fridge and freezer, as well as wider infrastructural changes underpinning them, seen as an essential, objective rather than subjective, desirable, part of a comfortable and worthwhile life:

*Grace: "Oh it was very hard going, very hard going...carrying water from the well every day, washing everything by hand using that*

## Chapter Eight

*bleeding washboard...cycling 12 kilometres each way to school every day...I really, I would never wish it on anyone again. It's great to be alive to see this part of the world, to see the way the world has developed."*

In summary, participants' narratives of the gradual technologisation of everyday life highlight the impact that material development has had on practices and the relations between them. Their accounts indicate that the arrival of technologies, such as the fridge, washing machine and freezer, shaped temporalities and relationalities of practices and routines. The emergence of dependency on energy-intensive technologies has intersected with the declining reproduction of corporeal skills necessary for the enactment of more labour-intensive but resource-efficient modes of performance, which have gradually died out over time. While changing socio-cultural notions of convenience and comfort as they relate to energy practices has been documented in the literature (Shove 2003, Shove et al., 2013), understandings of the lived experience of this has been underrepresented (Sayer, 2013, Henwood et al., 2016). My participants' narratives reveal intersections between changing techno-material and normative contexts and shifting personal meanings and expectations about what constitutes a worthwhile life, in terms of what is considered normal, comfortable and convenient ways of living. Furthermore, material developments have played a fundamental role in driving the co-evolution of complexes of practices towards configurations locked into increasingly resource-intensive trajectories. In this respect, biographic energy practice careers are deeply embedded in material and socio-technical complexes which have shaped and foreclosed opportunities for different meanings and modes of performance.

### 8.3 Socio-economic landscapes and transitions

In addition to technological development, shifts in the economic landscape were centrally implicated in the complex web of contextual processes shaping the lives and practices of individuals. The move from a production to consumer-orientated society brought about radical transformations in the architectures of provision. Participants' narratives revealed that macro-economic transformations have intersected and co-evolved in driving the technologisation and reconfiguration of everyday life, shaping dynamics in individual practices and the relations between them over time.

#### 8.3.1 Evolving complexes of practice

Domestic energy practices are intricately connected to practices of production. Participants' accounts suggested that changes in provision of services were associated with the demise of traditionally less resource-intensive modes of performance. Narratives revealed that transformation in the landscape of production has intersected with material developments to bring about changes in meanings and skills, temporalities and modes of performance, as well as the emergence of new complexes of practices. The shift from agrarian, self-sustaining and production-oriented society towards a consumer-orientated one was intricately bound up with the emergence of new modes of provision and the demise of complexes of less resource-intensive modes of practice. Many older individuals grew up on self-sufficient farms, with a large bulk of their diets supplemented by home-grown goods and produce delivered from local market-based services. For example, for Grace and Billie, most of their yearly vegetable intake was provided by produce grown in their vegetable gardens. They also sourced dairy from their own cows and meat from their pigs, which they would slaughter every so often. Crucially, participants revealed that resource-intensive modes of transport were not necessary for the reproduction of these traditional modes of provision. In cases where produce was sourced outside the home, milk, bread and vegetables were delivered daily to a

## Chapter Eight

family's door or were bought in nearby shops selling local produce and accessed by foot, bicycle or horse and cart. A strong, community-based circular economy was emphasised in participants' accounts:

*Michael: "Mam would buy her vegetables from the vegetable man who used to knock on our door...It was a horse and cart. He'd come on a Friday and Mam would buy enough vegetables to see her through to the following Friday; potatoes, cabbage, turnip, carrots, celery, broccoli – all off the back of this cart. And you had a vegetable bag for the house and all the vegetables went into it. And then when you'd clean and peel vegetables you'd put them in the swill bucket for the swill man. So everything was reused in some way. And then we had the milk man and he used to come with a horse and cart every single morning. You'd hear him trotting down around five o'clock. He'd deliver the milk to everybody's door in bottles. Then he'd turn and go off. And he did that seven days a week, 52 weeks of the year. And you'd get your bottle of milk. You'd use it. You'd wash the bottle out. Put it outside. And he'd take it away the next day and put a new one there for ya. And then the bread man would come twice a week. Boland's was the bread man. And he'd arrive twice a week and you'd buy slice-pan, you could get cakes, you could get anything off them."*

Narratives indicated that the decline of localised provision and the emergence of the supermarket co-evolved with the incorporation of technological appliances, such as the fridge and freezer, into food practices. These changes affected gradual transformations in the temporalities of food shopping practices and modes of preparation, preservation and wastage. A steady decline in the reproduction of traditional skills, such as practices of food preservation, and swilling as a form of recycling of food

## Chapter Eight

wastage, was noted. Some participants linked these changes to changing dynamics of relationality. Michael continued:

*“When Dunnes came you could start to see all these poor auld devils all getting put out...and then directives came in when we joined the EU, back in the 70s, directives came in and we could no longer feed pigs this swill. So the Swill man went. And the vegetable man went because he couldn’t compete with the likes of Dunnes Stores. The bread man went because it was better for him to deliver in bulk to the big stores. And that was it. So when you think about it today, Mary, for old people that was probably the only contact they had all day; the vegetable man, the swill man and the baker. They don’t have that today. So the socialisation of meeting people is gone.”*

Participants’ accounts suggested that dynamics in the provision of services have shaped interpersonal and community relations, with many, such as Michael, perceiving the decline of transitional, localised models of provision as bringing about a loss of opportunities for community-based socialisation and interaction. Narratives suggest that transformations in modes of domestic energy practices, including the shift towards supermarket shopping and an individualised car culture, have brought about a delinking of lives and a dis-embedding of practice from community contexts, with practice becoming increasingly individualised in context of progressively disconnected and closed domestic spheres. However, in interpreting these accounts it is important to be cognisant of the propensity for nostalgic representations of the past to be present in individuals’ accounts. In this respect, social-gerontological work has highlighted ‘narratives of decline’ as a common feature of older individuals’ stories of social change (cf. Bennett, 2001). However, the consistency of this theme across accounts suggests that shifts away from sharing and community-based modes of provision

## Chapter Eight

were implicated in the movement towards increasingly resource-intensive, individualised and socially disconnected practice.

Participants' stories indicated that as less resource-intensive practices died out, new complexes of practices of increasing resource-intensity emerged. The intersection between food and mobility practices was highlighted as increasingly the car was linked with food shopping, deemed necessary for facilitating the move away from daily, localised shopping to weekly shopping and bulk buying in stores spatially distanced from homes. Alongside these changes, individuals noted gradual changes in their diet towards increasingly processed and delocalised food products in line with changes in production and provision of goods in supermarkets:

*Henry: "We would have purchased in the local butcher, the markets, local small grocery shop, and again because I wouldn't have had a car in those days... it was all from local shops we would have used, then it started changing, lot of changes happened then...supermarkets sprung up and we got the car, we needed the car for shopping in the bigger supermarkets, then I got the second (company) car...so there was two cars available if you like...and we were adding to the appliances we had...so the shopping practice changed fairly substantially. I suppose one of the big changes would have been the arrival of say the likes of Quinnsworth and those big supermarkets and you tended instead of doing your shops in small sort of increments the tendency was to do it maybe at the weekend on a Saturday or a Sunday and try and shop as much as you could for the week ahead. That definitely was a big, big change. It impacted on the purchases as well because obviously you could buy stuff that you could ram into the microwave and if you wanted a quick snack away you go so I would say the microwave certainly was*

## Chapter Eight

*a big change. You would buy stuff that you mightn't otherwise buy because say like, you know, you would get these frozen sandwiches type of thing, baguettes and stuff like that, bang them into the microwave and you had a meal more or less instantly but that certainly did make a change."*

This account highlights the co-evolution of concurrent, intersecting change in practice careers, with this process driving the emergence of an increasingly complex and resource-intensive socio-technical system.

Alongside accounts of change, attachments to old modes of shopping among older people were noted by some individuals. For example, Sara's mother continued to disaggregate her shopping practices despite the move towards supermarkets. Similarly, Billie expressed a disdain with supermarkets and continued to shop as locally as she could. This suggests an effect of habitus and socialisation in shaping dispositions towards food shopping; despite changing contexts, these individuals continue to attach meaning to traditional modes of provision and shopping practices as the appropriate mode of conduct.

### 8.3.2 Access to Finance

Participants' accounts suggested that the increased availability of financial credit over time was an important factor enabling the gradual materialisation and technologisation of everyday life. Many individuals contrasted the slow and gradual accumulation of resources in the past with the instant gratification and expectations characteristic of contemporary Ireland. In the past, goods and personal wealth were accumulated slowly, with sharing practices and recycling of material household goods through social and familial networks considered normal practice:

## Chapter Eight

Martha: *“Nowadays people just expect everything on a plate, in our day you had to save for a house, then you got your house and you literally, all you had was a bed and you got donations of furniture and things you needed... some of them I only got rid of four years ago or whatever, you know it was donated...That was standard practice. Today it's nearly unheard of. ...You know nowadays it's instant, it's the house, it's the furniture, the appliances, it's instant.”*

Similarly, participants' accounts suggested that a decline in the relative cost of goods and services was implicated in the demise of the circular economy:

Michael: *“When we got married, like our parents, interest rates, the industrial wage wasn't great when we got married, but I remember interest rates on our first mortgage running at 18% a month. Oh my God. Like people complain about interest rates today. When we got married you were looking at 18%. We couldn't afford to buy coal to heat the house, we couldn't carpet the house because we just didn't have the money... we used to find out from neighbours and friends, if anybody was doing up a house and they were getting rid of anything we'd go and take it off them.”*

In the context of less available financial capital, individuals discussed the widespread inter-household sharing of social and material resources, such as clothing, heating fuel, cars, televisions, washing machines, as well as lending labour for DIY and farming activities. This relational dependency extended within families and between households. For example, Grace highlighted that during her childhood any cars in her area were shared throughout the community with owners allowing individuals to use them

## Chapter Eight

for events such as funerals and weddings. In setting up their first home, Triona and her husband relied heavily on family and social networks, getting DIY help from friends and receiving the majority of their furniture through 'hand-me-downs'. She and her husband returned favours by helping these individuals and doing DIY jobs for other couples.

Participants' narratives indicated that increases in personal wealth and technologisation led to the decline in the need to share; as financial capital became more accessible, the relative price of consumer goods dropped and labour-saving technologies emerged, practices of sharing faded out and were replaced by more resource-intensive practices. The role of macro-economic shifts in driving 'out-of-control' consumption during the Celtic Tiger period was discussed by a number of participants:

*Michael: "The Celtic Tiger, then we lost the run of ourselves...people splashed out on plasma televisions and second houses here and an apartment there and a BMW in the drive way and the financial companies saying "Yeah go on, take another 100,000. Yeah keep going."*

Financial institutions in particular were stressed as having enticed individuals to overconsume during this period:

*Tony: "A lot of people lost total control of themselves when it was too easy to get money and there was money being fired at people all over the country, you know. My wife and myself, we got a whole lot of letters asking us would you like a few thousand onto our card and all this kind of stuff to spend. But luckily we never got ourselves enmeshed in all that kind of stuff."*

## Chapter Eight

Tony and his wife resisted the bank's enticements, relating this to their strong faith-based approach to consumption and their own socialisation, stressing they were brought up to appreciate the true cost of things. Tony contrasted his experience with other people in his neighbourhood who succumbed to these financial lures and *"got caught up in it all"*, embarking on *"consumer frenzy"*. However, when economic circumstances changed, *"the bank put the squeeze on them and they had to move out to a lower cost house out of [this area]"*. Tony related these macro developments to a loss of morality surrounding consumption in Irish society, associated with the rise of neoliberalism in Ireland, a decline in community and a rise of individualisation.

Thus, through participants' biographical narratives it is possible to examine the ways in which traditional, low resource-intensive production and consumption practices faded out while energy-intensive modes of provision and practices have come to flourish. These gradual transformations have shaped the temporal rhythm of daily life and qualities of frequency, duration and sequences of practice. Furthermore, in exploring the intersections between concurrent and intersecting entities at the macro scale and the performance of practice in everyday life at the micro scale, it is possible to observe how energy practices have evolved over time in an increasingly resource-intensive complex of practices. In this respect, mobility, food and laundry practices are embedded in a complex socio-technical web evolving along an increasing energy-intensive developmental trajectory. This trajectory has encompassed a movement away from localised, pedestrian-accessible and community-based service-provision towards globalised production and large-scale supermarkets, many of which can only be accessed feasibly by car drivers. In answering the question of why energy-intensive practices have acquired dominance in

Irish homes, the crucial role of context and policy in steering this shift over time has emerged.

### 8.4. Steering action: the role of institutions and policy

Individuals' biographical narratives shed light on the ways in which institutions, as agenda setters, authority bodies and framers of key debates, have shaped lives and practices. Their accounts indicate that the projects, ideologies and policies of key societal institutions have had a key role in shaping and foreclosing opportunities for ways of participating in everyday life. In exploring the role of institutions in steering domestic energy demand, two key broad categories of influence emerged. On the one hand there are institutions and policies that have *directly* shaped practices. These policies include *visible* consumption policies that seek to intervene directly in the elements of specific energy practices. Examples include consumer-focused information campaigns encouraging more sustainable consumption, as well as intervention-based policies such as the three-bin waste scheme and water policy. On the other hand, there are a host of institutional policies that have *indirectly* shaped energy demand. Individuals' narratives revealed that the projects and policies of work, health and education institutions, as well as wider planning and infrastructure developments, have been implicated in the complex web of contextual factors shaping dynamics of demand. While visible consumption policies intentionally intervene in practices, *invisible* consumption policies are characterised by their indirect and unintentional effect on domestic energy practices. Participants' accounts suggest that invisible policies have had a significant effect in configuring energy demand, operating incrementally and insidiously in steering practice on an increasingly resource-intensive developmental trajectory.

### 8.4.1 Invisible energy policy: the effect of key societal institutions in steering demand

#### *Work institutions*

Individuals' narratives revealed that their lives and practices are intricately woven into the reproduction and transformation of key societal institutions. As highlighted in Chapters Five and Six, work institutions and roles are hugely significant in shaping dynamics of daily practice. Biographical analysis revealed that, over time, in the context of wider reconfigurations in the economic landscape, changing projects of work institutions have shaped the lives of the individuals' occupying positions within them. Progressively demanding and flexible work schedules were highlighted by a number of men, who noted that, in the context of an increasingly competitive economic landscape, their roles became more stressful and temporally demanding, with this having implications for their relationship with energy. For both Tony and Henry, the increasingly demanding nature of their work roles led to an increased reliance on convenience foods, noting a shift away from returning home for lunch to eating out. Furthermore, shifts in labour relations towards increasingly flexible working conditions emerged as a theme in younger men's lives, affecting mobility practice most significantly, with an overall shift towards increasing car dependency, with many indicating that they felt having a driving licence and access to a car was essential for employability.

With regard to car-driving careers, work institutions played a central role in the promotion of a car-driving culture in Ireland. Overtime, institutional work policies favoured the recruitment of employees skilled in car driving, with those with car-driving skills receiving promotions and financial benefits. Bridget, who worked in a civil service job prior to her marriage, emphasised the impact having a car-driving licence had on her work career:

## Chapter Eight

*“Having the car made a huge difference... I was able to use the car for work and get extra money. I got promoted in the health board ...I was in the salary section... to do that job I had to be able to drive and they gave you travel expenses. So being able to drive was an asset. It increased your money.”*

As Bridget’s account highlights, benefits, symbolic and material, were accrued by those who were skilled in driving.

All of the men in the sample discussed car driving as an essential part of their success in the public sphere, with many men being recruited to car driving specifically during official training and preparation for a work role. Tony was recruited to driving while working for a fisheries company during his teenage years. James was recruited for work purposes as he was required to drive while touring with theatre companies. Michael was recruited during his time in the army. Henry did not know how to drive when he commenced his career in an insurance company in Dublin at the age of 18. Although he was successful in his application, a key prerequisite to his commencement of the job was that he would undertake an intensive driving course and pass his test within three months.

The symbol of the car was increasingly linked to success and advancement at work; both Henry and Tony were provided with company cars upon promotion to more senior roles and encouraged to travel to client appointments by car. The company car was stressed by both of these men as a ‘huge perk’ and a symbol of their achievement and success. In intervening in the material element of car driving by providing these men with the material resource of a car, work institutions had an effect in

## Chapter Eight

shaping practice within these men's homes as well. Both Tony and Henry passed their old cars onto their wives and many more family trips were taken in the car as they took advantage of subsidised petrol. Thus, the policies and projects of work institutions actively intervened in the elements of car driving, shaping meanings, skills and materials and contributing to the advancement and expansion of car driving in Irish society. In promoting an image of car driving as symbol of progress and success and in offering material benefits to individuals who had acquired the skills of driving they promoted its expansion.

### *The Marriage Bar*

With regards to women's lives, the government policy of the marriage bar, which remained in effect until 1973, foreclosed opportunities for women to participate in work institutions following marriage and child birth. The marriage bar acted as an authority constraint that structured married women's biographies, making it a legal requirement for them to forfeit their employment and ensuring the orientation of their lives around the home. In enforcing and legitimising hegemonic normative understandings of women's place in the home and men's role as breadwinners in the public sphere, these policies intersected with individuals' energy practice careers and relational dynamics in the home. In this respect, policies relating to the legal status and employment of Irish women played a crucial, indirect role in steering the reproduction of gendered norms of conduct, shaping gendered patterns of career development and the development of gendered forms of embodied know how:

Henry: *"At that stage when we got married, the woman had to leave work ...so because she was at home then she did all the cooking and the food buying and all of that... She (wife) felt quite OK about it because that was normal in those days, that's what you did and you*

## Chapter Eight

*got a marriage gratuity as well like, you know, so that softened the blow...but by current day standards it's just amazing that that still had to happen, and it went on for so long, you know, that the person that had to go was always the female obviously and that was it, you just didn't have any choice. People of the modern generation find that very hard to believe but that was accepted as normal in those days."*

Following marriage, women's daily paths were reconfigured around their new roles as wife and fulltime homemakers. Marked gender division in roles and practice were reproduced, with the wives' positions firmly located in the private sphere and their husbands operating in the public sphere as male breadwinners. In fulfilling their roles, the women's daily paths were hemmed in and configured by their husband and children's routines. Henry contrasts the taken-for-grantedness of this practice with current day standards, highlighting how standards and norms in relation to domestic gender roles have changed over time, with this having implications for gendered patterns of resource use and career development. Indeed the removal of the marriage bar was a key policy change that, combined with wider socio-economic and political transformations, restructured opportunities for female biographies. The removal of the marriage bar opened up new opportunities for women to participate in the public sphere with implications for practice at home. However, change did not come about readily but took time to transpire:

*Martha: "When I got married in the early 70s, girls gave up work - they still had to give up. It wasn't really acceptable to still work as a married wife or mother then... things changed after the marriage bar was removed, not straight away though, it took time for people to accept women having a life outside the home..."*

## Chapter Eight

Despite changes in policy, the slower pace of normative change resulted in patterns of gendered career development being reproduced for some time after the policy effect had come into place. In this respect, changing patterns took time to come into effect and could be observed over the lives of individuals over the cohort groups. Within the context of changing normative contexts, a number of women who were restricted by the marriage bar at the time of marriage decided to return to work later in life with this having a significant impact on dynamics of practice in their homes. The most significant changes begin to come evident in the lives of women in cohort group three; with Triona and some of the men's wives (Michael and Seamus) continuing to work following marriage. The effect of this was an increased reliance on technologies, convenience foods as well as evidence of differential patterns of relationality in practice, with men's participation in laundry and food activities increasing to a small degree in these cohorts. As discussed in Section 8.2, these changes were facilitated and enabled by concurrent technological developments. However, in all of these cases, the female spouse continued to carry the majority of the load for domestic practice, hinting at the effect of socialisation and entrenched dispositions about gendered roles shaping conduct long after the conditions that have created them have faded out. In this respect, some women were keen to highlight the effect of a 'dual burden' (cf. Hochschild and Machung, 1990) on women in contemporary Ireland who, in the context of a changing economic landscape, are now required to work in order to maintain a standard of living while still assuming most of the responsibility for tasks at home:

*Maria: "As soon as women started working, life started becoming a lot harder for them because they still had the responsibility of doing all the household stuff too. In my day, you could survive comfortably on the one salary but now women are nearly forced into working,*

## Chapter Eight

*even if they'd rather be at home, just to keep up with the cost of everything."*

These accounts highlight how non-energy policies associated with gender and family structure, in configuring opportunities and delimiting lives, have intersected with the demanding of energy in the home.

### *Health institutions*

Health institutions also emerged as key actors shaping discourses and practices. Indirectly, health institutions played a key role in shaping discourses about health and hygiene which intersected with meanings concerning mobility and food practices. More directly, as discussed in Chapter Seven, many participants had experienced some sort of health diagnosis over the latter part of their life with this life event bringing them into engagement with health institutions and experts who played a role in promoting lifestyle change. In this respect, interventions with professionals such as nutritionists often resulted in changes in mobility and food practices. For this process to have effect, technology-assisted feedback and ongoing monitoring of practice was important. For example, following her diagnosis with heart problems and an insertion of a heart stent, Grace has been a regular attendee at Croi, a cardiac lifestyle support charity (see [www.croi.ie](http://www.croi.ie)), who have played a significant role in intervening in the elements of her food and mobility practice. Since this time, Grace has made significant changes to her diet, moving away from high meat and fat consumption towards a chiefly vegetarian-based diet.

