

## **A Bottom up Approach to Slowing Fashion: Tailored Solutions for Consumers.**

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Authors:

Jodie West, Clare Saunders and Joanie Willett

### **Introduction**

Fast fashion has emerged in the last few decades as clothes have become cheaper, less durable and are purchased more frequently. This has resulted in severe negative environmental and human costs (Fletcher 2014). The complexity of fashion's supply chains and the externalities it casts at multiple times and places make fashion the epitome of all that is wrong with western consumerism. Significant pollution and social inequity are identifiable at almost every stage of the production, consumption and waste cycles. In recognition of the severity of the problem, there has been recognition in high places of the need to 'fix' fashion, but many suggestions for doing so are top-down – including taxation, market incentives and legislation (House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee, 2019). Since 2007, the UK government has made tokenistic attempts to instigate policy measures to curtail the worst excesses of the fashion industry. In 2007, it launched the Sustainable Clothing Road Map, which gathered evidence on the lifecycle impacts of clothing, developed a vision for sustainability and set out short, medium and long-term measures to steer industry. One result was the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP), which places the onus on the industry to make improvements. The dominance in this initiative of large companies whose ethical and environmental credentials might be deemed questionable raises scepticism about whether it is genuine. Further doubts of its efficacy might be raised when we consider that street retailers such as Asda, the Arcadia Group, Next, and the budget outlets of Primark and New Look did not commit to SCAP at all (ENDS 2009). Unfortunately, significant progress from top-down