*"I follow the Croi recommendations. According to Croi, you're only supposed to eat, they're very particular about your diet, you're only supposed to eat do you know a match box? Well that amount of cheese a week, and red meat I have cut that out now."*

## Chapter Eight

Furthermore, she has emphasised more active forms of travel and has increased her recreational walking.

Accounts by other individuals revealed similar experiences with various conditions and diagnosis bringing about a shift in an individual's personal engagement with the elements of practices. While individuals generally highlighted the difficulty of initially changing their practice, they indicated that ongoing monitoring and contact with practitioners kept them motivated. Tony who had a heart attack in his sixties has undergone a radical change in his food practice. In his case, ongoing monitoring of his practice was crucial to effecting and maintaining change. He attends a clinic every ten weeks to keep check on his biomarkers:

*"I used to eat a lot of sugar, meat, all of that. But now we've cut down on all that, the amount of meat we eat...Through the dietitian first and then through our own knowledge that we'd picked up on the various things ourselves...but you need the markers... I have to go to, every ten weeks I do a heart check. It's the Department of Health monitoring of people who have had heart problems...and they do my weight, my girth, my blood pressure and a blood test... So that monitors the state of my health. And I know by that too if I'm over stepping the mark."*

As these accounts suggest one-on-one interventions and visible feedback may be more effective at bringing about changes than one-size fits all policy campaigns. Indeed, recent research suggests that visible feedback has potential to stimulate change in practice (e.g. Palm and Ellegård, 2011, Stengers, 2011, 2013), with my participants accounts substantiating this.

*Education institutions*

Participants' narratives revealed that the technologisation of daily life has been associated with a decline in the teaching of embodied skills associated with sustainable forms of production, such as sewing, knitting and food growing. In relation to intergenerational decline in embodied competence, the role of education institutions was discussed by a number of individuals. Triona contrasts her own experience of schooling and education with that of current day children:

*“The schools, they are not teaching them, as I do call it, “life issues”. They are not teaching them how to live life, you know, they are teaching them how to do maths and Irish and religion and whatever else but I don’t think any child knows how to recycle, how to sew... they’re teaching them the high flute stuff but they’re not teaching them the basics! They can tell ya anything but they couldn’t tell you the basic things about how to survive from A to B. And it’s the schools, it’s the education system, it’s all gone to how many honours you can get but there’s no teaching of common sense or basic skills of life.”*

From Triona's perspective, the changing policies of education institutions have contributed to declining numbers of practitioners enrolled in less resource-intensive modes of domestic production. However, the recent surge of interest in reinstating these skills in children's learning curriculums has been an aspect of recent interventions into educational policy. Initiatives such as the 'Kitting with granny' scheme as well as food growing projects emerging from Green Schools program (see [www.greenschoolireland.org](http://www.greenschoolireland.org)) are actively intervening in education to increase recruitment of younger generations to more sustainable practices

as part of a wider vision of educating young people to once again become producers and creators of practical things rather than solely consumers of manufactured goods.

### *Planning policy and the scripting of unsustainability*

Biographical narratives provided important insights into the effect of wider planning in configuring dynamics of everyday life and steering domestic practice. The theme of planning policy in scripting practice towards unsustainability emerged in participants' accounts most strongly from the period of 1960s onwards, from which point it was possible to observe the effect of intersecting planning policies relating to housing, service provision and transport infrastructure in steering domestic practice towards gradually increasing resource intensity. Poor spatial planning and the spatial distancing of sites and services configuring car dependency was a theme that featured in all participants' narratives. During childhood, individuals living in urban areas noted sites and services, such as schools and shops, being located in much closer proximity, with most important services being accessible by foot or bike. Bridget's description typifies the conditions highlighted by others:

*"All the schools that I went to in my younger days were in pretty close to proximity to where we lived. The one in Newport, I can remember it was literally about 70 yards up the road. Similarly in Wicklow, similarly Cork, maybe a little bit further, but there was just, you just walked everywhere back then."*

Many individuals who underwent the transition to marriage and parenthood in the 1960s and 70s purchased homes in the newly built suburban areas of Dublin and Galway. Most of these residential areas were poorly provisioned with services with increased spatial distances between

## Chapter Eight

sites and services making it increasingly necessary to have a car. Poor planning and provision of services in these areas drove the recruitment of women to driving, many of whom were housebound while their husbands were at work, without access to schools, shopping facilities or other services and sites needed for everyday living. Being housebound, several women highlighted intense feelings of isolation and in some cases the onset of depression (Martha, Alison, Bridget). In this respect, planning policy had an effect in steering practice in women's lives, shaping their determination to learn to drive. For example, Martha persuaded her husband to take the train to work so she could teach herself how to drive during the day, while Bridget and her husband saved for a number of years in order to secure a second family car for the home. Henry and Tony's wives learned to drive during this period also. This was considered necessary due to the lack of services and poor planning. Henry discusses the period when they moved to their marital home in a suburban area of North Dublin:

Henry: *"It was very awkward because again things like, you know Dunnes up there, that wasn't there when we came here first so we would often have to take a bus trip down, you know quite a good few miles to do the shopping and all that sort of thing, but that wasn't ideal, lucky enough I got the (company) car pretty shortly after we were married. Otherwise she (wife) would have been isolated really in the house and have to walk everywhere so we decided that a second car was required."*

Discussing her current dependency on the car, Sara highlights the role of government policy in configuring unsustainable car use. In doing so she compares the spatial distance between child-related services in contemporary Ireland with the proximity of such amenities in the past. As a child, all of her extra-curricular facilities were located in close proximity to

## Chapter Eight

the school and accessible by foot. This contrasts sharply with her experience today, in which her children's extra-curricular amenities are dispersed spatially and she spends every evening in the car ferrying them around:

*“Not washing my hands of my responsibility, but having three kids who do extra-curricular activities... I just feel there's a lot more the government, the education system can do...like they have no facilities in the school.... Now I can only speak for my own experience and I know in England when we went to school we did so much sport and extra activities and my mother did not drive and, I know it's a long time ago, but, that resulted in us doing all our activities and sports at school and in the evening my mother was not on the road driving and dropping us to so many different things...When we had the money as a country, if we had built better facilities in particular localities, like one location that everybody would be able to use and everybody could train in the one place at the one time. Like that Judith could go to training the same time Jacob goes to training and I wouldn't be in the car all evening.”*

Sara's account highlights how, in the context of her desire to give her children the best possible start in life, her car dependence is exacerbated by a car-centric landscape. Narratives such as these stress the crucial role of planning policy in steering domestic practice and aggregately configuring individuals' everyday practice towards increasing energy-intensity over time. The commonality of experiences throughout the sample attests to the crucial role of context in this regard. More recently, several individuals indicated that large-scale road development projects and the building of motorways has influenced them to shift from taking the train or bus to the car for longer journeys throughout the country. Thus, through participants' biographical narratives it was possible to discern a coalescence of

## Chapter Eight

intersecting contextual factors that have worked over time to result in increasingly resource intensive practice. Planning policy relating to housing, roads and location of services have intersected to drive increasing reliance on the car as essential for the performance of a range of social practices necessary for daily living. These contextual processes steered the increasing recruitment of women to driving as the car has come to be understood as an essential component of a worthwhile life. In this way, policy and planning have played a key role in steering demand over time.

### *Health and safety regulations*

Ireland's entry to the EU was discussed by many participants as a crucial turning point in the country's developmental trajectory, with many new policies emerging during this period that directly and indirectly shaped their everyday lives over time. Several individuals discussed the role of EU directives in leading to the introduction of government policies that have worked to intervene in the elements of practices. For older participants in particular, the introduction of sell-by dates and health and safety measures, for example, the laws put on the practice of swilling, were discussed. Participants' narratives revealed that these health and safety measures often had long term unintended impacts on energy use, with some policies leading to increased sustainability in behaviour and others driving increased wastage and resource use. In this respect, national and international forces have over time shaped the demanding of energy in homes.

With regard to car driving, the introduction of rules and regulations, such as more stringent laws surrounding the use of seatbelts, the number of individuals per car and drink driving, had implications for driving careers with some individuals highlighting the increasing need for two family cars in the context of such changes. Participants revealed that while in the past it was possible to carry four or five children in a car without repercussion,

## Chapter Eight

in the context of new safety laws larger families needed two cars, especially when considered in the context of an evolving infrastructural landscape that increasingly demanded the car as a means of operating flexibly. More recently the introduction of the compulsory National Car Testing Service (NCT) was noted as increasing the turnover of cars, with increased availability of access to finance mediating this.

In relation to food practice, the emergence of health and safety orientated regulations and the introduction of food labels, such as 'sell by' and 'best before' labels, have gradually led to new standards, dispositions and modes of conduct. Many older individuals felt that health and safety regulations had resulted in the gradual loss of embodied skills associated with preservation leading to increased wastage and a throw-away disposition amongst younger generations. Discussing the impact of food and safety policies in leading to the decline in skills and practices, Michael commented: *"When we look at today's polices and health and safety, we've gone overboard Mary, we've gone the opposite direction."*

Tony compares his practice to that of their children and grandchildren, highlighting the impact that food labels have had in driving a loss of embodied competence associated with relying on the human senses of touch, smell and sight to determine if something should be wasted:

*"We don't dump fresh food or anything like that... Except if our son and our daughter in law come, she's a nurse and he's fairly picky as well on account of the two kids, and if a thing has an expiry date oh, they say, put that in the bin and they just chuck it out. Now that really goes against my grain...like if it's a day or two over the sell by date that to me is a guide not a licence to chuck it out... we go by the look*

## Chapter Eight

*of it, the taste and the smell and we always have...it's the way we were brought up and it hasn't killed us yet!"*

Individuals' narratives revealed the effect of policy in slowly configuring generational differences in standards about hygiene and safety, as well as skills and modes of food wastage/preservation practice; older generations, socialised in the pre-food labelling culture, continued to rely on embodied skills they developed during their earlier lives. This highlights the unintended effects of policy in intervening in elements of practice over time. Health policies in particular appear to have had a significant role in shaping norms about cleanliness and hygiene which have unintentionally shaped how energy is demanded over time. These findings share affinities with those of Hand (2005) discussed in Section 2.3.3.

### 8.4.2 Visible Energy Policy

More recently, all participants indicated the impact of visible energy-specific policies on their practice. Direct practice-specific policies refer to policies that intervene directly in an energy practice and seek to intentionally bring about a change in the practice. More recent policies discussed by all participations include the three-bin wastage policy and the impending water policy charges. The legislative and direct focus of these policies is associated with a differential tempo of change, with visible energy policies appearing to effect change more quickly than indirect policies that affect change unintentionally. Apart from a couple of outliers who indicated environmental commitments intersected with many of their domestic practices, most individuals indicated that they have not altered their practice towards increased sustainability over and beyond what is required by such direct and visible consumption policies. For this latter group, this predominantly included adhering to the three-bin scheme and reusing plastic bags:

## Chapter Eight

*Sara: "I couldn't say people would see me as environmentally friendly because I'm not, that's not in the sense of over and above the duties of the recycling or things you're required to do like plastic bags... and that has been kind of brought into the city, so everybody is doing that, you know recycling their plastics and their food waste and using plastic bags. So I suppose I am doing some duties but probably not over and above that...but had recycling not been brought into Galway would I recycle? Probably not."*

*Researcher: "So what role would environmental considerations play in directing your domestic routine?"*

*Sara: "They don't... accept for the compulsory ones which are now in my subconscious. I wouldn't dream of putting my food waste or my garden waste in the wrong bin now. Just completely compliant. You know so the legislated ones are just there. So it's in my subconscious. So they're not a primary role or influence, they're just kind of there in my subconscious. Like they are there under the surface now."*

Sara's comment that the practice changes implemented through policy are now in her "*subconscious*" is an interesting one. Analysis of the influence of direct policy in configuring practice revealed the crucial role that direct participation has in determining the long-term effectiveness of a policy in shaping practice and values. Policies that intervene by making it a legal necessity to participate have a significant effect in this regard. While many individuals highlighted their initial resistance to the introduction of such policies, their views changed as they participated within the sustainable practice. As their participation increased, the practice became habitualised and a reformulation of dispositions occurred over time. In this respect, direct intervention-based consumption policies, by influencing an individual's participation have the capacity to shape dispositions. This

## Chapter Eight

complicates the idea that values drive action, highlighting instead the way in which participation can shape values. Sara's account of her adjustment during the period of change highlights the role that participation can have in altering dispositions and values:

*"I remember the woman coming to teach us how to separate [waste] and I was thinking oh Lord God, I'll never learn this. Imagine thinking that! you know no one likes change and I was quite reluctant...And now I don't even remark on it...it's in my subconscious and I wouldn't dream of putting things into the one bin now and if I was in a place that didn't do the 3 bins scheme, you'd kind of be like all your waste goes into one bin?! You would obviously be quite surprised."*

As Sara's narrative suggests, legislated policy has an important role in affecting change through participation, with this kind of change appearing to be more effective than information-based campaign approaches that focus on affecting change through values and attitudes.

Public debate about the water charges were ongoing at the time of the interviews and this was brought into many individuals' discussions, providing an interesting context for exploring how policy intersects with household discourse, perceptions and deliberations. For example, at the time of interviewing, James' and Trish were actively engaging with their children in discussion about how water-related household practices could be changed over the coming months in order to reduce water consumption:

*James: "So the whole water thing that's going on now, until now it's something we haven't thought too much about. Apart from when they were small and in school and learning to turn the tap off and*

## Chapter Eight

*scrub your teeth and those kind of things, water hasn't come into it particularly. But now we're all looking at our water practices and I mean one of the things now that will have to change is how much washing we do which is also another energy use but in order for that to change we need to have kids that are less germ orientated..."*

*Trish: "like Sam (son), a typical teenager he's become obsessed with hygiene and being clean, you'll go to pick up his laundry and everyday there's another full set of clothes worn once only and of course it's all been squished together...so they're going to have to start wearing clothes at least twice..."*

*James: "So we're talking about things like that now and how long are you going to be in the shower once things change ...Sam...now he rarely takes more than one shower a day now but he has been known to take three you know at times so they're going to have to cop on a bit..."*

*Trish: "Like I remember my parents would...like it was one bath a week, you know as a child, it was one bath a week, the rest we used to do in the sink and wash yourself..."*

As indicated from Trish and James' discussion, changing water practices will require intervening in a range of water-related practices, including laundry, showering, and other personal hygiene practices, as well as broader standards of cleanliness. It was evident that the public debate about impending water charges stimulated participants to reflect upon and question unsustainable ideals of water-related practices and norms.

However, policy was not received positively by all participants in the sample with social differentiation in reception of consumption policy initiatives appearing to intersect with class and level of education. In particular,

## Chapter Eight

individuals from working class backgrounds were more likely to indicate a distrust of policy and demonstrate resistance to it. Triona expressed very hostile views towards the introduction of the three-bin scheme and the recent debates about the water charges and refuses to participate in the food bin scheme. A lack of trust in the government and a feeling that they were intervening too much in individuals' lives was expressed:

*Triona: "Well I honestly think with the environmental issues....I think with all our recycling and our green and our everything else they are making us do I think we...have gone back further than progressed and I know for a fact a few on the road feel the same, they are refusing to accept it and use the green bin for the black rubbish and things and I think it's because people are refusing to accept it, it is driven home too much, but it's not practiced and I think an awful lot of people are kind of saying as well they don't believe, you know, we would have a brown bin collection here the same day as the black bin but as one fellow said, he said it was the same fucking two drivers, they collected the black bin first and then came back for the brown bin so we said it was going into the same container so we said why would we bother...I think an awful lot of people think there is an awful lot being pushed at us...I think a lot of people just don't have the time and...an awful lot of people don't have the space to be doing different things they want us to do."*

In addition, some individuals expressed anger that the authorities had not considered their circumstances, with those living in terraced houses stressing that bringing bins through the house was an unhygienic inconvenience:

## Chapter Eight

*Frank: “some people have taken it on board, some people find it hard to come on board with it. For example, my Mum, we live in a house in Santry, they’re four houses together, so we’re in the terraced house in between, a house on either side and the garages. And my Mum now finds it very difficult because she never did have three-bins outside the door, because she can’t bring them through the house.”*

These accounts suggest one-size-fits all approaches to policy may not always be appropriate and signify that segmented approaches, tailored according to different living circumstances and arrangements, may be more effective at bringing about long-term change.

### 8.5 Chapter Summary

Participants’ biographic narratives reveal that multiple intersecting macro level processes have worked to steer, script and configure energy demand and practice trajectories. Material development, infrastructural change and socio-cultural transitions, as well as direct and indirect policies, have intersected to shape the emergence of an increasing resource-intensive, socio-technical complex. These contextual processes have reconfigured the fabric of daily life and shaped demand over time. This brings the presentation of the findings to a close. The subsequent concluding discussion offers a synthesis of the findings generated in this study and their relation to the broader research and policy landscapes.

## 9. Chapter Nine: Concluding Discussion

### 9.1 Introduction

As outlined in earlier chapters of this thesis, as of now, dynamic, contextual approaches to exploring consumption over biographic time have been unrepresented and underexplored. This has given rise to a situation where little is known about patterns and processes of change at the scale of biographic time. In seeking to address this lacuna, this thesis has been underpinned by one key question, that is:

**How do the everyday energy practices of individuals interact with processes of biographic and socio-technical change?**

In addressing this broader question, three key research questions were delineated:

- 1. How does performance of energy practices develop and/or change throughout the individual lifecourse?**
- 2. What are the key processes that influence biographic dynamics in consumption?**
- 3. What lessons can be drawn for consumption policy from contextual, dynamic investigations?**

In attempting to answer these questions, an innovative theoretical and methodological approach was developed that combined concepts and methods from socio-geographical perspectives that draw biography into questions of social change.

This concluding discussion provides an overview of the key findings and discusses the policy implications and contributions of the study. Section 9.2 provides an overview of the key findings as they relate to the research questions. This is followed by a discussion of the policy implications arising from the research in Section 9.3. Section 9.4 considers the contribution of the study to wider knowledge in empirical, theoretical and methodological terms. Finally, Section 9.5 discusses key limitations of the study and outlines recommendations for future research.

### 9.2 Summary of key findings

#### 9.2.1 Participation at daily and life paths – patterns and contexts

Chapters Five and Six sought to establish how performances of energy practices develop and change over the individual lifecourse. Zooming in on the scale of the daily path, Chapter Five drew on diary and interview data to provide a detailed, descriptive picture of daily path dynamics in practice. The first section of Chapter Five delineated the personal temporalities of participants' current daily routines and the practices that comprise them. Focusing on the key exemplar practices of food (shopping and preparation), mobility (car driving) and laundry, analysis revealed that temporalities of daily practice are strongly configured by the presence or absence of institutional and relational roles and commitments. Variance in modes and temporal patterns of performance were observed according to lifecourse circumstances, in particular, gender, age, employment status, and parenthood. Practices are immersed in complex and variously malleable routines that are structured around key institutional roles and commitments. Practices in various domains compete with each other for time and resources. In this respect, lifecourse circumstances, relationship and institutional constraints have an important role in bounding people to carry specific practices, the performance of which limits their capacity for

other ways of doing things. In this way, commitments to work and family-related practices configure the field of possibilities as well as the rhythm and cohesion of performances during the day, with implications for how energy is performed in daily life. Practices such as car use, laundry and food shopping and preparation are embedded and sequenced in an enmeshment of practices, routines and contexts, with clear patterns of social differentiation among the sample in terms of capacity to reorder and alter rhythms related to these. In particular, individuals with young children and those with busy work schedules illustrated the greatest degree of 'harriedness' (Southerton, 2003) and less propensity to reorder routines. Furthermore, it was revealed that across all age groups women carry a much greater load of practices for other people, with their lives more complexly enmeshed in relational contexts and obligations. These findings attest to the importance of situating energy practices within the context of lifecourse and daily contexts.

Zooming out to the scale of the life path, Chapter Six employed the concept of 'career' to explore patterns of development in practice over the lifecourse. Patterns of career development were investigated from several vantage points, including trajectories, phases and transitions. Section 6.2 revealed that patterns of career development are highly gendered, with evolutions in meanings, modes and forms of competence diverging between men and women over biographic time. Pred discusses the dialectical relationship between the longer-term institutional roles and projects in which an individual is invested and the activities of their daily path, which he refers to as the 'daily/life path dialectic'. Analysis of my participants' careers revealed that this dialectic is highly gendered; whether one is born female or male appeared to be the most significant factor shaping the type of social positions they will hold within public and domestic fields, with these positions and their evolution over time having important implications for trajectories of energy practice careers.

## Chapter Nine

Reflecting the public-private division of gendered roles, men were far less likely than women to have developed continuous careers in private domain energy practices such as food preparation and laundry. In contrast, all men in the sample developed continuous careers in car driving, being recruited to car driving in their late teens or early twenties. Conversely, women were more likely to reveal later recruitment to car driving and periods of non-participation in their driving careers. The results of this study indicate that careers tend to develop with an element of path dependency, shaped by events and transitions in concurrent careers, most notably work and family, with key milestones and transitions, such as getting married and having children, having a long-term impact on career trajectories.

In addition to highlighting broad patterns of participation in careers, analysis at the scale of the life path revealed phases of relative periods of stability and change in careers. Section 6.3 revealed that certain periods of life were characterised by greater dynamism in practice careers whereas others were represented as periods of relatively uneventful change. The intersections between energy practice careers and concurrent careers in work, residency and family emerged strongly. Periods of stability generally corresponded to distinct phases within a life in which institutional roles and routines were held stable or when lifecourse circumstances represented significant social constraints on the ordering and rhythm of daily life. In contrast, other periods of life, in particular emerging adulthood, the transition to empty nest and the work-retirement transition, were characterised by manifold and frequent transitions and turning points in practice careers. These phases were identified as critical periods during which key life decisions, events and milestones had the effect of shaping the trajectory of practice careers thereafter.

## Chapter Nine

Upon outlining broad phases of relative stability and change, Section 6.4 explored the tempos and contexts of change in greater depth. Within individual practice careers, transitions and turning points were noted for the direction of change in terms of levels of participation as increasing, decreasing or remaining stable. Furthermore, the tempo of change was explored by analysing the rate and pace of change during transitional periods. Analysis revealed that differential tempos of change were characterised by different contexts of change. Sudden transitions in practice careers were more strongly configured by distinct breaks in context in the material or physical environment, involving, for example, relocation or the integration of a new material appliance into a practice. Incremental transitions are more insidious and gradual in character. Sources and contexts of incremental change ranged from experiential learning and development through the lifecourse to gradual shifts in relational contexts and broader changes in the socio-cultural and techno-material landscapes framing individuals' practice. Comparative analysis across the exemplar practice careers uncovered differences in terms of the degree of dynamism as well as the relative frequency of sudden and incremental transitions, with car-driving careers showing the greatest dynamism and food shopping careers the least. Furthermore, patterns and contexts of change differed between men and women's careers, with women's careers being more heavily shaped by family and relational dynamics and men's careers being largely configured around work roles and commitments.

As outlined in Chapter Two, extant quantitative lifecourse research on consumption has tended to focus on changes associated with life events and transitions. The finding that many transitions in practice careers occur incrementally over time and are shaped by broader shifts in biographic and societal contexts is significant. Moving beyond life-event centred approaches, the retrospective-biographic approach revealed multiple temporalities of change shaped by processes operating at various scales of

## Chapter Nine

emergence, from an individual's embodied participation in practices as they emerge through their lifecourse, to changes in relational contexts to wider shifts in the projects and institutions of Irish society. Thus, departing from linear event-based conceptions of lifecourse dynamics in consumption, a key contribution of this study is directing attention to other temporalities and scales of change in the context of biographical time.

### 9.2.3 Explaining patterns of change - mapping processes and mechanisms

While Chapters Five and Six focused predominantly on exploring how performances of practices develop throughout the lifecourse, the following two results chapters sought to offer a more nuanced exploration of processes and mechanisms shaping the patterns observed. Individuals' narratives revealed that their practice is shaped by complex intersecting processes operating at a range of interacting scales, from an individual's emergence through the stages and phases of the gendered lifecourse, to the broader societal structures that frame this process.

Chapter Seven focused on micro-level dynamics operating in the context of an individual's biographic experience. Concentrating on the experiential scale, it highlighted engagement with energy as intricately bound up in continually evolving identities, roles, social contexts and relationships. How energy is done and performed as it is embedded in everyday conduct is enmeshed in the reflexive construction and performance of gendered and moral identities. Employing a performative conception of identity, it was revealed that Individuals develop dispositions and attachments over the course of their biography, with this being shaped by joint processes of socialisation and individual agency.

## Chapter Nine

A key finding to emerge is that individuals actively construct a practice-based identity by associating or disassociating with lifestyle groups with which they feel affiliated or estranged. For most individuals, participation in pro-environmental conduct that deviates too far from mainstream conduct is associated with stigma. In this respect, energy use and practice is intricately bound up in notions of what it means to live a worthwhile life, which for many individuals is associated with high-energy lifestyles. Analysis of the biographies of a smaller number of individuals who associated strongly with pro-environmental conduct revealed the crucial importance of biographic experience, including participation within communities of practice and social contexts in which pro-environmental conduct is practiced, for legitimising pro-environmental conduct. In this respect, participants' narratives suggest that the expression of values and conduct is strongly configured by social context.

In addition to broader moral positions and identities, attachments to practices are also strongly constituted by gender, with energy fundamentally intertwined with the performance of gendered identities. Analysis revealed that men and women draw on different cultural scripts and resources in their talk about their practice. However, importantly gender groups did not emerge as homogenous categories. In this respect, multiple ways of subjectively personifying and embodying masculinities and femininities were evident across the sample, with this having implication for their engagement with energy practices throughout the lifecourse. Despite the diversity of ways of performing and embodying gender among the sample, two broad categories were discerned within each gender group, reflecting, on the one hand, men and women who ascribe to traditional hegemonic gender identity, and, on the other, those who reflect non-hegemonic conceptions about gender roles. Whether one ascribes to hegemonic or non-hegemonic gender identity appears to have important implications for how energy is done in daily life. Men and women reflecting

## Chapter Nine

hegemonic gender roles were more likely to hold traditional perceptions and understandings regarding how energy practices should be performed and allocated in the home, with strict boundaries in performance of energy practices as they relate to men and women's roles being maintained for these cases. In contrast, those reflecting non-hegemonic conceptions about gender roles engaged with energy differently, with a more equal sharing of practices between genders as well as different strategies for how energy practices are coordinated and performed on a daily basis observed among this group.

Biographic analysis revealed that the formation of dispositions and careers of action were rooted in early socialisation. Socialisation experiences provided individuals with natal context experiences that were crucial for setting individuals on domestic practice trajectories and inculcating deep seated preferences, dispositions and images about practices that acted as references points for comparison in later life. Through the process of socialisation, individuals acquired a *le sens pratique* (Bourdieu, 1990) that structures their action throughout life. Furthermore, enrolment or non-participation in various practices during childhood was an important component of the acquisition of a gender identity, with performance, interaction and context crucial in the formation of habitus. Gendered patterns of enrolment in childhood had implications for the development of practice trajectories over time, shaping individuals' engagement with energy long after the initial years of childhood socialisation.

Relational contexts play a crucial role in the formation of dispositions, meanings and forms of practical action. Through processes of social interaction and learning, individuals come to form dispositions and images that shape what they do. Individuals' narratives revealed that they draw on values, meanings and interpretive frames of their social context, with their

## Chapter Nine

conduct strongly influenced by their relationships with others. Furthermore, it was revealed that dynamics in relational contexts and transitions in the lives of others have important implications for modes and patterns of performance of energy over time. Relationships with others are often sources of change that are incremental, unplanned and unintentional in character, although on occasion they are the source of more abrupt changes in practice. While family roles and responsibilities were found to have the most significant influence on trajectories, peer groups, communities of practices and work networks all emerged as important sources of change shaping individuals' understandings and action over time.

Finally, the effects of changing status in material capital, health and ageing on energy practices were discussed. Throughout individual lifecourses, dynamics in monetary resources and material capital significantly shaped an individual's relationship to energy. Social differentiation in terms of the accumulation of resources and wealth shaped differential patterns of career development among people from different class positions. Moreover, ageing and changing health status emerged as important sources of change affecting perceptions and levels of physical ability which shape how people do things, and the energy implications that emerge from this.

While Chapter Seven uncovered processes shaping dynamics of energy at the scale of individuals' experiential development through the lifecourse, Chapter Eight moves beyond this to consider the broader macro processes and mechanisms shaping practice careers. Participants' narratives revealed that social norms, infrastructures, economic and political developments have intersected to have a crucial impact in steering careers towards increasing resource intensity.

## Chapter Nine

A gradual process of increasing dependency on automated technologies has characterised careers over time as practices become increasingly intertwined within, and dependent upon, complex socio-technological infrastructures. Analysis across cases uncovered social differentiation in the pace of technologisation of practices according to geography and social class. Individuals' narratives revealed that the gradual technologisation of every practice has reshaped how energy is used, understood and performed in the home. The technologisation of daily life has reshaped temporalities of practices and routines, opening up many new possibilities for the way daily life is ordered and the range of possible activities performed. These technological changes have co-evolved with new social norms about what is considered convenient and appropriate practice in everyday life. The co-evolution of techno-material and normative contexts, has shaped changing meanings and expectations about what a worthwhile life entails, with increasingly resource-intensive standards normalised over time.

Explorations of the impact of technological change on modes and temporalities of performance shed light on the changing relations between practices. Concurrent macro-economic transformations and changes in systems of provision were centrally implicated in the web of contextual processes shaping the lives and practices of individuals. The gradual move from a production- to consumer-orientated society has reshaped how practices are socially organised and 'hang together' (Schatzki, 2002) in daily life. Participants' accounts revealed that as less resource-intensive practices died out, new complexes of practices of increasing resource-intensity emerged. An overall process of spatial distancing between sites and services and the development of car-centric infrastructure drove increasing car use and the recruitment of women to driving. In this respect, planning policy has steered the emergence of increasingly resource-intensive mobility practices.

## Chapter Nine

The crucial role of policy and institutions in steering demand intentionally and unintentionally was discussed in greater depth in Sections 8.4 and 8.5. Participants discussed the impact of visible and invisible energy policies in delimiting action over time. While visible energy policies intentionally intervene in energy practices, invisible energy policies are characterised by their indirect and unintentional effect on practices. Narratives revealed that the projects and policies of work, health and education institutions, as well as wider planning and infrastructural development, have had an important role in steering career trajectories largely towards increasing resource intensity. Policies such as the introduction of food labels and sell by dates as well as car-centric work initiatives have reshaped meanings and modes of performance. Moreover, car-centric and poorly deliberated planning policy drove the recruitment of women to driving and locked individuals into unsustainable patterns of car use. Planning policy relating to housing, roads and location of services intersected to drive increasing reliance on the car, without which many individuals felt they would be unable to accomplish social practices and access amenities necessary for everyday living.

More recently, all participants indicated the impact of visible energy-specific policies on their practice. Visible policies, such as that of the three-bin scheme, directly intervene in practice and seek to intentionally bring about a change in the practice. Analysis revealed that visible and invisible policies are associated with differential tempos of change, with visible energy policies appearing to effect change at a quicker pace than invisible energy policies whose impacts on domestic energy practices tend to occur more gradually. In relation to visible policies, those that enforce participation legally appear to be particularly successful at affecting change. In this sense, the finding that participation can shift values complicates assumptions underpinning linear ABC models of behaviour change which

posit behaviour change as stemming from deliberative processes. Moreover, social differentiation in responses to policy was observed with individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds expressing greater distrust in relation to government intentions, suggesting that a one-size-fits-all approach to policy is likely to be presented with challenges in implementation.

### 9.3 Policy implications and lessons

#### 9.3.1 Challenging hegemonic discourses of development and intervention

Understanding how change has occurred in the past is a vital prerequisite to designing future transitions for sustainability. By adopting an innovative critical socio-geographic methodology to uncovering mechanisms and processes of change, this study revealed that a retrospective, biographic-narrative scale of analysis holds immense potential for addressing questions of social reproduction and transformation. In revealing individuals' conduct as shaped by intersecting processes of biographic and social-technical change, this study adds to a growing body of work that is critiquing individualist-rationalist approaches to consumption and energy demand policy (Shove and Walker, 2007, Shove and Walker, 2010). In directing attention away from individual decision making towards the social-organisation of practices, practice-theoretical approaches offer a theoretical challenge to contemporary policy approaches which have been criticised as failing to appreciate the social configuration of action by contextual forces. Much extant consumption and energy demand research and the subsequent policy responses have been out of touch with the lived realities, challenges and opportunities that people face in their everyday lives. Shifting the focus away from processes of deliberation and onto individuals as carriers of practice directs attention to the ways in which individual performances are shaped by shared social understandings about what it means to perform a practice, with these being configured by gender, life stage and wider socio-technical contexts. The findings of this study call

## Chapter Nine

for a movement away from policy approaches that individualise responsibility for change towards a contextual approach to energy and consumption policy that appreciates the intersections between processes of biographic and socio-technical change and everyday conduct. Mirroring the findings of this study emerge a series of concrete policy recommendations that hold relevance to both governmental and non-governmental institutions and actors implicated in sustainable development at a variety of scales, from the everyday and experiential to the broader structures framing individuals' lives.

At the scale of experiential lifecourse, the results of this study indicate that consumption practice is not static but changes over time in the context of individuals' shifting needs, roles and circumstances. Providing support for the 'moment of change' hypothesis (Verplanken et al., 2008, Darnton et al., 2011), the findings reveal certain periods of life appear to present as more amenable to sustainability interventions. Critical or sensitive periods of change, most notably emerging adulthood, the transition to empty nest and the work-retirement transition represent particularly dynamic periods of life in which routines and perspectives are in flux in the context of role transitions. The connection of individuals to societal institutions, such as universities and work places, during these periods of change represents a fruitful opportunity for challenging interventions. The period of childhood emerged as a particularly critical period in practice careers during which, via processes of socialisation and experiential learning, longstanding dispositions are formed. Young adulthood also emerged as a crucial phase in practice careers, with many key milestones, such as learning to drive, and navigating independent performance in food shopping, cooking and laundry clustered in this stage. In this respect, policy interventions could be developed to target children from a young age, from Montessori through primary and secondary school years. Furthermore, individuals making the transition to university represent a critical population that can be targeted

## Chapter Nine

in promoting and incentivising recruitment to sustainable consumption practices. For example, providing vegetarian cooking classes and free public transport to leaving certificate and first year university students could offer a useful means of facilitating the recruitment of young people to more sustainable practices. Other critical periods of change include the transition to parenthood and the later work-retirement transition. Individuals approaching the transition to parenthood appear to be particularly open to reordering their food practice, although more careful consideration of the demands of parenting with car dependency is needed to increase the effectiveness of sustainable mobility initiatives among this demographic group. The transition to retirement, characterised by a reordering of routines and increasing biographical availability, represents another particularly promising period for targeting sustainability interventions. In preparation for this transition, individuals could be approached through work institutions and retirement groups to partake in sustainability interventions aimed at promoting recruitment to pro-environmental practices during the latter years of their working career and retirement life.

While critical periods emerged as particularly fruitful opportunities for intervention, certain periods of life appear to be less suitable for targeting change initiatives. In this regard, the findings suggest that policy responses should be sensitive to the ways in which practices compete for time and resources in individuals' lives. An appreciation for the ways in which energy practices intersect with roles and commitments in domains of work and family would likely increase the effectiveness of policy. For example, efforts to increase sustainable transport options could be improved if the impact that a modal shift from car to cycling or public transport had on broader rhythm of daily living was considered. For example, coordinating cycling to work initiatives with later starting times at work would make it more feasible and attractive to individuals to make a modal shift from car to cycling for the commute to work. Clearly some periods of life are

## Chapter Nine

characterised by greater degrees of constraint on agency. Commitments to work and family-related practices configure the field of possibilities as well as the rhythm and cohesion of performances during the day, with individuals parenting and working having less agency to reorder their routines. In this respect, policy could usefully pay greater attention to the intersection of different careers in various life domain, such as those of mobility, work and family. In particular, the findings suggest that policy should consider how improvements can be made for people whose daily routines are especially harried and inhibited by relational and institutional commitments, for example through offering additional support and services for parents of dependent children. Examples include presenting more flexible working options to those with young children to reduce car dependency and introducing policies to improve coordination of car-sharing initiatives among parents with children in school. Furthermore, ensuring that essential facilities relating to child development, including schools and sports facilities, are located in close proximity to each other appears to be a crucial prerequisite to reducing car dependency and increasing the feasibility of sustainable transport options.

Findings highlighting the importance of gender for energy use and practice suggest that policy efforts should be gender-sensitive. The results from this study indicate that patterns of resource use are highly gendered, with meanings and modes of performance of energy practices differing between men and women. Furthermore, men and women's energy use is directed towards different ends. For example, women's car use tends to be more deeply enmeshed in a complex of practices relating to domestic upkeep and caring, such as shopping and collecting children, whereas men's car use tends to be orientated more around work and public roles. This suggests that policy should be sensitive to differential patterns of resource use as well as how experiences and constraints differ between men and women.

## Chapter Nine

Scaling up to the meso-level social contexts in which individuals lives evolve, the findings of this study have highlighted the relational nature of consumption and resource use. Refuting individualistic-rationalistic conceptions of the consumer, they have revealed that an individual's practice is strongly configured by relational and normative contexts. At a household level, it is imperative that policy recognise consumption as a relational activity, the dynamics of which change over time in the context of individuals' progression through changing roles and commitments. Furthermore, there is need to recognise that energy and resource use is embedded in the performance of practices that are shaped by broader socio-cultural norms and discourses. Findings highlighting the intersections of consumption with identity bring into relief the importance of social norms surrounding practice for maintaining attachments to high energy-consuming lifestyle practices. The finding that many individuals continue to associate pro-environmental conduct with deviance from normality suggests normative contexts continue to work against pro-environmental conduct in Ireland. This points to a crucial role for policy to support the emergence of 'envirogenic environments' (Shove, 2010) that promote sustainable practice. Participation within social contexts in which pro-environmental norms are salient seems to be a crucial element shaping perceptions and meanings of practice. Policy could usefully capitalise on existing processes of social interaction and peer-to-peer communication as avenues for advocating and supporting pro-environmental conduct, for example by promoting and incentivising environmental champions in work places, schools and neighbourhoods as well as moderating advertisements that normalise and legitimise high-energy consuming lifestyles.

In highlighting the intersections of practice with wider social-technical contexts the results of this study offer a challenge to mainstream discourses of development that underpin governmental and much non-governmental approaches to change. A conclusion emerging from these findings is that

policy should move beyond approaches that rely on orthodox economic assumptions about consumer rationality to meaningfully address the infrastructural and social dynamics locking individuals into current resource-intensive patterns of energy demand. To this end, it is strongly advocated that the scope of interventionism in western societies is expanded to advance a more contextualised approach to understanding and approaching development. As this study reveals, it is not only energy and consumption policies that shape demand, but factors including normative contexts, economic conditions, banking policies, technological developments, spatial planning, work and health institutions, gender policies and family structures, amongst others, have intersected and interacted in configuring conduct over time. Findings highlighting the non-linear and often unintended effects of policy and institutional change on demand contradict linear models of intervention characteristic of the neoliberal, individualistic-rationalistic developmental regime (cf. Pennington, 2005) and suggest that a more interconnected approach to sustainable development policy, one which recognises the fluid, situated, interconnected and long-lasting impacts of both intentional and unintentional policies in delimiting individuals' action, is needed to bring about successful change. The type of critical methodology employed in this study is capable of shedding light on such complex mechanisms and processes of change in a way that methodologies associated with the dominant policy regime have not yet achieved. Accounting for how wider contexts shape patterns of resource use will be necessary to develop more effective development policy that can address the complex drivers of consumption. To this end, it is suggested that an integrated, contextual approach to intervention would entail coordinating a long-term vision to reconfigure socio-technical landscapes to script behaviour towards sustainable rather than unsustainable patterns of resource use. This thesis contends that critical socio-geographical methodology, characteristic of the approach employed in this study, holds immense emancipatory potential for advancing and improving policy responses to sustainable development.

### 9.3.2 Methodology as intervention – the transformative potential of critical method

The results of this study shed light on the implications of methodological orientation in the construction of conceptions of social change and resulting policy responses. A key political implication emerging from this relates to the potential of critical socio-geographical method as a tool for intervention and activism in sustainability transitions. Within social scientific research, the methodological approach employed has a hugely significant effect in shaping the type of findings that emerge (cf. Courtney-Hall and Rogers, 2002). In employing alternative methodologies that depart from disciplines usually aligned with individualistic-rationalistic, neoliberal models of development, this research suggests that critical, dynamic socio-geographical method holds immense potential for innovating and diversifying approaches to sustainability interventions. In doing so, it highlights the transformative and activist potential of contextual, biographic methodological approaches to empirical inquiry in helping to shed light on complex social processes shaping social change.

Theoretical concepts hold relevance insofar as they aid empirical analysis and understanding. The results from this study suggest that individualistic-rationalistic concepts of consumption are ill suited when explaining dynamics of change as they relate to lived realities and contexts. This study suggests that policy makers should engage with ‘ordinary’ citizens to take their lived experience seriously in the design of interventions and policies and respond to the type of nuanced and experiential evidence generated through narrative and ethnographic means of research. Policy approaches that are rooted in lived experience and appreciate energy and resource consumption as embedded in situated action are likely to bring about more effective and long-lasting transitions in practice. In offering a challenging critique to evaluating dominant individualistic-rationalistic approaches to

## Chapter Nine

sustainable development characteristic of neoliberal regimes, the findings of this study suggest that more critical discourses and models of development are needed to interpret and understand change as it plays out in the context of lived experience. Socio-geographical understandings of development, in offering an alternative conception of sociality where human behaviour is intrinsically integrated into the social, political, economic and techno-material contexts of everyday life, present a means of increasing the effectiveness of existing policy approaches. Conclusions from this study suggest that the type of robust, qualitative data emerging from socio-geographical biographic-narrative approaches are of immense policy relevance and significance and should be given more serious consideration in designing interventions for sustainability.

In treating methodology and research itself as a form of intervention and activism, this research takes Bourdieu's appeal for critical, reflexive and politically engaged social analysis seriously (Bourdieu, 1991, cf. also Flyvbjerg 2001, Flyvbjerg et al. 2012). In doing so, this thesis champions the notion that reflexive, critical method, in disclosing structuration processes and power dynamics, can itself become 'a powerful tool to enhance social emancipation' (Navarro, 2006: 15-16), with untapped potential for illuminating the operation of power relations and orthodox norms and beliefs in shaping conduct.

A further means by which critical socio-geographic biographic method holds transformative capacity relates to its potential as an intervention tool for advancing personal reflexivity on the doxic logic of routine practices that are of crucial relevance to questions of sustainable development. The three-stage, multi-modal process, in offering individuals a range of ways through which to explore the working of their practice and its transformation over time, had the effect of enlightening individuals to the workings of their

routines. In this regard, three interdependent characteristics of the methodological approach arose as crucial components of the interventionist character of the methodology; the 1) longitudinal design, 2) specific suite, and, 3) sequencing of methods combined to facilitate the reconstruction of individuals' taken for granted routines and their transformation over time. This specific combination, in facilitating a cumulative narrative-generating-effect, enabled gradual cognisance and illumination to arise. Further, the longitudinal process, in facilitating the process of reconstruction between the researcher and participant, enabled a dialectical relation between trust and intervention to emerge. Following this, in further exploring the interventionist potential of critical biographic method, future research could potentially explore the ways in which specific combinations, configurations and sequences of methods shape the reconstructive process and its interventionist potential.

### 9.4 Contribution to knowledge

#### 9.4.1 Theoretical contribution

As outlined in Chapter Two, considerable tensions exist between perspectives that (over-) emphasise agentic aspects of consumption and those that focus more or less exclusively on its contextual or structural dimensions. In seeking to advance a holistic approach to studying consumption dynamics, this study builds upon recent practice-theoretical consumption research. In this respect, a novel fusion of social practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990, Pred, 1977, 1981a, 1981b) and lifecourse perspectives (Mayer, 2008) has been advanced. This combined lifecourse and practice-theoretical frame offers an experience-centred, holistic and dynamic approach to exploring biographic dynamics in energy. Engaging with first wave practice theorists and other sociological lifecourse accounts that have drawn biography into questions of social change, this thesis sought to advance understandings of structuration processes. The conceptual tools employed provided a means of moving beyond actor-

## Chapter Nine

centric and contextual dualisms to enable an exploration of the dialectic relation between self and society, micro and macro processes, in change processes.

This thesis has demonstrated that the theoretical accounts of first wave practice theorists can be usefully cross-fertilised in explorations of dialectic processes in energy practice dynamics as they play out over biographical time. While Bourdieu's concept of habitus directs attention to a performative understanding of identity and the role of socialisation in the formation of longstanding dispositions that shape and delimit action, Pred's path concepts and associated dialectics offer a means of theorising dynamics of practice over the scale of the whole lifecourse. Combining these two accounts, it is possible to explore how the everyday activities, accumulated knowledges and biographies of individuals intersect and interact with the social reproduction and transformation of practices, societies and institutions. In this respect, it is suggested that continued engagement with these accounts could hold additional potential for biographically situated investigations of energy demand.

Combining these practice-theoretical accounts with concepts and insights from the socio-historic lifecourse paradigm adds further to the contextualised, temporal approach. Crucially, a lifecourse orientation implies understanding lifecourse processes and their links with energy consumption within broader social, spatial and temporal contexts. As the findings from this study indicate, the lifecourse functions as a socially constructed, normative framework that defines the parameters of consumption. Transitions between age-related social roles and associated identities are linked to changes in the performance of energy practices over time. Gendered roles are anticipated and realised through modes of performance, having direct implications for patterns of resource use and

## Chapter Nine

energy consumption. Furthermore, it is apparent that the recruitment and defection of individuals to and from social practices is influenced by the normative and institutional structuring of the lifecourse. Thus, changing societal expectations about appropriate ways of 'being', a good parent, partner, employee, and so on, direct and shape the contours of everyday consumption practices. Furthermore, focusing on lived experience, the findings from this study indicate that patterns of recruitment and career development are differentiated along gender and class dimensions, indicating that capabilities and patterns of resource use are structured unequally among social groups (cf. Walker, 2013).

Gender has remained under-theorised in relation to practice in general and energy practices in particular. This thesis has advanced work in this field by directing attention to implications of gender for environmental socialisation and the patterning of demand over biographical time. In doing so, it has engendered the practice-theoretical concepts outlined by Bourdieu and Pred. Building on a recent body of work that has sought to engender Bourdieu's notion of habitus (McNay, 1999, Miller, 2016), this thesis has highlighted that the formation and evolution of dispositions and careers of action concerning energy practices is a highly gendered process. Through processes of socialisation, men and women develop specific dispositions that shape and delimit their action over time, with this having important implications for their engagement with energy. Furthermore, drawing on Pred's paths concepts and associated dialectics, the study has revealed divergent patterns and processes configuring the daily-life path and internal-external dialectics as they play out in the lives of men and women. Furthermore, the constraints on practice (Pred, 1981a, 198b) encountered by individuals are differentiated according to gender. At the micro-scale of capability constraints, women and men develop different forms of personal know-how and competence which delimits their activity, and shapes how they engage with energy in their daily lives. At a meso-level, coupling

constraints are configured by gender, with women's careers shaped to a greater extent by patterns of relational dependency relative to men. Finally, from a macro-level perspective, it has been revealed that the influence of authority constraints in shaping and foreclosing opportunities for action, stemming from policies, economic conditions and cultural norms, transpire differently for men and women. This thesis thus makes a theoretical advance in assimilating and expanding Bourdieu and Pred's concepts as they apply to biographic dynamics in domestic energy consumption, which to the author's knowledge, no study has accomplished to date.

To date, little research has explored how wider institutions and contexts work to shape objective structures, social discourse and delimit action in relation to energy practices, especially in an Irish context. In highlighting careers as situated within a broader dynamic landscape, this study has made a significant contribution to theoretical debates concerning the role of institutions and policy in configuring action (cf. Sayer, 2013) and energy demand. For example, these findings add to the insights emerging from the DEMAND Invisible energy policy project (Royston, 2016). Furthermore, they add to practice-theoretical work exploring the role of technological change in reconfiguring how energy is practiced and understood (Shove et al., 2012). Finally, in focusing on narratives of practice, this study contributes to practice-theoretical approaches exploring dynamics in socio-cultural meanings and discourse (cf. Spaargaren, 2013).

### 9.4.2 Empirical contribution

In addition to advancing theoretical understandings, the empirical contribution of this study is significant. Currently, there is a paucity of biographic, practice-theoretical investigations of energy practices from a retrospective, longitudinal perspective. To date, little research has been conducted from a contextual, dynamic perspective on biographic dynamics

in consumption. This study gathered rich, nuanced biographic data concerning energy practices from a range of different methodological vantage points. In doing so, it has shed light on patterns, processes and contexts of change as they play out in experiential circumstances. More specifically, investigating these processes in an Irish context represents a noteworthy empirical contribution. Relative to other European countries, Irish-based consumption research is still very much in its infancy. While the recent Consensus project represents a significant advancement towards improving understandings of the dynamics of consumption among Irish householders, research in this field is still lagging, especially with regard to an exploration of biographic dynamics in consumption. While advances in contextualised, biographic studies on consumption have been conducted in a UK (e.g. Groves et al., 2014, Groves et al., 2015, Henwood et al., 2015) and European context (e.g. Schäfer et al., 2012, Sattlegger and Rau, 2016), limited work has been conducted in an Irish context. Irish exceptionalism in terms of the rate and pace of recent structural change offers a unique context through which to explore processes of structuration as they relate to dynamics in practice at the scale of biographic time. By providing an in-depth account of patterns and processes affecting the formation of domestic energy practices in Ireland, this research has begun to address the lacuna in Irish-based consumption research as well as contributing to a growing body of empirical work advancing contextualised, biographic approaches to consumption more broadly.

### 9.4.3 Methodological contribution

Dominant actor-centric approaches to researching consumption in lifecourse contexts have primarily drawn upon quantitative lifecourse methods. While these have been useful for exploring dynamics in socio-cognitive processes during moments of change, in studying context quantitatively as a set of external variables that influence individuals' decision-making, they have been much less suitable for uncovering

## Chapter Nine

contextualised casual processes in the context of situated social practices. Sociological and human geographical accounts have highlighted the conceptualisation of context in these accounts as limited. In advancing a contextualised and experiential methodology, this study departs from these actor-centric approaches to employ a critical socio-geographical investigation of biographic dynamics in energy practices.

To date few studies have explored biographic dynamics from a holistic, retrospective perspective that considers dynamics as they play out in the context of the whole lifecourse. As such, explorations of patterns and processes operating over longer time scales have been limited. Building on a small but growing body of contextualised retrospective approaches to consumption, this study makes a contribution by advancing an innovative biographic-narrative, practice methodology to investigate patterns and processes of change over biographic time. Biographic methods attend to the subjective and experiential ways in which human beings as active agents interact with structural, social and historical forces in the making of their lives. Providing a sophisticated stock of methodological and interpretive tools for relating the personal and the social, biographic methods offer fruitful pathways for structurationist empirical investigations. The multi-modal biographic-narrative methodology employed in this study facilitated the generation of different forms of data that captured how experiences, contexts and practices intersect and interact from different temporal scales and vantage points. By exploring how individuals' lives and their practice careers at the micro-level are shaped by broader political, social and material contexts at the macro scale, the biographic-narrative methodology was able to reveal the intersections between multiple scales, temporalities and contexts as they play out in individuals' lives.

## Chapter Nine

The investigation of dynamics of energy practices at the scales of daily and life paths represents an innovation in this field. Combined within a problem-centred frame, a suite of biographic and ethnographic methods was employed to deal with the challenge of representing multiple temporalities of analysis, namely in relation to the evolution of the everyday in the context of the wider lifecourse. A key benefit of the retrospective methodology employed was the treatment of the entire data relating to an individual's life story as a whole. Capturing patterns at the scale of the life path enabled a broad stroke perspective on longer term processes and mechanisms operating over the extent of biographic time, whereas the elicitation of episodic narratives and detailed documentation of practices at the scale of the daily path enabled an exploration of contextual processes shaping practice at the micro-scale of lived experience. This innovative analytical method of zooming in to and out of the scale of the daily path within the context of transitional periods and phases of stability over the life path enabled an exploration of how longer-term patterns intersect with changes in everyday life.

This thesis suggests that biographic inquiry offers immense potential for contextual and dynamic investigations of energy practices. However, retrospective biographic methods also present limitations and challenges. A key issue relates to the verifiability of data. In particular, it is important to consider the ways in which participants' accounts might be subject to distortion and bias. For example, the narratives of decline presented by older individuals should be interpreted with caution for romanticised depictions of an idealised past. These issues may influence how results emerging from biographic-narrative methods are received amongst policy makers.

## Chapter Nine

In seeking to increase validity of the data generated, this study developed a robust, triangulated methodology that sought to capture and study dynamics from a number of different vantage points. In this respect, the three-stage, longitudinal process added rigour by presenting participants with multiple avenues and media through which to express and co-construct their biographic experience. The combination of methods within a problem-centred framework worked well in the context of this investigation as it facilitated a structured investigation of a defined topic in a way that remained true to participants' own biographic accounts. Each data source offered a different angle or perspective on the question under examination, with each method employed having a different narrative generating effect. Visual-biographic methods proved particularly useful as prompting and structuring tools guiding narratives discussions. However, they tend to be more suited to exploring micro-level processes at the scale of an individual's development through the lifecourse than for investigating macro-level dynamics which often remain embedded within participants' narrative accounts. Combining life graphs with narrative interviewing techniques offered a holistic methodological approach for investigating processes operating over a range of contexts from the micro to macro scales of analysis.

The inclusion of a diary method added further rigour to the research process. Moving beyond verbal accounts to capture data on how people behave as they live out their daily lives, this method corroborated narrative accounts by collating rich and nuanced data on the social, spatial and temporal contexts of behaviour. Occasionally participants' narrative accounts of their current day conduct were contradicted by data revealed in the diaries. These contradictions were discussed with participants, many of whom commented on the role that participation in the diary method had in illuminating them to the workings of their routines. Thus, while participants can 'talk about their practices' (Hitching, 2011), methods that

## Chapter Nine

move beyond the verbal can add rigour to investigations of energy practices. Furthermore, in stimulating awareness of taken for granted practices as they are performed at the scale of daily life, the diary acted as a key interventionist methodological tool for stimulating deeper biographic reflection on how dynamics of daily practice evolve and change over the lifecourse. In this respect, the diary acted as a useful prompt for eliciting more detailed accounts from participants on their daily conduct at previous life stages, thus facilitating a more nuanced exploration of the daily/life path dialectic as it plays out in experiential contexts. Finally, walking interviews around participants' homes provided a useful means by which the sensory and material environment of the home could be used to stimulate discussions on the materiality of daily life and its transformation over time.

While the triangulated multi-modal methodology improved the rigour of the findings, a consequence has been an increase in the labour intensity of the study. Participant fatigue is a key issue that must be considered in the context of multi-modal biographic research. Furthermore, differences in response to methods highlighted the importance of remaining sensitive to the ways in which methods are experienced and encountered differently among individuals. Biographic methods involve a deep exploration into the lives of individuals. Although the topic of this study was not classed as a particularly sensitive one, the process of biographic reflection stimulated by the methodological participation resulted in a number of individuals revisiting difficult periods of life which ignited emotional responses. Being sufficiently prepared to encounter and deal with instances such as these is crucial for researchers seeking to engage with biographic methods.

Another methodological contribution of the study concerns the finding that methodology acts as intervention. In this respect, it is clear that narrative,

biographical methods have transformative potential. The three-stage multi-modal process, in offering individuals a range of ways through which to explore the working of their routines and its transformation over time, had the effect of enlightening individuals. Future research could explore the potential of methods such as diaries, visual-biographic tools, narrative interviews and walking interviews for affecting transitions in practice as part of interventions.

### 9.5 Limitations and suggestions for future research

A full evaluation of the methodological approach is provided in Chapter Five. However, some key limitations deserve revisiting here. A key limitation of the study concerns the small sample size. While the findings allow for theoretical generalisability, given the relatively small and homogenous sample, it is questionable how applicable they are to other contexts. **It is plausible to hypothesis that while the particular patterns of action would differ, the processes and mechanisms shaping dynamics would remain consistent.** While efforts were taken to incorporate diversity in the sampling strategy, nevertheless the sample in this study was relatively homogenous in a number of senses. All respondents were indigenous white homeowners living in traditional heterosexual households. Future research could potentially explore more diverse living circumstances and arrangements, for example less traditional relationships as well as share and renting households.

Additionally, investigating the experiences of younger cohorts could reveal patterns and perspectives not captured in this study. Research in other countries is showing that millennials tend to show distinct patterns of meanings and modes in energy practices (Circella et al., 2016). To the authors' knowledge, only one study has explored this group in Ireland in the context of domestic energy practices (cf. Rau and Manton's 2016

## Chapter Nine

exploration of mobility practice among generational cohorts in Ireland). However, there is much more to be done. Future research should be conducted on this group in Ireland to explore how reproduction or transformation is occurring and to what extent they deviate from or show similar patterns to older generations.

Another limitation of the study is that in attempting to capture a holistic, contextual picture of everyday life it could be argued that it has attempted to take on too much. While this research was concerned with investigating broad patterns and processes of change, the decision to include a number of exemplar practices resulted in a compromise between holism and detail. By including a number of practices for investigation, a more detailed exploration of the dynamics in specific practice careers was eclipsed. It is anticipated that future research could further advance understandings by progressing a more thorough exploration of dynamics in specific practice careers.

The findings of this study have highlighted that consumption is deeply embedded in relational contexts. Individuals' daily consumption is shaped by transitions and events in the lives of significant others. Future research could consider conducting household level analysis in the context of life transitions. Exploring changing dynamics as they play out at the intersections of individuals' daily paths during key transitional periods could reveal further insights into relational and temporal dynamics in energy practices. A useful methodology might be to extend the diary method to encompass all household members. This would facilitate a more nuanced exploration of the way lives and practices intersect as they are played out in daily life.

## Chapter Nine

The results of this study suggest the diary methodology is particularly suitable for situated ethnographic investigations of practice. An interesting avenue for future research might entail repeat implementations of the diary methodology with a sample over an extended period to uncover how routines and practices shift over weekly, seasonal and annual time scales. Another viable possibility would be to implement a practice diary methodology with individuals before, during and after a significant life transition to uncover how patterns and modes of performance change. Furthermore, scaling up, an interesting line of inquiry would be to implement time diaries with nationally representative samples to explore social differentiations in routines among different lifestyle groups. Such data would be useful for informing interventions.

Findings highlighting the transformative potential of critical socio-geographical biographic method suggest an avenue for a research agenda to investigate more explicitly the role of methodology in interventionism and activism for sustainability transitions. For example, subsequent work could usefully explore the ways in which engagement with critical narrative-biographic method might be affected by factors such as gender, class, age, and linguistic competence as well as how different methodological approaches shape interventionist potential and outcomes.

Findings revealed that energy is intricately bound up with the performance of normative and relational contexts. In relation to the enmeshment of consumption with gendered identities, the investigation revealed that men and women draw on cultural scripts about gender roles in their talk about their practice. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that such cultural scripts are changing over generations. Further research could usefully explore the changing intersections of gender and energy in an Irish context. Moreover, findings highlighting the relationality of conduct suggest a need for

researchers to more thoroughly investigate the crucial role of processes of social interaction as source of change in practice careers. Going forward, researchers could consider how interaction in different normative contexts shapes the lives and practice of individuals as part of the wider Irish community.

Another interesting finding to emerge relates to intersection of class and level of education with reception to policy initiatives. Following this, a salient avenue for future research would be to examine patterns of social differentiation in response to policy among different socio-demographic groups. This could provide useful information that could be drawn upon in the design of more effective policy measures.

Finally, the role of institutions and 'invisible' energy policy in affecting change deserves greater exploration. Conclusions from this study highlight the crucial role of macro contexts in configuring and delimiting action. Accounting for how these wider contexts shape patterns of resource use will be necessary in order to develop more effective policy that is capable of identifying and addressing the complex drivers of consumption. Future research investigating further the role of policy and macro institutions in shaping lifestyles and consumption practices is an important agenda for future scholarship in this field.

### 9.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has made a contribution to practice-theoretical approaches to consumption. Theoretically, it has suggested that integrating practice and lifecourse concepts that have conceptualised biography, into the study of energy practices, can advance understandings of patterns and processes of change. Methodologically, it has contended that qualitative

## Chapter Nine

reconstructive-biographic methods offer a holistic, contextual and experiential means of analysing processes that have hitherto been overlooked by deductive or temporally limited research designs. To this end, it has contributed to methodological developments in practice theory by designing, implementing and testing a relatively innovative biographic-practice methodology. It has been argued that a combined biographic, practice methodology offers a temporal, contextual and experiential approach which provides a useful means of studying how lives, practices and contexts interact.

Building on a review of the literature, this thesis has sought to address key gaps in the knowledge base. To date, few social-scientific studies have explored the energy practices of ordinary individuals from an experience-centred retrospective, lifecourse perspective. Employing a relatively innovative, biographic-narrative methodology, this study departs from de-contextualised quantitative approaches to consumption. In doing so, it has explored energy practices as they are lived and experienced in context. In adopting a dynamic approach, the study investigates energy practices from a holistic biographic scale in the context of daily and life paths. It has shed light on intersecting contextual processes shaping careers, operating at the intersection between lives, practices and socio-technical contexts.

The findings generated by this study have highlighted the importance of situating consumption contextually in biographic and socio-technical contexts. They have illustrated that, rather than being driven by solely by individual choice and actor-centric deliberation, an individual's action is strongly configured by context. This study has further highlighted the transformative potential of ethnographic, narrative-biographic, retrospective research for illuminating the workings of doxic action and for informing new approaches to interventionism. The insights generated here

## Chapter Nine

add to theoretical debates in the field concerning the relative role of individual agency and social processes in shaping and configuring action. As discussed in this chapter, these findings have implications for current policy approaches to consumption and a movement away from individualised to contextual approaches has been recommended. Many of the findings generated here are of cross-disciplinary relevance. It is hoped that this thesis might stimulate others to consider the intersection of lives, practices and contexts in investigations of social action. To this end, approaches that combine and build upon insights from both practice-theoretical and biographical studies offer a largely untapped body of conceptual and methodological tools. These could be fruitfully deployed in future research to capture, represent and understand dynamics in ways that complement other recent theoretical and practical innovations following the cultural and temporal turns in the social sciences.

## References:

- AARTS, H. & DIJKSTERHUIS, A. 2000. Habits as knowledge structures: Automaticity in goal-directed behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78, 53-63.
- AARTS, H., VERPLANKEN, B. & VAN KNIPPENBERG, A. 1997. Habit and information use in travel mode choices. *Acta Psychologica*, 96, 1-14.
- AARTS, H., VERPLANKEN, B. & VAN KNIPPENBERG, A. 1998. Predicting behavior from actions in the past: Repeated decision making or a matter of habit? *Journal of applied social psychology*, 28, 1355-1374.
- AJZEN, I. 1991. The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 50, 179-211.
- ALASZEWSKI, A. 2006. *Using diaries for social research*, London, Sage.
- ALMANZAR, N. A. P. & HERRING, C. 2004. Sacrificing for the cause: Another look at high-risk/cost activism. *Race and Society*, 7, 113-129.
- ANDERSON, B. 2014. Tracking Social Practices with Big(ish) Data. *paper presented at the Practices, the Built Environment and Sustainability Researchers Workshop*. Cambridge 26-27 June.
- ANDERSON, B. 2016. Laundry, energy and time: Insights from 20 years of time-use diary data in the United Kingdom. *Energy Research and Social Science*, 22, 125-136.
- ANDREWS, M., SCLATHER, D., RUSTIN, M., SQUIRE, C. & TREACHER, A. 2004a. Introduction. In: ANDREWS, M., SCLATHER, D., SQUIRE, C. & TREACHER, A. (eds.) *The Uses of Narrative: Explorations in Sociology, Psychology and Cultural Studies*. New Jersey: Transaction.
- ANDREWS, M., SCLATHER, D., SQUIRE, C. & TREACHER, A. 2004b. *The Uses of Narrative: Explorations in Sociology, Psychology and Cultural Studies*. New Jersey: Transactions.
- ANDREWS, M., SQUIRE, C. & TAMBOUKOU, M. (eds.) 2013. *Doing narrative research*, London: Sage.
- ARCHER, M. 2009. *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- ARCHER, M. S. 2000. *Being human: The problem of agency*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BAMBERG, S. 2003. How does environmental concern influence specific environmentally related behaviors? A new answer to an old question. *Journal of environmental psychology*, 23, 21-32.
- BAMBERG, S. 2006. Is a residential relocation a good opportunity to change people's travel behavior? Results from a theory-driven intervention study. *Environment and behavior*, 38, 820-840.
- BAMBERG, S. & MÖSER, G. 2007. Twenty years after Hines, Hungerford, and Tomera: A new meta-analysis of psycho-social determinants of pro-environmental behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 27, 14-25.
- BAMBERG, S. & SCHMIDT, P. 2003. Incentives, Morality, Or Habit? Predicting Students' Car Use for University Routes With the Models of Ajzen, Schwartz, and Triandis. *Environment and Behavior* 35, 264-285.

- BARNETT, C., CLOKE, P., CLARKE, N. & MALPASS, A. 2010. *Globalizing responsibility : the political rationalities of ethical consumption*, Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.
- BARR, S. & PRILLWITZ, J. 2014. A smarter choice? exploring the behaviour change agenda for environmentally sustainable mobility. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 32, 1-19.
- BARRETT, T. 2015. Storying Bourdieu: Fragments Toward a Bourdieusian Approach to "Life Histories". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 14, 1-10.
- BAUMAN, Z. 2007. *Consuming Life*, Malden, MA, Polity.
- BEAGAN, B., CHAPMAN, G. E., D'SYLVA, A. & BASSETT, B. R. 2008. 'It's just easier for me to do it': Rationalizing the family division of foodwork. *Sociology*, 42, 653-671.
- BEASLEY, C. 2008. Rethinking hegemonic masculinity in a globalizing world. *Men and Masculinities*, 11, 86-103.
- BENNETT, O. 2001. *Cultural Pessimism: Narratives of Decline in the Postmodern World* Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- BERG, J., LEVIN, L., ABRAMSSON, M. & HAGBERG, J. E. 2015. "I want complete freedom": car use and everyday mobility among the newly retired. *European Transport Research Review*, 7.
- BLAKE, J. 1999. Overcoming the 'Value--Action Gap' in environmental policy: tensions between national policy and local experience. *Local Environment*, 4, 257.
- BLUE, S., GREENE, M. & MOROSANU, R. 2014. Time and practice. In: FOULDS, C. & JENSEN, C. L. (eds.) *Practices, the Built Environment & Sustainability - A Thinking Note Collection*. Cambridge, Copenhagen, London: GSI, DIST, BSA CCSG.
- BLUMER, H. 1969. *Symbolic interactionism: Perspective and method*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press.
- BONNINGTON, O. 2015. The indispensability of reflexivity to practice: The case of home energy efficiency. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 14, 461-484.
- BORCH, A., VITTERSØ, G. & STØ, E. 2015. Studying sustainable change: From ABC to practice. *GAIA*, 24, 103-107.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1977. *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.
- BOURDIEU, P. 1990. *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- BRÜCKNER, H. & MAYER, K. U. 2005. De-Standardization of the Life Course: What it Might Mean? And if it Means Anything, Whether it Actually Took Place? *Advances in Life Course Research*, 9, 27-53.
- BURGESS, J., BEDFORD, T., HOBSON, K., DAVIES, G. & HARRISON, C. 2003. (Un)sustainable consumption. In: BERKHOUT, F., LEACH, M. & SCOONES, I. (eds.) *Negotiating environmental change: new perspectives from social science*. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
- BURGESS, J., HARRISON, C. M. & FILIUS, P. 1998. Environmental communication and the cultural politics of environmental citizenship. *Environment and planning A*, 30, 1445-1460.
- BURNINGHAM, K., VENN, S., CHRISTIE, I., JACKSON, T. & GATERSLEBEN, B. 2014a. New motherhood: A moment of change in everyday shopping practices? *Young Consumers*, 15, 211-226.
- BURNINGHAM, K., VENN, S., GATERSLEBEN, B., CHRISTIE, I. & JACKSON, T. 2014b. Lifecourse transitions as moments of change for sustainability? Reflections

- from longitudinal qualitative research. *Lifecourse Transitions: Opportunities for Sustainable Lifestyles?* University of Surrey, 15-16 July 2014.
- BUSH, D. M. & SIMMONS, R. 1981. Socialization processes over the life course. In: ROSENBERG, M. & TURNER, R. H. (eds.) *Social psychology: Sociological perspectives*. New York: Basic.
- BUTLER, C., PARKHILL, K. & BICKERSTAFF, K. 2016. Welfare policy, practice and energy demand. *Demand Centre Conference*. Lancaster, 13-15 April.
- BUTLER, C., PARKHILL, K., HENWOOD, K., SHIRANI, F. & PIDGEON, N. 2012. Researching Energy in the Everyday: Methods and theory for capturing complexity. *Energy biographies: Think pieces*. <http://energybiographies.org/our-work/think-pieces/>.
- BUTLER, C., PARKHILL, K. A., SHIRANI, F., HENWOOD, K. & PIDGEON, N. 2014. Examining the dynamics of energy demand through a biographical lens. *Nature and Culture*, 9, 164-182.
- BUTLER, J. 1990. *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*, London, Routledge.
- CALLON, M. & BLACKWELL, O. 2007. *Actor-Network Theory -The Politics of Interventions*.
- CHAMBERLAYNE, P., BORNAT, J. & WENGRAF, T. 2000. *Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples*, London, Routledge.
- CHAPMAN, K. & OGDEN, J. 2009. How do people change their diet?: An exploration into mechanisms of dietary change. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 14, 1229-1242.
- CHATTERJEE, K., SHERWIN, H. & JAIN, J. 2013. Triggers for changes in cycling: the role of life events and modifications to the external environment. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 30, 183-193.
- CHEUNG, S. F., CHAN, D. K.-S. & WONG, Z. S.-Y. 1999. Reexamining the theory of planned behavior in understanding wastepaper recycling. *Environment and behavior*, 31, 587-612.
- CHRISTINA, S., DAINTY, A., DANIELS, K. & WATERSON, P. 2014. How organisational behaviour and attitudes can impact building energy use in the UK retail environment: A theoretical framework. *Architectural Engineering and Design Management*, 10, 164-179.
- CIALDINI, R. B., KALLGREN, C. A. & RENO, R. R. 1991. A focus theory of normative conduct. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 24.
- CIRCELLA, G., FULTON, L., ALEMI, F., BERLINER, R., TIEDEMAN, K., MOKHTARIAN, P. L. & HANDY, S. 2016. What affects Millennials' Mobility? PART I: Investigating the Environmental Concerns, Lifestyles, Mobility-Related Attitudes and Adoption of Technology of Young Adults in California. *A Research Report from the National Center for Sustainable Transportation*. University of California, Davis: National Centre for Sustainable Transportation.
- CLARK, B., CHATTERJEE, K., MELIA, S., KNIES, G. & LAURIE, H. 2014. Life events and travel behavior. *Transportation Research Record*.
- COHEN, M. J., BROWN, H. S. & VERGRAGT, P. J. 2013. *Innovations in Sustainable Consumption: New Economics, Socio-technical Transitions and Social Practices*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar.
- CONNELL, R. W. 2002. *Gender*, Oxford, UK, Polity.

- CONNOLLY, L. 2015. Locating the Irish family: towards a plurality of family forms. In: CONNOLLY, L. (ed.) *The 'Irish' Family*. New York: Routledge.
- COURTENAY-HALL, P. & ROGERS, L. 2002. Gaps in mind: Problems in environmental knowledge-behaviour modelling research. *Environmental Education Research*, 8, 283-297.
- DARGAY, J. & VYTHOULKAS, P. 1999. Estimation of a Dynamic Car Ownership Model: A Pseudo-panel Approach. *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, 33, 287-302.
- DAVIDSON, M. 2010. Social Sustainability and the City. *Geography Compass*, 4, 872-880.
- DAVIES, A., FAHY, F., RAU, H., DEVANEY, L., DOYLE, R., HEISSERER, B., HYNES, M., LAVELLE, M. & PAPE, J. 2014a. CONSENSUS: Consumption, Environment and Sustainability. Dublin: Environmental Protection Agency.
- DAVIES, A., FAHY, F., RAU, H. & PAPE, J. 2010. Sustainable consumption and governance: reflecting on a research agenda for Ireland. *Irish Geography*, 43, 59-79.
- DAVIES, A., FAHY, F. & TAYLOR, D. 2005. Mind the gap! Householder attitudes and actions towards waste in Ireland. *Irish Geography*, 38, 151-168.
- DAVIES, A. R., FAHY, F. & RAU, H. 2014b. *Challenging Consumption: Pathways to a More Sustainable Future*, New York & Oxon, Routledge.
- DAY, R., HITCHING, R., VENN, S. & FOX, E. in press. Leisure travel and the temporalities of later life. In: DAY, G., HUI, A. & WALKER, G. (eds.) *Demanding energy: spaces, temporalities and change*. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave.
- DAY, R., WALKER, G. & SIMCOCK, N. 2016. Conceptualising Energy Use and Energy Poverty Using a Capabilities Framework. *Energy Policy*, 93.
- DECLG 2012. Our Sustainable Future: A Framework for Sustainable Development for Ireland. Dublin: Department for Environment, Community and Local Government.
- DELANEY, M. & MCCARTHY, M. 2009. Food choice and health across the life: A qualitative study examining food choice in older Irish adults. *J. Food Products Marketing* 17 114-140.
- DEVINE, C. M. 2005. A life course perspective: Understanding food choices in time, social location, and history. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 37, 121-128.
- DEVINE, C. M., CONNORS, M., BISOGNI, C. A. & SOBAL, J. 1998. Life-course influences on fruit and vegetable trajectories: Qualitative analysis of food choices. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, 30, 361-370.
- DIEWALD, M. & MAYER, K. U. 2009. The sociology of the life course and life span psychology: Integrated paradigm or complementing pathways? *Advances in Life Course Research*, 14, 5-14.
- DOUGLAS, M. 1976. Relative Poverty, Relative Communication. In: HALSEY, A. (ed.) *Traditions of Social Policy*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- DOUGLAS, M. & ISHERWOOD, B. 1979. *The world of goods -towards an anthropology of consumption*, London, Allen Lane.
- DOYLE, W. 1997. Heard any really good stories lately? A critique of the critics of narrative in educational research *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 13, 93-99.
- EC 2011. Roadmap to a Resource Efficient Europe. *Europe 2020 Strategy*. Brussels: European Commission.

- EEA 2005. Household consumption and the environment. Copenhagen: European Environment Agency (EEA).
- EEA 2012a. Consumption and the environment - 2012 update: The European environment state and outlook 2010. Copenhagen: European Environment Agency.
- EEA 2012b. Energy efficiency and energy consumption in the household sector (Ener 022) - assessment published April 2012. Copenhagen: European Environment Agency.
- ELDER, G. H. & GIELE, J. Z. 1998. *Methods of life course research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, Sage.
- ELDER JR, G. H. 1974. *Children of the Great Depression: Social Change in Life Experience*, Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- ELDER JR, G. H., JOHNSON, M. K. & CROSNOE, R. 2003. The Emergence and Development of Life Course Theory. In: MORTIMER, J. T. & SHANAHAN, M. J. (eds.) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- ELLIOTT, J. 2005a. Listening to people's stories. In: ELLIOTT, J. (ed.) *Narrative in Social Research*. London: Sage.
- ELLIOTT, J. 2005b. *Using narrative in social research: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*, London, Sage
- EPA 2006. Environment in focus: environmental indicators for Ireland. Dublin: Environmental Protection Agency.
- FIELDING, K. S., MCDONALD, R. & LOUIS, W. R. 2008. Theory of planned behaviour, identity and intentions to engage in environmental activism. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28, 318-326.
- FINE, G. 1996. *Kitchens: The Culture of Work*, Berkeley, University California Press.
- FISHBEIN, M. & AJZEN, I. 1975. *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior: An introduction to theory and research*, Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley.
- FLYVBJERG, B. 2001. *Making social science matter: Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- FLYVBJERG, B., LANDMAN, T. & SCHRAM, S. 2012. *Real social science: Applied phronesis*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- GABRIEL, Y. & LANG, T. 2006. *The unmanageable consumer*, London, Sage.
- GARFINKEL, H. 1967. Englewood Cliffs, N.J, Prentice-Hall.
- GIBSON, C., HEAD, L., GILL, N. & WAITT, G. 2011. Climate change and household dynamics: beyond consumption, unbounding sustainability. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 36, 3-8.
- GIDDENS, A. 1984. *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*, Cambridge, The Polity Press.
- GIDDENS, A. 1991. *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*, Standford, Stanford University Press.
- GRAM-HANSSSEN, K. 2010. Standby consumption in households analyzed with a practice theory approach. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 14, 150-165.
- GREEN, L. 2010. *Understanding the Life Course: Sociological and Psychological Perspectives*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- GREENE, M. in press. Paths, projects and careers of domestic practice: exploring dynamics of demand over biographical time. In: DAY, R., HUI, A. & WALKER, G. (eds.) *Demanding energy: spaces, temporalities and change*. Hampshire, UK. : Palgrave Macmillan Publishers Ltd.

- GREENE, M. & RAU, H. 2016. Moving across the life course: the potential of a biographic approach to researching dynamics of everyday mobility practices. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, (in press).
- GREENE, M. & WESTERHOFF, L. 2014. Exploring the relationship between narrative and social practice. In: FOULDS, C. & JENSEN, C. L. (eds.) *Practices, the Built Environment & Sustainability - A Thinking Note Collection*. Cambridge, Copenhagen, London: GSI, DIST, BSA CCSG.
- GRIN, J., ROTMANS, J. & SCHOT, J. 2010. *Transitions to sustainable development: New directions in the study of long term transformative change*, Oxon, Routledge.
- GRONCOW, J. & WARDE, A. 2001. *Ordinary consumption*, Psychology Press.
- GROVES, C., BUTLER, C., HENWOOD, K., PARKHILL, K., PIDGEON, N. & SHIRANI, F. 2014. Energy Biographies: liminality, narratives of care and transforming practices. *Lifecourse Transitions: Opportunities for Sustainable Lifestyles?* University of Surrey, 15-16 July 2014.
- GROVES, C., HENWOOD, K., SHIRANI, F., BUTLER, C., PARKHILL, K. & PIDGEON, N. 2015. Energy biographies: narrative genres, lifecourse transitions and practice change. *Science, Technology & Human Values*, DOI: 10.1177/0162243915609116.
- GROVES, C., HENWOOD, K., SHIRANI, F., BUTLER, C., PARKHILL, K. & PIDGEON, N. 2016. Invested in unsustainability? On the psychosocial patterning of engagement in practices *Environmental Values*, 25.
- GUAGNANO, G. A., STERN, P. C. & DIETZ, T. 1995. Influences on attitude-behavior relationships a natural experiment with curbside recycling. *Environment and Behavior*, 27, 699-718.
- GUBRIUM, J. F. 2013. Review of 'Andreas Witzel and Herwig Reiter, The Problem-centred Interview. London: Sage, 2012, 216 pp'. *Acta Sociologica*, 56, 376-378.
- HALKIER, B. & JENSEN, I. 2011. Methodological challenges in using practice theory in consumption research. Examples from a study on handling nutritional contestations of food consumption. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11, 101-123.
- HAND, M. & SHOVE, E. 2007. Condensing Practices Ways of living with a freezer. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7, 79-104.
- HAND, M., SHOVE, E. & SOUTHERTON, D. 2005. Explaining showering: a discussion of the material, conventional, and temporal dimensions of practice. *Sociological Research Online*, 10.
- HANSEN, A. R. 2016. Heat consumption and prices in a practice-theoretical perspective. *Demand Centre Conference*. Lancaster University, 13-15 April 2016.
- HARDS, S. 2011a. *Careers of Action on Climate Change: The evolution of practices throughout the life-course*. Doctorate in Philosophy PhD thesis, University of York.
- HARDS, S. 2011b. Social practice and the evolution of personal environmental values. *Environmental Values*, 20, 23-42.
- HARDS, S. 2012. Tales of transformation: The potential of a narrative approach to pro-environmental practices. *Geoforum*, 43, 760-771.
- HARDS, S. K. 2013. Status, stigma and energy practices in the home. *Local Environment*, 18, 438-454.
- HAREVEN, T. 1982. *Family Time and Industrial Time*. New York: Chicago University Press.

- HAREVEN, T. 1986. Historical changes in the social construction of the life course. *Human Development*, 29, 171-180.
- HAREVEN, T. & ADAMS, K. 1982. *Ageing and life course transitions: An interdisciplinary perspective*, New York, Routledge.
- HARGREAVES, T. 2011. Practice-ing behaviour change: Applying social practice theory to pro-environmental behaviour change. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11, 79-99.
- HARGREAVES, T. 2016. Interacting for the Environment: Engaging Goffman in Pro-Environmental Action. *Society and Natural Resources*, 29, 53-67.
- HEISSERER, B. 2013. *Curbing The Consumption of Distance? A practice-theoretical investigation of an employer-based mobility management initiative to promote more sustainable commuting*. PhD thesis, National University of Ireland, Galway.
- HEISSERER, B. & RAU, H. 2015. Capturing the consumption of distance? A practice-theoretical investigation of everyday travel. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 0, 1-21.
- HENWOOD, K., GROVES, C. & SHIRANI, F. 2016. Relationality, entangled practices and psychosocial exploration of intergenerational dynamics in sustainable energy studies *Relationships, families and societies*, 5, 393-410.
- HENWOOD, K., PIDGEON, N., GROVES, C., SHIRANI, F., BUTLER, C. & PARKHILL, K. 2015. Energy Biographies Research Report. <http://energybiographies.org>: Cardiff University.
- HENWOOD, K. & SHIRANI, F. 2012. Researching the temporal. In: COOPER, H., CAMIC, P. M., LONG, D., PANTER, A. T., RINDSKOPF, D. & SHER, K. J. (eds.) *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.
- HINES, J. M., HUNGERFORD, H. R. & TOMERA, A. N. 1987. Analysis and synthesis of research on responsible environmental behavior: A meta-analysis. *The Journal of environmental education*, 18, 1-8.
- HIRSCH, F. 1977. *Social limits to growth*, London, Routledge.
- HOBSON, K. 2006. Bins, bulbs, and shower timers: on the 'techno-ethics' of sustainable living. *Ethics Place and Environment*, 9, 317-336.
- HOCHSCHILD, A. R. & MACHUNG, A. 1990. *The Second Shift*, New York, Avon Books.
- HOLLOWAY, L. & HUBBARD, P. 2001. *People and place: the extraordinary geographies of everyday life*, Harlow, Pearson Education.
- HOLMES, M. 2008. *Gender and Everyday Life*, New York, Routledge.
- HOWELL, R. A. 2013. Are graphical representations of practices over an individual's lifecourse a useful methodological tool in researching the impact of lifecourse transitions on sustainability? *Paper presented at Royal Geographical Society Annual Conference session 'Researching Practices for Sustainability: Exploring new (and old) methodological frontiers'*. 27-30 August 2014.
- HUI, A. & SPURLING, N. 2013. *Career dynamics in social practices: accumulation, concurrent careers and career demographics* [Online]. Available: <https://nicolaspurling.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/hui-and-spurling-careers-paper-web-1.pdf> [Accessed 8/10/2015].
- HWANG, Y. H., KIM, S. I. & JENG, J. M. 2000. Examining the causal relationships among selected antecedents of responsible environmental behavior. *The Journal of environmental education*, 31, 19-25.

- JACKSON, T. 2004. Negotiating sustainable consumption: A review of the consumption debate and its policy implications. *Energy & Environment*, 15, 1027-1051.
- JACKSON, T. 2005. *Motivating Sustainable Consumption: A Review of Evidence on Consumer Behaviour and Behavioural Change*. Guildford: Sustainable Development Research Network.
- JACKSON, T. 2006. *The Earthscan reader in sustainable consumption*, London and Sterling, VA, Earthscan
- JACKSON, T. & MICHAELIS, L. 2003. Policies for sustainable consumption. London: Sustainable Development Commission.
- JAEGER-ERBEN, M. 2013. Everyday life in transition: biographical research and sustainability. In: FAHY, F. & RAU, H. (eds.) *Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage.
- JAEGER-ERBEN, M. & OFFENBERGER, U. 2014. A practice theory approach to sustainable consumption. *GAIA*, 23, 166-174.
- JANSEN, L. 2003. The challenge of sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 11.
- JELSMA, J. 2003. Innovating for sustainability: Involving users, politics and technology. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 16, 103-116.
- JELSMA, J. & KNOT, M. 2002. Designing environmentally efficient services; a 'script' approach. *The Journal of Sustainable Product Design*, 2, 119-130.
- JONES, H., CHATTERJEE, K. & GRAY, S. 2014. A biographical approach to studying individual change and continuity in walking and cycling over the life course. *Journal of Transport & Health*, 1, 182-189.
- KEIL, R. 2007. Sustaining Modernity, Modernizing Nature: The Environmental Crises and the Survival of Capitalism. In: KRUEGER, R. & GIBBS, D. (eds.) *The Sustainable Development Paradox: Urban Political Economy in the United States and Europe*. New York: Guilford Press.
- KELLER, M., HALKIER, B. & WILSKA, T. A. 2016. Policy and Governance for Sustainable Consumption at the Crossroads of Theories and Concepts. *Environmental Policy and Governance*, 26, 75-88.
- KLÖCKNER, C. A. & VERPLANKEN, B. 2012. Yesterday's habits preventing change for tomorrow? The influence of automaticity on environmental behaviour. In: STEG, L., VAN DEN BERG, A. E. & DE GROOT, J. (eds.) *Environmental Psychology - An Introduction*. Chichester, Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- KOLLMUSS, A. & AGYEMAN, J. 2002. Mind the gap: why do people act environmentally and what are the barriers to pro-environmental behavior? *Environmental education research*, 8, 239-260.
- KRUEGER, R. & GIBBS, D. 2007. Introduction: Problematizing the Politics of Sustainability. In: KRUEGER, R. & GIBBS, D. (eds.) *The Sustainable Development Paradox: Urban Political Economy in the United States and Europe*. New York: Guilford Press.
- KURZ, T., DONAGHUE, N., RAPLEY, M. & WALKER, I. 2005. The ways that people talk about natural resources: Discursive strategies as barriers to environmentally sustainable practices. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44, 603-620.
- KURZ, T., GARDNER, B., VERPLANKEN, B. & ABRAHAM, C. 2015. Habitual behaviors or patterns of practice? Explaining and changing repetitive climate-relevant actions. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, 6, 113-128.

- LABOV, W. & WALETZKY, J. 1967. Narrative analysis. In: HELM, J. (ed.) *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- LANZENDORF, M. 2010. Key Events and Their Effect on Mobility Biographies: The Case of Childbirth. *International Journal of Sustainable Transportation*, 4, 272-292.
- LATOUR, B. 2005. *Reassembling the social-an introduction to actor-network-theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- LAW, J. & HASSARD, J. (eds.) 1999. *Actor Network Theory and After*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- LEVY, R. & WIDMER, E. (eds.) 2013. *Gendered Life Courses Between Standardization and Individualization: A European approach applied to Switzerland*, Berlin: Lit Verlag.
- LINK, B. G. & PHELAN, J. C. 2001. Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27.
- MACINTYRE, A. 1981. *After Virtue*, London, Duckworth.
- MALONEY, M. P. & WARD, M. P. 1973. Ecology: Let's hear from the people: An objective scale for the measurement of ecological attitudes and knowledge. *American psychologist*, 28, 583-586.
- MANNETTI, L., PIERRO, A. & LIVI, S. 2004. Recycling: Planned and self-expressive behaviour. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24, 227-236.
- MANSTEAD, A. S. & PARKER, D. 1995. Evaluating and extending the theory of planned behaviour. *European review of social psychology*, 6, 69-95.
- MANSVELT, J. 2010. Geographies of consumption: engaging with absent presences. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34, 224-233.
- MASON, J. 1996. *Qualitative Researching*, London, Sage.
- MASON, J. 2004. Personal narratives, relational selves: residential histories in the living and telling. *The Sociological Review*, 52, 162-179.
- MAYER, K. U. 2009. New directions in life course research. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 35, 413-433.
- MCADAM, D. 1986. Recruitment to High-Risk Activism: The Case of Freedom Summer. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 92, 64-90.
- MCDONALD, F. & NIX, J. 2005. *Chaos at the crossroads*, Kinsale, Cork, Gandon Books.
- MCGINTY 2005. Time Use Study.
- MCNAY, L. 1999. Gender, habitus and the field: Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16, 95-117.
- MEAH, A. 2014. Reconceptualising 'masculinity' through men's contribution to domestic foodwork. In: GORMAN-MURRAY, A. & HOPKINS, P. (eds.) *Masculinities and Place*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.
- MENARY, R. 2008. Embodied narratives. *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 15, 63-84.
- MILLER, D. 2001. *Home possessions: Material culture behind closed doors*, Oxford, Berg.
- MILLER, D. L. 2016. Gender, Field, and Habitus: How Gendered Dispositions Reproduce Fields of Cultural Production. *Sociological Forum*, 31, 330-353.
- MORTIMER, J. T. & SHANAHAN, M. J. 2003. *Handbook of the Life Course*, New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- NAVARRO, Z. 2006. In Search of Cultural Interpretation of Power. *IDS Bulletin* 37, 11-22

- NEAL, D. T., WOOD, W. & DROLET, A. 2013. How do people adhere to goals when willpower is low? the profits (and pitfalls) of strong habits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104, 959-975.
- NICOLINI, D. 2012. *Practice theory, work and organisations*.
- NIGBUR, D., LYONS, E. & UZZELL, D. 2010. Attitudes, norms, identity and environmental behaviour: Using an expanded theory of planned behaviour to predict participation in a kerbside recycling programme. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 49, 259-284.
- NYE, M. & HARGREAVES, T. 2009. Exploring the social dynamics of proenvironmental behavior change. *Journal of Industrial Ecology*, 14, 137-149.
- OLLI, E., GRENSTAD, G. & WOLLEBAEK, D. 2001. Correlates of environmental behaviors bringing back social context. *Environment and behavior*, 33, 181-208.
- ORBELL, S. & VERPLANKEN, B. 2010. The automatic component of habit in health behavior: Habit as cue-contingent automaticity. *Health psychology*, 29, 374-383.
- OWENS, S. 2000. 'Engaging the public': information and deliberation in environmental policy. *Environment and planning A*, 32, 1141-1148.
- PALM, J. & ELLEGÅRD, K. 2011. Visualizing energy consumption activities as a tool for developing effective policy. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 35, 171-179.
- PAPE, J., RAU, H., FAHY, F. & DAVIES, A. 2011. Developing Policies and Instruments for Sustainable Household Consumption: Irish Experiences and Futures. *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 1-18.
- PELENUR, M. J. & CRUICKSHANK, H. J. 2012. Closing the Energy Efficiency Gap: A study linking demographics with barriers to adopting energy efficiency measures in the home. *Energy*.
- PINK, S. 2004. *Home truths: Gender, domestic objects and everyday life*, Oxford, Berg.
- PINK, S. 2012. *Situating Everyday Life: Practices and Places*, London, Sage Publications Limited.
- PINK, S. & MACKLEY, K. L. 2015. Social science, design and everyday life: Refiguring showering through anthropological ethnography. *Journal of Design Research*, 13, 278-292.
- PINNEGAR, S. & DAYNES, J. G. 2007. Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative. In: CLANDININ, D. J. (ed.) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. London: Sage.
- PISCICELLI, L., COOPER, T. & FISCHER, T. 2015. The role of values in collaborative consumption: insights from a product-service system for lending and borrowing in the UK. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 97, 21-29.
- PLESSZ, M., DUBUISSON-QUELLIER, S., GOJARD, S. & BARREY, S. 2014. How consumption prescriptions affect food practices: Assessing the roles of household resources and life-course events. *Journal of Consumer Culture*.
- POSTILL, J. 2010. Introduction: Theorising media and practice. In: BRÄUCHLER, B. & POSTILL, J. (eds.) *Theorising Media and Practice*. Oxford: Berghahn.
- PRED, A. 1977. The choreography of existence: comments on Hägerstrand's time-geography and its usefulness. *Economic geography*, 207-221.
- PRED, A. 1981a. Social reproduction and the time-geography of everyday life. *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 63, 5-22.

- PRED, A. 1981b. Of paths and projects: Individual behavior and its societal context. *Behavioral Problems in Geography Revisited*, 231-255.
- RAMIREZ-VALLES, J. 1999. Changing women: the narrative construction of personal change through community health work among women in Mexico. *Health education & behavior*, 26, 25-42.
- RÄTY, R. & CARLSSON-KANYAMA, A. 2010. Energy consumption by gender in some European countries. *Energy Policy*, 38, 646-649.
- RAU, H., DAVIES, A. R. & FAHY, F. 2014. Moving on—promising pathways to more sustainable futures. In: DAVIES, A., FAHY, F. & RAU, H. (eds.) *Challenging Consumption: Pathways to a More Sustainable Future*. New York & Oxon: Routledge.
- RAU, H. & EDMONDSON, R. 2013. Time and Sustainability. In: FAHY, F. & RAU, H. (eds.) *Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage.
- RAU, H. & FAHY, F. 2013. Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences – Concepts, Methodologies and the Challenge of Interdisciplinarity. In: FAHY, F. & RAU, H. (eds.) *Methods of Sustainability Research in the Social Sciences*. London: Sage.
- RAU, H. & MANTON, R. 2016. Life events and mobility milestones: Advances in mobility biography theory and research *Journal of Transport Geography*, (Under review).
- REARDON, L. & MARSDEN, G. 2016. Steering Demand – A Wicked Problem in the Making: Insights from UK Transport Policy. *Demand Centre Conference*. Lancaster, 13-15 April.
- RECKWITZ, A. 2002a. Toward a Theory of Social Practices A development in culturalist theorizing. *European journal of social theory*, 5, 243-263.
- RECKWITZ, A. 2002b. The status of the “material” in theories of culture: From “social structure” to “artefacts”. *Journal for the theory of social behaviour*, 32, 195-217.
- REES, W. 2011. What's blocking sustainability? Human nature, cognition and denial. *Sustainability: Science, Practice, & Policy*, 6.
- RIESSMAN, C. K. 2002. Analysis of personal narratives. In: GUBRIUM, G. & HOLSTEIN, J. A. (eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research*. London: Sage.
- RIESSMAN, C. K. 2008. *Narrative methods for the human sciences*, London, Sage.
- RILEY, T. & HAWES, P. 2005. Researching practice: the methodological case for narrative inquiry. *Health education research*, 20, 226-236.
- RØPKE, I. 2009. Theories of practice—New inspiration for ecological economic studies on consumption. *Ecological Economics*, 68, 2490-2497.
- ROYSTON, S. 2016. Invisible energy policy in Higher Education. *Demand Centre Conference*. Lancaster, 13-15 April
- SAHAKIAN, M. & WILHITE, H. 2013. Making practice theory practicable: towards more sustainable forms of consumption *ERSCP-EMSU Conference: Building bridges for a more sustainable future*. Istanbul, Turkey. June 4-7 2013.
- SANNE, C. 2002. Willing consumers--or locked-in? Policies for a sustainable consumption. *Ecological Economics*, 42, 273-287.
- SATTELEGER, L. & RAU, H. 2016. Carlessness in a car-centric world: A reconstructive approach to qualitative mobility biographies research. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 53, 22-31.
- SAYER, A. 2013. Power, sustainability and wellbeing: An outsiders view. In: SHOVE, E. & SPURLING, N. (eds.) *Sustainable Practices: Social Theory and Climate Change*. Oxon: Routledge.

- SCHÄFER, M., JAEGER-ERBEN, M. & BAMBERG, S. 2012. Life Events as Windows of Opportunity for Changing Towards Sustainable Consumption Patterns? *Journal of Consumer Policy*, 1-20.
- SCHATZKI, T. 2002. *The site of the social: A philosophical account of the constitution of social life and change*, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press.
- SCHATZKI, T. R. 1996. *Social practices: A Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SCHATZKI, T. R., CETINA, K. K. & VON SAVIGNY, E. 2001. *The practice turn in contemporary theory*, London and New York, Routledge.
- SCHEINER, J. 2014. Gendered key events in the life course: Effects on changes in travel mode choice over time. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 37, 47-60.
- SCHEINER, J. & HOLZ-RAU, C. 2013. Changes in travel mode use after residential relocation: A contribution to mobility biographies. *Transportation*, 40, 431-458.
- SCHULTZ, P. W., SHRIVER, C., TABANICO, J. J. & KHAZIAN, A. M. 2004. Implicit connections with nature. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 24.
- SETTERSTEN JR, R. A. 2003. Age structuring and the rhythm of the life course. In: MORTIMER, J. T. & SHANAHAN, M. J. (eds.) *Handbook of the Life Course*. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- SETTERSTEN JR, R. A. 2009. It takes two to tango: The (un)easy dance between life-course sociology and life-span psychology. *Advances in Life Course Research*, 14, 74-81.
- SEVIN, E. & LADWEIN, R. 2008. To start being... The anticipation of a social role through consumption in life transition: The case of the first-time pregnancy. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 35.
- SEYFANG, G. 2005. Shopping for Sustainability: Can Sustainable Consumption Promote Ecological Citizenship? *Environmental politics*, 14, 290-306.
- SEYFANG, G. 2009. *The New Economics of Sustainable Consumption: Seeds of Change*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan.
- SEYFANG, G., HAXELTINE, A., HARGREAVES, T. & LONGHURST, N. 2010. Energy and Communities in Transition: Towards a new research agenda on agency and civil society in sustainability transitions. *CSERGE working paper 10-13*. University of East Anglia.
- SHIRANI, F., BUTLER, C., HENWOOD, K., PARKHILL, K. & PIDGEON, N. 2013. Disconnected futures: exploring notions of ethical responsibility in energy practices. *Local Environment*, 18, 455-468.
- SHIRANI, F., BUTLER, C., HENWOOD, K., PARKHILL, K. & PIDGEON, N. 2015. 'I'm not a tree hugger, I'm just like you': changing perceptions of sustainable lifestyles. *Environmental Politics*, 24, 57-74.
- SHOVE, E. 2009. Everyday Practice and the Production and Consumption of Time. In: SHOVE, E., TRENTMANN, F. & WILK, R. (eds.) *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture*. Oxford: Berg.
- SHOVE, E. 2010. Beyond the ABC: climate change policy and theories of social change. *Environment and planning. A*, 42, 1273.
- SHOVE, E. 2016. Steering by accident: unintended governance strategies in action. *DEMAND Centre Conference*. Lancaster, 13-15 April.
- SHOVE, E. & PANTZAR, M. 2005. Consumers, Producers and Practices Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of consumer culture*, 5, 43-64.

- SHOVE, E. & PANTZAR, M. 2006. Fossilisation. *Ethnologia Europaea: Journal of European Ethnology*, 35, 59-63.
- SHOVE, E. & PANTZAR, M. 2007. Recruitment and reproduction: the careers and carriers of digital photography and floorball. *Human Affairs*, 17, 154-167.
- SHOVE, E., PANTZAR, M. & WATSON, M. (eds.) 2012. *The Dynamics of Social Practice: Everyday life and how it changes*, London: Sage.
- SHOVE, E., TRENTMANN, F. & WILK, R. (eds.) 2009. *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life: Practice, Materiality and Culture*, Oxford: Berg.
- SHOVE, E. & WALKER, G. 2007. CAUTION! Transitions ahead: politics, practice, and sustainable transition management. *Environment and Planning A*, 39, 763-770.
- SHOVE, E. & WALKER, G. 2010. Governing transitions in the sustainability of everyday life. *Research Policy*, 39, 471-476.
- SHOVE, E. & WALKER, G. 2014. What Is Energy For? Social Practice and Energy Demand. *Theory, Culture and Society*, 31, 41-58.
- SMART, C. 2007. *Personal life*, Cambridge, Polity Press.
- SOBAL, J., BISOGNI, C., DEVINE, C. M. & JASTRAN, M. 2006. A Conceptual Model of the Food Choice Process over the Life Course. In: SHEPHERD, R. & RAATS, M. (eds.) *The Psychology of Food Choice*. Oxfordshire, UK: CABI.
- SORON, D. 2010. Sustainability, self-identity and the sociology of consumption. *Sustainable Development*, 18, 172-181.
- SOUTHERTON, D. 2003. Squeezing time'Allocating practices, coordinating networks and scheduling society. *Time & Society*, 12, 5-25.
- SOUTHERTON, D. 2006. Analysing the temporal organization of daily life: Social constraints, practices and their allocation. *Sociology*, 40, 435-454.
- SOUTHERTON, D. 2009. Re-ordering Temporal Rhythms: Coordinating Daily Practices in the UK in 1937 and 2000. In: SHOVE, E., TRENTMANN, F. & WILK, R. (eds.) *Time, Consumption and Everyday Life. Practice, Materiality and Culture* Oxford: Berg.
- SOUTHERTON, D. 2013. Habits, routines and temporalities of consumption: From individual behaviours to the reproduction of everyday practices. *Time and Society*, 22, 335-355.
- SOUTHERTON, D., WARDE, A. & HAND, M. 2004. The limited autonomy of the consumer: implications for sustainable consumption. In: SOUTHERTON, D., CHAPPELLS, H. & VAN VLIET, B. (eds.) *Sustainable consumption: the implications of changing infrastructures of provision*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- SPAARGAREN, G. 2003. Sustainable consumption: a theoretical and environmental policy perspective. *Society & Natural Resources*, 16, 687-701.
- SPAARGAREN, G. 2011. Theories of practices: Agency, technology, and culture. Exploring the relevance of practice theories for the governance of sustainable consumption practices in the new world-order. *Global Environmental Change*, 21, 813-822.
- SPAARGAREN, G. 2013. The cultural dimension of sustainable consumption practices: An exploration in theory and policy. In: COHEN, M. J., BROWN, G. & VERGRAGT, P. J. (eds.) *Innovations in Sustainable Consumption: New Economics, Socio-technical Transitions and Social Practices*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- SPURLING, N. 2010. *Authors of Our Own Lives? Individuals, institutions and the everyday practice of sociology*. PhD, Lancaster University.

- SPURLING, N. 2015. Differential experiences of time in academic work: How qualities of time are made in practice. *Time & Society*, 0, 1-23.
- SPURLING, N. & BLUE, S. 2014. Entites, performances and interventions. In: FOULDS, C. & JENSEN, C. L. (eds.) *Practices, the Built Environment & Sustainability - A Thinking Note Collection*. Cambridge, Copenhagen, London: GSI, DIST, BSA CCSG.
- SQUIRE, C. 2005. Reading narratives. *Group Analysis*, 38, 91-107.
- SQUIRE, C. 2013. Experience-centred and culturally-oriented approaches to narrative. In: ANDREWS, M., SQUIRE, C. & TAMBOUKOU, M. (eds.) *Doing Narrative Research*. London: Sage.
- STERN, P. C. 2000. Psychology and the science of human-environment interactions. *American psychologist*, 55, 523.
- STERN, P. C. 2005. Understanding Individuals' Environmentally Significant Behavior. *Environmental Law Reporter: News and Analysis*, 35, 10785-10790.
- STIBBE, A. & LUNA, H. 2008. Introduction. In: STIBBE, A. (ed.) *The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy: Skills for a changing world*. Devon: Green Books.
- STRENGERS, Y. 2011. Negotiating everyday life: The role of energy and water consumption feedback. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 11, 319-338.
- STRENGERS, Y. 2013. *Smart energy technologies in everyday life: smart Utopia?*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
- SZABO, M. K. 2014. "I'm a real catch": The blurring of alternative and hegemonic masculinities in men's talk about home cooking. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 44, 228-235.
- SZTOMPKA, P. 2008. The focus on everyday life: A new turn in sociology. *European Review*, 16, 23-37.
- TAYLOR, P. J. 1999. *Modernities: a geohistorical interpretation*, Berkeley, CA, University of Minnesota Press.
- THOMPSON, C. J., MICHAELSON, J., ABDALLAH, S., JOHNSON, V., MORRIS, D., RILEY, K. & SIMMS, A. 2011. Moments of change as opportunities for influencing behaviour: A report to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. DEFRA London: NEF
- TONGLET, M., PHILLIPS, P. S. & READ, A. D. 2004. Using the Theory of Planned Behaviour to investigate the determinants of recycling behaviour: a case study from Brixworth, UK. *Resources, Conservation and Recycling*, 41, 191-214.
- TRIANDIS, H. C. 1977. *Interpersonal behavior*, Monterey, CA, Brooks/Cole. .
- UKERC 2009. Energy 2050 Synthesis Report. London: UK Energy Research Council.
- UNEP 2011. Decoupling natural resource use and environmental impacts from economic growth, a report of the working group on decoupling to the international resource panel. Paris: United Nations Environment Programme.
- UNEP 2012. 21 issues for the 21st century: Result of the UNEP foresight process on emerging environmental issues. Nairobi: United Nations Environment Programme.
- VEBLEN, T. 1898. *The Theory of the Leisure Class, Reprinted 1998*, London, Prometheus Books.
- VERPLANKEN, B. 2006. Beyond frequency: Habit as mental construct. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 45, 639-656.

- VERPLANKEN, B., AARTS, H., VAN KNIPPENBERG, A. & MOONEN, A. 1998. Habit versus planned behaviour: A field experiment. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 37, 111-128.
- VERPLANKEN, B. & ORBELL, S. 2003. Reflections on Past Behavior: A Self-Report Index of Habit Strength. *Journal of applied social psychology*, 33, 1313-1330.
- VERPLANKEN, B., WALKER, I., DAVIS, A. & JURASEK, M. 2008. Context change and travel mode choice: Combining the habit discontinuity and self-activation hypotheses. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 28, 121-127.
- WALKER, G. 2013. Inequality, sustainability and capability: locating justice in social practice. In: SHOVE, E. & SPURLING, N. (eds.) *Sustainable Practices: Social Theory and Climate Change*. Oxon: Routledge.
- WALKER, G. 2014. The dynamics of energy demand: change, rhythm and synchronicity. *Energy Research & Social Science*, 1, 49-55.
- WARDE, A. 2005. Consumption and theories of practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5, 131-153.
- WARDE, A. & SOUTHERTON, D. (eds.) 2012a. *The Habits of Consumption*, Helsinki: Open Access Book.
- WARDE, A. & SOUTHERTON, D. 2012b. Introduction. In: WARDE, A. & SOUTHERTON, D. (eds.) *The Habits of Consumption*. Helsinki: Open Access Book.
- WATSON, M. 2012. How theories of practice can inform transition to a decarbonised transport system. *Journal of Transport Geography*, 24, 488-496.
- WENGRAF, T. 2001. *Qualitative Research Interviewing - Biographic Narrative and Semi-Structured Research Methods*, London, Sage Publications.
- WEST, C. & ZIMMERMAN, D. H. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1, 125-151.
- WEST, L. & MERRILL, B. 2009. *Using biographical methods in social research*, London, Sage.
- WITZEL, A. & REITER, H. 2012. *The problem-centred interview*, London, Sage.
- WITZEL, A. & REITER, H. 2014. The problem-centred interview: Response to Jaber F. Gubrium's review of the new SAGE-book "The problem-centred interview" (Witzel/Reiter 2012) in Acta Sociologica 2013. *Social Science Open Access Repository*, <http://www.ssoar.info/>.
- WOOD, W. & NEAL, D. T. 2007. A new look at habits and the habit-goal interface. *Psychological Review*, 114, 843-863.

## Appendix 1: Participant Characteristics

Name	Gender	DOB	Age	Income	Location	Other demographics	Environmental concern
Grace	F	1934	83	19-38 k	Urban, Galway	Nun; not married, no children	Somewhat concerned
Billie	F	1928	89	19-38 k	Urban, Galway	Married, 4 adult children, 12 grandchildren	Somewhat concerned
Martha	F	1955	62	38-76 k	Urban, Dublin	Married, 5 adult children, 6 grandchildren	Very concerned
Claire	F	1953	64	19-38 k	Rural, Galway	Married, 4 adult children	Somewhat concerned
Bridget	F	1959	57	Refused	Urban, Galway	Married, 4 adult children	Very concerned
Triona	F	1964	53	19-38 k	Urban, Dublin	Married, 1 child U18	Somewhat concerned
Sara	F	1968	48	76-114 k	Urban, Galway	Married, 3 children U18	Somewhat concerned
Tony	M	1938	78	38-76 l	Urban, Dublin	Married, 4 adult children, 7 grandchildren	Somewhat concerned
Henry	M	1946	70	76-114 k	Rural, Dublin	Married, 4 adult children, 6 grandchildren	Somewhat concerned
Frank	M	1948	68	38-76 k	Urban, Dublin	Married, 1 adult child	Somewhat concerned
Michael	M	1956	59	38-76 k	Rural, Dublin	Married, no children	Very concerned
Seamus	M	1959	57	19-38 k	Urban, Dublin	Married, 2 adult children, 1 grandchild	Not concerned
James	M	1961	56	38-76 k	Rural, Galway	Married, 2 children, U18	Very concerned
Daniel	M	1968	48	Refused	Rural, Galway	Married, No children	Very concerned

## Appendix 2

### Sample Recruitment Letter



#### Invitation to participate in NUI Galway research study

#### Consumption Biographies:

#### Domestic practice over the lifecourse

Address

Date

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

My name is Mary Greene. I am a postgraduate researcher, undertaking a PhD in Human Geography, at the National University of Ireland, Galway.

You kindly took part in a previous NUI Galway and Trinity College Dublin study (The ConsEnSus study) when my colleague completed a door-to-door survey on household consumption with you a couple of years ago. As you stated then that you would be interested in finding out the results of this survey, I have attached a couple of fact sheets summarising the results (If you are interested in learning more, please see the [consensus website](#) for further information as well as access to more fact sheets and publications).

I am contacting you as you are one of 20 participants who have been selected from a group of people who consented to be contacted to possibly take part in further research. You have been chosen to participate based on characteristics that are central focus to the investigation (e.g. your age, life-stage and attitudes about consumption).

I would now like to request you to take part in a new study which I am doing and which relates closely to the earlier ConsEnSus study. This research study, entitled *Consumption Biographies*:

*Domestic Practice over the Lifecourse*, is looking at the factors that influence people's everyday routines by examining different household practices (e.g. food practices, transport practices, laundry practices). It is also examining how people's performance of these household practices has changed over time in Ireland.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be invited to take part in three phases of research. This will involve a first face-to-face interview, a take-home diary task, and a second face-to-face interview. Interviews will begin in May/June 2014. Ideally, the interviews will take place in participant's homes, as this is the location for people's domestic practices. Please see the attached Information Sheet for more information.

In taking part, you will be part of a study that will help to shed light on factors that influence people's domestic consumption. You do not need to prepare anything for this research or have any special knowledge. If you live in Ireland and follow some sort of domestic routine at home, you are an expert in my eyes!

If you are interested in taking part, I would be delighted if you could contact me as soon as possible after receiving this invitation. I can be contacted by email on [mary.greene@nuigalway.ie](mailto:mary.greene@nuigalway.ie). If you send on your phone number, I can contact you at your convenience to discuss your possible participation in my study. Alternatively, I can be contacted on my mobile phone on 0857318953.

Further details about this research can be found on the attached Information Sheet. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me by telephone or by email using the contact details given above.

Kind Regards,

---

Mary Greene

PhD Candidate

Department of Geography

National University of Ireland, Galway

# Sample reminder recruitment letter



Address

4th November 2014

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Further to my email of October 17 and letter of October 20, this letter is a gentle reminder of the request for your participation in the Consumption Biographies research project. This research is exploring the links between lifecourse transitions and everyday consumption patterns.

Your participation in the study would be extremely beneficial for the research project and would be greatly appreciated.

I would be delighted if you could contact me as soon as possible to let me know if you are interested in taking part. It would be greatly appreciated if you could get in touch even if your decision is to not take part. I can be contacted by email on [mary.greene@nuigalway.ie](mailto:mary.greene@nuigalway.ie) and if you send on your phone number, I can contact you at your convenience to arrange this discussion. Alternatively, I can be contacted by phone directly on 085-7318953.

Further details on this research can be found in the Participant Information Sheet, previously enclosed. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me by telephone or by email using the contact details given above.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Best wishes,

---

Mary Greene

PhD Candidate

Department of Geography

National University of Ireland, Galway

# Appendix 3

## Participant information sheet



### Participant Information Sheet

#### Consumption Biographies: Domestic practice over the lifecourse

##### **What is the purpose of this study?**

This research seeks to address a gap in our understanding of domestic consumption practices. We currently know very little about how people's domestic consumption patterns change over short and longer periods of time. Understanding people's motivations for maintaining their everyday routines as well as what prompts them to change their habits over time is important for research related to consumption, environment and sustainability. The focus for this study is on domestic consumption practices that may have environmentally significant impacts. If you agree to take part in this research, you will be part of an exciting study that will help to shed light on the factors that influence people's energy consumption in the context of their everyday lives.

##### **About this information sheet**

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. You are receiving this because you indicated when you completed the survey on consumption in Ireland in 2011 that you would be willing to engage in further research. Before you decide whether or not you would like to participate in this study, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This Participant Information Sheet will tell you about the purpose of this research study and what your participation will involve. If there is anything that needs clarification, I will be happy to help. My contact details are below. I would be grateful if you could let me know your decision within seven days.

##### **Who is doing the research?**

I am Mary Greene, a postgraduate student in Human Geography at the National University of Ireland, Galway. This research forms part of my PhD work, which explores domestic consumption at different stages of the lifecourse.

##### **Why have you been chosen to participate?**

As a participant who has already taken part in the household survey, you have been chosen to participate in this study because you are deemed to possess some of the characteristics that are of central focus to the investigation. These include your age, life-stage and attitudes to issues regarding consumption.

## **What will you do if you agree to participate?**

If you agree to participate in this study, I will contact you to arrange a suitable day and time for the first of two interviews. Given the focus of the study, the interviews will take place in your home as this will help to stimulate discussion about your domestic routines and practices. The research has three parts as outlined on the following page. If you have any questions regarding this information please do not hesitate to contact me.

### ***1.) Part 1: First Interview:***

The first interview will ideally take place over the following month, depending on what date and time works best for you. The interview will follow a 'biographical' format, which involves looking back over your life. During the interview we will also fill out timelines showing things you have done at different times in your life.

While most interviews generally last around one hour and a half in length, in some cases, where individuals have a lot to say about their lives, biographical interviews of this format can end up lasting up to two hours. If we find that this is the case during your interview, a short or longer break can be incorporated. A short break would last up to twenty minutes whereas a long break would last one to two hours. You will be free to choose whatever option suits you best. Alternatively, if neither of these suits you we can break the interview up into two sessions on different days. The point is to find something that works best for you.

### ***2.) Part 2: Consumption Diary task (2 weeks)***

During this time, if you agree, you will keep a daily record of three domestic practices – your way of getting around (transport), your laundry practices and your food practices. The diary will be well laid out into sections to minimise the amount of time it will take for you to fill it in. It will only take approximately 10 minutes to fill in each day. Again, if you agree, you will be requested to keep any receipts for things you have purchased relating to these practices over the two week period. In order to ensure your privacy is maintained you will be provided with a black marker to block out any personal details (e.g. credit/debit card information) that may be present on the receipts.

### ***3.) Part 3: Follow-up interview***

This second and final interview will take place once you have completed the diary task. This interview will involve discussing the diary materials that you have produced as well as your experience of being a participant in the study. If you agree, this interview will be accompanied by a quick tour of your house. The purpose of the house tour is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which consumption is related to the types of domestic practices you carry out in your home as well as the role that technology plays in your everyday life.

## **What will happen after your participation?**

The information collected during the interviews will be transcribed and analysed. Your name and personal details will not appear on any part of the transcripts. At your request, you can be sent a copy of the recording and/or interview transcripts and diary materials. Computer files will be stored on password-protected computers and only the researcher and supervisory team at NUI Galway will see the information. Later on, when the project is nearly finished, you will have the opportunity to read the results and to provide feedback on them.

## **Ethical standpoint**

This project has been approved by the ethics committee at NUI Galway. This means that the highest standards of practice in academic research will be used in gathering and storing information and when publishing findings. A clear

and consistent means of making anonymous the information gathered will be followed through out. Your name will not be used anywhere within the research, and quotes used in the PhD report or in other publications will be checked to ensure that they cannot be used to identify you.

### **What next?**

**Please take your time over the next seven days to arrive at your decision** after which you can contact me, Mary Greene, using the details below. It would be much appreciated if you would get in touch even if your choice is to not participate.

#### **Contact Details: Researcher**

Mary Greene  
Rm 116 Arts/Science building  
Geography department  
NUI Galway  
Galway  
Email: mary.greene@nuigalway.ie  
Phone: 0857318953

#### **Contact details: PhD Supervisor**

Dr Frances Fahy  
Rm105 Arts/Science building  
Geography department  
NUI Galway  
Galway  
Email: frances.fahy@nuigalway.ie  
Phone: 091 492315 Ext 2315

### **Please Note**

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact:

The Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee,

C/o Office of the Vice President for Research,

NUI Galway

E-mail: ethics@nuigalway.ie.

## Appendix 4

### Pilot study participants

Name	Gender	Age	Life-stage	Location	Accommodation	Other demographics
Catriona*	F	40	Adulthood; Parenting	Rural	Rented, semi-detached; lives with children	2 children, U18 living at home, recently separated
Kieran	M	41	Adulthood	Urban	Rented, semi-detached; share with house mates	No children; girlfriend; lives with housemates
Samantha	F	54	Mature adulthood	Rural	Own home; no mortgage; detached house; live with partner	3 children, all over 18 & living away from home, divorced; living with new partner
Maria	F	81	Younger senior	Urban	Own home; no mortgage; detached; lived with adult son	5 children, 9 grandchildren; widowed 4 years
Beatrice *Pseudonyms	F	91	Older senior	Urban	Own home; no mortgage; Lives alone	4 children; 8 grandchildren; widowed 47 years

# Appendix 5

## Interview schedules



### CONSUMPTION BIOGRAPHIES RESEARCH STUDY INTERVIEW 1: PARTICIPANTS SCHEDULE

Thank you for taking part in this interview. The interview will follow a **'biographical' format**, which involves looking back over your life. An overview of the interview format is provided below. The interview is divided into two parts as follows:

#### **Part 1: Your life history**

The first part of the interview will centre on generating an overview of your **life history**. Here I will invite you to reflect back over your life and talk freely about the evolution of your life from the earliest point you can remember up to the present day. I will ask you to reflect on key stages, events and transitions that stand out for you in your life (e.g. transition to adulthood; moving home; having a first child etc.). I will also ask you to reflect on your key roles, responsibilities and goals at each stage of life that we identify.

At the end of this part of the interview we will **construct a timeline** together documenting all the key phases of your life and any events and transitions that have been significant for you.

#### **Short break**

#### **Part 2: Exploration of key consumption practices**

Once we have constructed a timeline of your life we will look over your life again this time focusing specifically on consumption over your life. At each life stage we will explore your own story of how you did things and why you did them in the way you did. While we will explore all kinds of consumption practices we will be focusing particularly on three domestic consumption habits over the years, as follows:

- Your food practices (purchasing, food preparation, food wastage)
- Your ways of getting around (your mobility/transport practices)
- Your laundry practices

At the end of this part of the interview we will fill out several **life graphs** representing different patterns of consumption over your life.

**Closing:** Finally, I will debrief you on the **diary task** and we will reflect on your experience with the interview process so far.



**Energy Biographies**  
**Interview Two Schedule**  
**Participants Schedule**

Thank you for your participation in the study so far and for agreeing to take part in this second interview. This interview will focus on the following things:

- **Part 1: Discussion of daily routine and practice diary**
- **Part 2: House Tour: a walking interview around your home**
- **Part 3: Exploration of your views on consumption, environment and sustainability and wider social change issues**
- **Part 4: Your experience of taking part in the study**

<b>PCI INTERVIEW 2 RESERACHER INTERVIEW GUIDE</b>	<b>POINTS FOR DISCUSSION</b>  <i>Employing narrative-generating techniques to elicit accounts of concrete experiences</i>
<b>1: Review of practice diary and daily path</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-ordination of practices with other people (family members etc.)</li> <li>• How are practices affected by the different people they interact with?</li> <li>• How are they affected by the different places/contexts they were in?</li> <li>• (e.g., Home Vs at work; weekends Vs Week day; holidays; seasons) other key domains of everyday life identified in the diary task)</li> <li>• How does social context impact upon them?</li> <li>• Prompt them to think about how the above has changed over time (using life graphs and timeline as a reference point – see below)</li> </ul>
<b>Reviewing practice graphs and life transitions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key milestones, transitions in three exemplar practices</li> <li>• Impact of key events on practices – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Exploration of the context and meaning of the changes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <u>Context of changes</u>: sudden Vs gradual change</li> <li>▪ <u>Tempo of change</u> (gradual Vs Sudden)</li> <li>▪ <u>Impacts of change</u>: Long Vs short term impacts on practice;</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prompt for exploration of key changes in the key elements of practice (images/meaning, skills/competence, stuff)</li> <li>• What practices from their childhood have stuck with them today?</li> <li>• Using all events identified from interview one, explore again how each impacted on daily life (and 3 exemplar practices) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Personal life events and daily life</li> <li>○ Wider macro events and impact on daily life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Looking back over your life, Are there any societal level changes that stand out as have having an impact on your life, or the way you do things in your everyday life:</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Ask open question: which life events/transitions have impacted most on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Your travel behaviour?</li> <li>▪ Your food behaviour?</li> <li>▪ Your laundry behaviour?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>2: House Tour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prompt for stories of changing relations with technology</li> <li>• Impact on temporal rhythm of daily practice</li> <li>• Impact on relationalities of practice</li> </ul>
<b>Part 3: Exploration of views on consumption, env and</b>	<b>Sustainable consumption</b>

**sus and wider social change  
issues**

- What does sustainable consumption mean to you? In your view, what kind of practices would sustainable consumption at home involve? (prompt for definitions of when practices are sustainable or less-recourse intensive for each of the exemplar practices)

- What, in your view, is/are sustainable food practice(s)?
- What, in your view, is sustainable travel/mobility practice(s)?
- What, in your view, is sustainable laundry practice(s)?

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION:**

What role do environmental considerations play in directing your domestic routine? Please describe some of the practices that you currently do in order to be more environmentally friendly at home?

- How do they feel when you are incorporating environmental considerations into your practices? How do you feel when you are not? (prompt about quality of life here too)
- Do you talk about environmental issues with your family and friends? How often? What kind of things do you talk about? (socio-cultural setting)
- Does anyone influence you with regard to environmentally friendly practice? If so, please tell me about this
- What are the key constraints and barriers you face that hinder you from being more environmentally friendly in your daily life?
  - Can you please describe some of barriers you face? What are some of the things that you feel make it difficult for you to change (explore each of the exemplar

practices - transportation, food, heating, laundry practices`); prompt for narrative examples and accounts

o What are some factors you feel help you to behave more sustainably in your everyday life?

**Wider social change**

Q. What does social progress mean to you?

Q. Please describe the key changes you have seen in Irish society over your life? What changes in Irish society have shaped your daily practice at home? What are the developments that stand out for you the most? (put onto timeline).

How do you feel about the changes you have witnessed in Irish society? You domestic life?

Q. How you would describe your idea of what a good life, a better life entails?

Q. What does being comfortable mean to you? Has this changed over your life? What are the key things in your life that enable you to be comfortable?

Q. What does convenience mean to you? How has this changed over your life? What are the key things in your life that enable convenience?

Q: And finally looking forward to the future: How do you envision life for your grandchildren/future generations in the future?

<b>Part 4: Experience taking part</b>	<p>A key aim of the research is to explore the value of different methods for studying and capturing people's ordinary consumption and everyday life. As such, your experience with and views on the methods is very important. Before we close the interview would you be willing to answer some questions on your experience of using the various methods?</p> <p>First, what stimulated you to take part in the study?</p> <p>What was your overall experience of taking part in this research? Anything you liked? Anything you didn't like?</p> <p>Questions in relation to specific methods</p> <p>Interview:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Did you find my questioning clear?</li><li>• What did you like best about the interview?</li><li>• What did you like least?</li><li>• Anything not covered that you feel should be?</li><li>• Impact on you? (thinking/behaviour)</li><li>• House-tour/walking interview?</li></ul>

**Visual methods:**

Timeline

- What did you like best about the timeline? What did you like least?
- Did you find the timeline useful? In what ways?
- Any other methods you feel I could incorporate that might aid memory?

Life graphs:

- How did you find the process of constructing the life graphs?
- Impact on your thinking/behaviour?

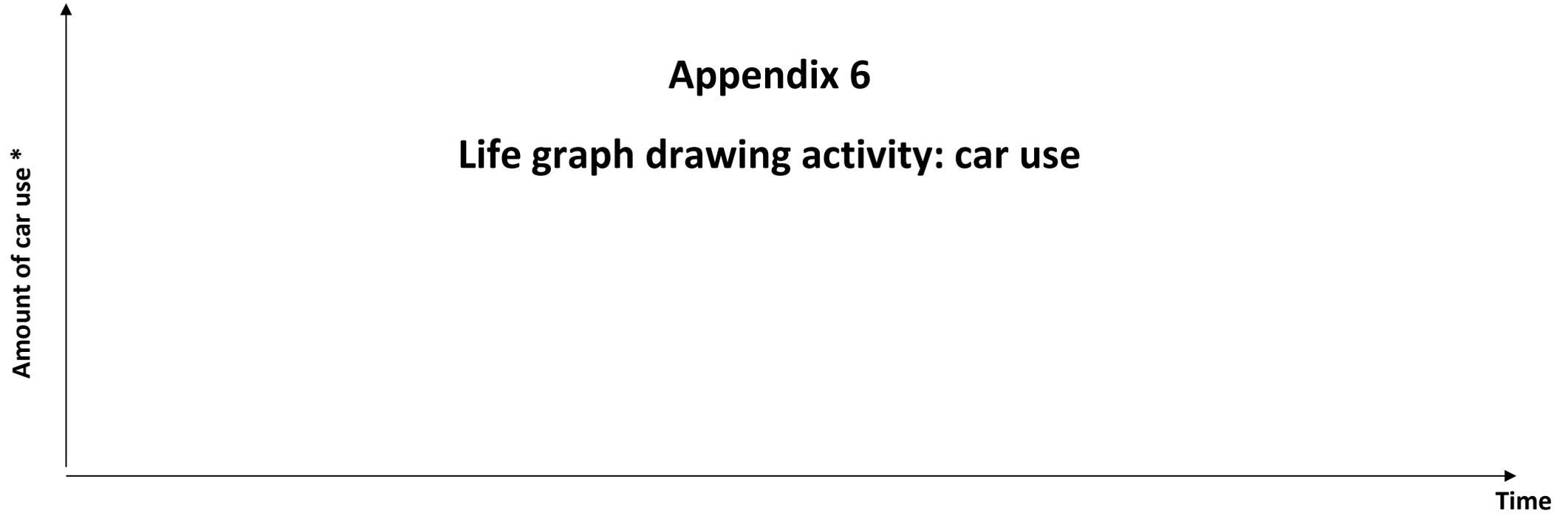
Diary:

- What was your experience of taking part in the diary study?
- Anything you liked? Anything you didn't like?
- Ease of use?
- Anything not covered that you feel should be?
- Impact on you? (thinking/behaviour)

	Overall, what would you choose as your preferred communication mode? What was your least?
<b>Close:</b>	Thank for participation  Any questions? Follow up at later stage?

## Appendix 6

### Life graph drawing activity: car use



Practicalities	
Feelings, opinions, values etc	

**\*Please note: 'Amount of car use' refers to any kind of use of a private car, whether as driver or passenger; own car, hire car, friend's car etc. When considering your amount of use please consider the number, type and length of trips (more information is included on the reverse of this sheet).**

### **What goes on the sketch?**

- **Any kind of use of a private car**, whether as driver or passenger; own car, hire car, friend's car etc.
- When you show amount of use of a mode of transport, please think about both the number of trips and their length. But **the graph doesn't need to show exact measurements**, either of time or of car use! You don't need to do complicated calculations about mileage per year or anything like that. The 'graph' is a pictorial guide rather than a real graph. I'm just looking for an idea of when and why car use has changed in your life, and whether the changes have been gradual or sudden; what factors lead to it being high or low, steady or fluctuating. I'm not trying to calculate your likely emissions.

### **Please include in the notes:**

- **Info about what kind of journeys you were mostly making**, whether as driver or passenger, whether in your own car or another. e.g. "driving daily to work in own car without passengers (10 miles/day), plus some weekend and holiday trips with others"; "didn't own car; hired one for family trips about 20 times per year".
- **Info about thoughts, feelings, opinions etc.** that you had about your car use at the time (including having no opinions/feelings about it!)
- **Info about the kind of car you were using IF this made a difference to how much you used it.**
- **You don't need to try and include every last little detail – just the main trends.**

# Life graph drawing activity: laundry



Practicalities	
Feelings, opinions, values etc	

## ***Laundry Practice over the Life-course***

### **What goes on the sketch?**

- A graphic sketch of your average number of laundry cycles per week over your life (whether these were administered by you or someone else).

### **Please include in the notes:**

- **Info about the practicalities of your laundry practices**, e.g. laundry cycles per week, the number of people's clothes being washed and dried and their relationship to you, the type and model of washing machine/dryer (if you can remember), the type of settings you used, the type of detergent, how you dried your clothes etc
- **Info about thoughts, feelings, opinions etc.** that you had about your laundry practice at the time (including having no opinions/feelings about it!)
- **Info about factors that influenced a change in your laundry practice** (e.g. growing family)
- **Remember you don't need to try and include every last little detail – just the main trends.** The 'graph' is a pictorial guide rather than a real graph. I'm just looking for an idea of when and why your laundry routine has changed in your life, and whether the changes have been gradual or sudden; what factors lead to it being high or low, steady or fluctuating.

## **Appendix 7**

### **YOUR EVERYDAY PRACTICE DIARY**

## How to fill in your diary

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this diary task. The aim of this part of the study is to obtain information on everyday practices/routines that are often not consciously reflected on. You are encouraged to maintain this diary for a period of **two weeks**. Please be mindful of the following points:

- **Please try not to let the diary influence your behaviour.** Participate in domestic activities as you would normally do and be completely honest when recording your behaviour. I am interested in finding out as much as possible about ordinary people's every day routines so there is no right or wrong answers and you will in no way be judged on your activities.
- **Please write as clearly as you can.** If you can't fit everything into an entry, continue on the back of the sheet or on a separate sheet, remembering to mark the date and section from which the entry is continuing from.
- **Please keep any receipts** you obtain over the period that relate to your consumption of food and energy (e.g. grocery shopping, petrol, bus tickets etc.). In order to ensure your privacy is maintained I have provided you with a black marker to block out any personal details (e.g. credit/debit card information) that may be present on the receipts.
- Diary format and structure:
  - At the start of the diary there is a short questionnaire, you will only fill this out once.
  - For the rest of the diary you are requested to complete the entries provided **every evening**. If you cannot make an entry for a particular day, then you can fill it in the following day. If you find you have missed out on several days, please do not give up the task. Just start again on the next day you are able to fill in and you can leave the other days blank.
  - At the start of each daily entry you are asked to fill in the day, date and a description of your day in the space provided. Once you have completed this the diary asks you to fill out information on your food consumption, means of getting, your space heating practice and laundry practice for that day. Most of the information requested here focuses on the practicalities of how you carried out different tasks.
  - At the end of each practice section you are asked to provide information in the entry **'further comments, opinions, feelings'**. Here you are invited to reflect on activities and routines that you most likely don't often reflect on. For, example you might **think about how your routine today is similar to or different from your routine in other contexts** (e.g. on holidays, at weekends) **or at different stages of your life** (e.g. before you had children) as well as some of the factors that might make your routine resistant to change.
- An example of a completed diary entry is provided on the following pages. If you have any further questions about the diary, please don't hesitate to contact me on 085 7318953.



Part 2: Food purchasing						
2a. Did you purchase food today?	2b. Where did you make this/these purchase(s)? Please also list the type of purchase (e.g. groceries, meal out, snack etc.)	2c. Were you accompanied by anyone when you made the purchase(s) listed? If so, please indicate relationship to you	2d. What were the most important factors guiding your purchasing decision for the occasion(s) listed?	Further comments/opinions		
Yes						
No <i>(continue to part 3)</i>						
Part 3: Food consumption/preparation/cooking						
Please briefly describe contents of each meal you ate today	<u>Where</u> and <u>when</u> did you eat this meal and <u>who</u> were you with?	<u>Who</u> was your food/drink prepared by? And <u>when</u> ?	If prepared by you, did you also prepare food for others? pls indicate who	Time spent on prep and cooking?	What appliances were used during prep and cooking?	Further comments/opinions
Breakfast:	<u>Where and when:</u>  <u>Who:</u>	<u>Who prep:</u>  <u>When:</u>	YES / NO  <u>Who:</u>			
Lunch:	<u>Where:</u>  <u>Who:</u>	<u>Who prep:</u>  <u>When:</u>	YES / NO  <u>Who:</u>			

Dinner:	<u>Where:</u>	<u>Who prep:</u>	YES / NO			
	<u>Who:</u>	<u>When:</u>	<u>Who:</u>			
Snacks:	<u>Where and who with:</u>	<u>Who prepared and when:</u>	<u>Who else you prep'd for:</u>	<u>Time on prep:</u>	<u>Appliances used:</u>	

**Part 4: Food disposal**

For each meal please indicate whether you disposed of any waste and, if so, the manner in which you disposed of it

Breakfast		Lunch		Dinner		Snacks		Further comments/opinions
Wastage	Method	Wastage	Method	Wastage	Method	Wastage	Method	
Yes		Yes		Yes		Yes		
No		No		No		No		

**Part 5: Getting around**

Did you leave your home today?    Yes                      No

*If you answered Yes please fill in a row below for every trip or outing you took today*

*If you answered No please continue to Part 6*

Time of trip	Purpose of trip	Destination(s) (in the case of multi-purpose trips pls list all the "from-to" destinations)	Mode of transport	Approx. distance travelled	No. of people with you and their relation to you	Further comments/opinions


**Part 6: Laundry**

Did you do any laundry today?      Yes                  No  
*If you answered Yes please fill in a row below for each cycle you completed today*  
*If you answered No, you have completed the diary task for today 😊*

Time of activity	Person who carried out this task	Method of washing clothes (e.g. Machine, hand rinse)	Method of drying clothes (e.g. tumble dryer, natural drying)	Products used (I.e. type of detergent, colour catchers etc.)	Programme choice (list temperature, type of wash/dry etc.)	Further comments/opinions


# Appendix 8

## Survey

**Q1. Which of the following best describes where you live?**

*(Please circle one option)*

1. Rural
2. Urban

**Q2. Which of the following best describes your accommodation?**

*(Please circle one option)*

1. Own without mortgage (i.e. without any loan)
2. Own with mortgage
3. Tenant, paying rent to private landlord
4. Tenant, paying rent in social/voluntary/municipal housing
5. Accommodation is provided free
6. Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. Don't know

**Q3. Who do you share your home with?**

*(Please circle one option)*

1. Family members
2. Live alone
3. Housemates
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_
5. Spouse/partner
6. Owner occupied

**Q.4 Do you have children?**

1. Yes (Go to part B and C)

2. No (Go to Q.5)

Q.4B. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

Q.4C How many of these children live at home? \_\_\_\_\_

Q.4D. How many are less than 18 years of age? \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.5 How many of the following does your household own?**

1. Cars \_\_\_\_\_

2. Bicycles \_\_\_\_\_

3. TVs \_\_\_\_\_

4. Personal computers/laptops \_\_\_\_\_

5. Mobile phones \_\_\_\_\_

6. Electric shower \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.6 How far do you travel (one way) to work/college/school on a daily basis?**

*(Please circle one option)*

1. Less than 1 km

2. Less than 2 kms

3. Less than 3 kms

4. Less than 4 kms

5. Less than 10 kms

6. Less than 20 kms

7. Over 20 kms

8. Not applicable

9. Don't know

**Q.7 Which method of transport do you use most frequently to travel to work/school/college?**

*(Please circle one option)*

1. Walk

2. Cycle

3. Bus/train **(if you tick this option please go straight to Q.10)**
4. Taxi
5. Car (driver)
6. Car (passenger)
7. Motorbike
8. Not applicable

**Q.8 Is there public transport (or a private bus service) available for this commute to work/college/school?**

***(Please circle one option)***

1. Yes
2. No
3. I don't know
4. Not applicable

**Q.9 If yes, what is the main reason for not using this public transport?**

***(Please rank top three options)***

1. It's too expensive
2. It's unreliable
3. It's very restrictive
4. It's unsafe
5. Buses can be very unhygienic
6. I need to carry heavy/bulky things
7. I need to give lifts to others
8. I need the car for work
9. Never considered it
10. Don't know
11. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
12. Not applicable

**Q.10 What is the most important issue for you when you buy food?**

***(Please rank top three)***

1. Price
2. Health benefits/Nutritional content
3. Where/how food is produced (i.e. is it fair trade/organic)
4. Taste/flavour
5. Brand
6. It's easy to cook (i.e. convenience foods/ frozen meals)
7. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Q.11 What is the main reason that your household throws food in the bin?**

***(Please circle one option)***

1. Bought too much – expired
2. Change of plans (*e.g. late home from work, sickness*)
3. Supermarket offers – “buy one get one free”
4. No space to conserve food (*e.g. no freezer*)
5. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Our household does not throw food in the bin!
7. Don't know/Not applicable

**Q. 12 Which method of space heating does your household use most frequently?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q. 13 Who is your energy supplier?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Q.14. Which of the following best describes how you feel about environmental issues?**

***(please tick one option)***

1. I am very concerned
2. I am somewhat concerned
3. I am not concerned
4. I am not at all concerned
5. I have no opinion/Don't know

**Q.15 To what extent do you agree with the following statements:**

**Q.15A I pay attention to where my food is produced**

*(please circle one option)*

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q.15B I have the right to use as much energy as I want**

*(please circle one option)*

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q.15C I like people to think of me as being environmentally friendly**

*(please circle one option)*

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree

4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q.15D I am concerned about environmental issues**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q15E. I feel that my own personal behaviour can bring about positive environmental change**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Strong agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q15F. I can change my consumption behaviour quite easily if I wanted to**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Strong agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree
6. Don't know

**Q 15E. In your opinion who is the most responsible for protecting the environment?**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Government agencies
  2. Business and manufacturers
  3. Communities (i.e. people working together in communities)
  4. Individuals themselves
  5. Other (please specify)
- 

6. All of the above

7. Don't know

**Socio-demographic questions:**

**Q16. What year were you born in? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Q17. What is the highest level of education which you have completed to date?**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Primary/national school education
2. Second level education
3. Third level education
4. No formal education

**Q.18 How would you describe you current employment status?**

***(please circle one option)***

1. Employed
2. Unemployed
3. Student
4. Retired
5. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey**

# Appendix 9

## Postscript field notes

Post Script: Pilot 3

Name: Kieran Mahony<sup>1</sup>; 18/11/2013; 2.29hr

Interview 1

**Before the interview:** This interview forms part of the pilot study. I approached Kieran, a friend of mine that I know through my involvement in a local environmental community based organisation, several weeks ago to ask him if he would be willing to take part as a participant in this pilot study and I sent him on the pilot participant information sheet. I contacted him a week later to see if he was willing to take part and he agreed so we arranged the first interview for this date.

This being my third pilot study I had learned a bit from my previous two experiences. After transcribing the other interviews I had become very aware that I have a tendency to jump in too quick on people's comments, something that I think is largely attributable to my nerves and inexperience. I decided that for this interview I was going to make a big effort to refrain from this and make an attempt to become more comfortable with extended silences. In addition, this time I wanted to begin with a narrative opening question and then progress to filling out the timeline as I found in the other two interviews that the 'timeline first, narrative question second' approach didn't work so smoothly. Building on my reflections from the first two pilots I devised a revised schedule for the interview, as follows:

### **Part 1: Life history**

*The first part of the interview will centre on generating an overview of your life history. Here I will invite you to reflect back over your life and talk freely about your evolution of your life from the earliest point you can remember up to the present day.*

*At the end of this part of the interview we will construct a timeline together documenting all the key phases of your life and any events and transitions that have been significant for you.*

### **Short break**

### **Part 2: Exploration of key themes**

*Once we have constructed a timeline of your life we will look over your life again this time focusing specifically on consumption over your life. At each life stage we will explore your own story of how you did things and why you did them in the way you did. While we will explore all kinds of consumption we will be focusing particularly on four domestic consumption habits over the years, as follows:*

- *Your food practices (purchasing, food preparation, food wastage)*
- *Your ways of getting around*
- *Your laundry practices*

*At the end of this part of the interview I will ask you to fill out a couple of life graphs*

---

<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym

### **Part 3: House Tour**

Once the interview has been completed with your permission we will take a **short tour around your house** during which I will take some photographs

**Closing:** Finally, I will debrief you on the diary task and we will reflect on your experience with the interview process so far

**Place of the interview:** The interview took place in the front sitting room of the participant's house. This is rented accommodation that Kieran shares with 7 other housemates. There were soft furnishings in the room, one very bright ceiling light and the house was very quiet. On one occasion one of Kieran's housemates walking in on the interview.

**During the interview:** While initially I sensed that Kieran was a little bit uncomfortable with the idea of giving me detailed narrative of his life history, contrary to what I had expected he quickly opened up and had no trouble discussing things at length. When it appeared that he might have finished discussing something instead of jumping in with another question I held out. I decided that for each moment of silence I would count to ten slowly before I said anything. This proved to be a very effective strategy as in nearly every instance after he paused he took up his discussion again. In the previous interviews I would have undoubtedly jumped in before second 3 or 4. When he was finished discussing something he would indicate so. Also, in terms of the structure and layout of the interview, the three part schedule I devised worked really effectively. I think it also helped to share this schedule with the participant before the interview started to give the participant some extra time to reflect on their account.

With regards to non-verbal communication aspects, initially, for the first part of the interview I was sitting opposite Kieran. As he was narrating about his life history he rarely made eye contact with me and he kept his eyes firmly fixated downwards on the floor. He seemed a little nervous. However, he appeared to loosen up as he got into the flow of his narrative. When he closed his opening narrative and we then progressed to fill out the timeline together I moved around beside him and we constructed the timeline together from a side-by-side position. I decided to remain sitting here for the rest of the interview and I found Kieran seemed to be far more comfortable in this position. It was also ideal as we could both look at and refer to the timeline while he narrated while intermittingly we would turn sideways and talk face to face.

The general atmosphere of the interview was very positive. Kieran talked at length about many experiences and was very reflective, making connections between aspects of his history and his everyday behaviour. He clearly understood the purpose of the research and what the questions were attempting to get at. I felt that he was very honest throughout the whole discussion. My wording of the questions has improved greatly over the past couple of interviews, however, in certain instances, in particular when questioning about routines over the lifecourse, there is still much room for improvement. I feel I need to work on wording the questions for part 2 more effectively.

**After the interview:** In our concluding discussion I asked Kieran to comment on his experience of the interview process. He indicated that while he has previously reflected on these issues he made many new connections during his narrative discussion in this interview. I think it was very obvious that Kieran as an environmental activist had previously reflected on these issues – in comparison to the

other interviewees (who did not identify as pro-environmental) he was readily able to speak about his consumption practices. He also indicated that it would have been good to have a break (I did offer one after part 1 but we decided to keep going). In terms of follow up plans Kieran is currently filling out the practice diary. Once he has it completed in two weeks time he will get in contact and we'll then schedule the second interview.

## **Interview 2**

**28/1/2014, 8 pm; ~3hrs**

**Before:** Kieran participated in the diary task for two weeks (from 27<sup>th</sup>/11/2013 to the 10/12/2013). He was very busy in the weeks leading up to Christmas so I didn't get a chance to meet him prior to the holidays to collect the diary. Also both of us were on holidays away over the Christmas break. As such I picked it up from him in the middle of January. Here we scheduled the next meeting for January the 28<sup>th</sup> 2014 at 8 pm. I set aside some time to review his interview and diary materials in the days leading up to this meeting. I transcribed and read through the whole interview (~23,000 words) and studied the diary noting follow up points whilst also jotting down emerging themes in a separate document. I devised an interview schedule for the second interview with the follow up points noted clearly. I decided to bring along the timelines and graphs produced during the first interview Kieran might have felt at this stage that he had something more to add to (or indeed remove/amend from) them.

**Place:** The interview took place in the same front sitting room of the house as before. The furnishing and lighting was the same. However, while last time the house was very quiet on this occasion there was much more activity as other housemates were coming and going, talking and making food in the kitchen. While we could hear them however they did not interrupt us in the sitting room. Finally the house was very warm. I was verging on uncomfortably warm. The heat appeared to be on full blast and we were both stripped down to light clothing.

**During:** The interview schedule I devised for Interview 2 follows a 4 part structure as follows:

- Part 1: Review of practice diary and follow up questions from interview 1  
  
As we did not complete the house tour during interview 1 it took place at the end of part one
- Part 2: Further exploration of your views on consumption and sustainability
- Part 3: Your views on wider social change issues
- Part 4: Your experience of taking part in the study

Part 1 lasted 43 minutes in total. We then took a break, which was followed by the house tour and then another short break during which we made another cup of tea. By this stage over 1h45ms has passed. I actually hadn't checked the time by this stage and we were both very surprised when we realised another 1h15ms had passed by the time we came to the end of part 3. It was 11 pm! I was worried that part 3 and 4 had stretched on too long so I will have to review these questions and

perhaps discuss them with Frances and Tom to see if there might be a way of shortening them or perhaps eliminating a few of them. I am worried that participants might experience too much fatigue given the amount that participation requires from them. However, before making amendments I will test this schedule for a second time with Pilot 4 during their second interview this coming Friday the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2014.

**After:** Finally, we did not proceed to cover part 4 as I did not want to keep the participant for any longer and we were both exhausted by this stage. We agreed to meet up informally for coffee sometime next week to discuss his experience of participating in the study.

**Follow up:** Meet Kieran on 7<sup>th</sup>/ 2/2014 to discuss his experience of taking part in the study. Kieran gave a very positive response here. He talked at length about the value of this kind of research indicating that the experience had brought his values and practices into a new salience. He indicated that the experience has refocused and reengaged him in his social and environmental commitment to living as morally as good a lifestyle as possible. In fact, he requested that I send back the diary survey next year and every year here after and highlighted the need for longitudinal work of this kind. In contrast to pilot 2, Kieran was very positive about the diary, with this having a significant impact for him in increasing his cognisance about his practice. He also gave positive feedback about the narrative interviews, highlighting that he found the process of talking about his practice and how it has transformed over time very revealing for him.

# Appendix 10: NVIVO screenshot showing category development for research question exploring why change occurs

The screenshot displays the NVivo interface with a project named 'eb working verison copy.nvp'. The left sidebar shows a tree of nodes, with 'Explaining change in practice' selected. The main window shows a table of nodes under this category.

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Experiential, lifecourse scale	0	0	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:01	MG
Agency & reflexivity	4	6	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Changing roles	22	166	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 21:51	MG
Gendered Practice	10	30	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Health	12	59	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Identity	16	76	12/11/2016 21:44	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Participation	2	2	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Personal capitals	27	132	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Relationships	52	228	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Socialisation	42	330	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 21:04	MG
Work career	10	11	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:03	MG
Socio-technical transitions & contexts	60	811	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:01	MG
Cultural discourse & media	15	38	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Economic transitions	30	119	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Norms & Discourse	33	126	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Planning & Infrastructure	18	88	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Policy & Institutions	38	275	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Services	25	140	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG
Technologies	8	23	12/11/2016 20:39	MG	12/11/2016 22:02	MG

# Appendix 11

## Dealing with Distressed Participants

### Ethics Protocol

---

The following is a procedural protocol for assisting participants who may become distressed while being interviewed for the 'Energy biographies: domestic practice throughout the lifecourse' research project.

If a participant becomes distressed or upset during interview:

1. Ask the person if they would like to take a break and if they would like you to switch off the recorder.

2. If the person continues to be upset, ask the person if they would like to end the interview and if they would like you to call someone to spend time with them, such as a relative, a friend or care-giver, or someone from the local community (e.g. health professional, member of the clergy, community worker).

3. Before leaving, ask the person if it would be ok to call them later in the day or the following day to make sure they are ok. Alternatively, ask them if they would like you to have someone from the local community (e.g. a health professional, member of the clergy, community worker) call them to make sure they are ok.

4. Before leaving, hand the person the sheet of national and local contact names and contact details of people and organisations that may be of some help to them.

---

The sheet will include contact details for the organisations and groups listed below.

- HSE Information Line 1850 24 1850
- Samaritans (provides a listening and emotional support service) 1850 60 90 90
- Aware (mental health information and support) 1890 303 302
- COSC– The national office for the prevention of domestic, sexual, and gender-based violence
- 01-4768680

## Appendix 12



### Consent Form

I, ....., consent to participate in the research project examining domestic practices and the lifecourse.

**By signing this form, I agree that:**

- I have read the participant information sheet and understand what participation entails
- My participation in this study is completely voluntary
- I can withdraw from the study at any stage during the research without my legal rights being affected
- The data generated will be kept confidential and the transcript, tapes and photographs will not be seen or used by anyone other than the researcher and supervisor
- My name and other identifying features will not be used anywhere in the PhD report and other publications

#### Participant

#### Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINTED NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINTED NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date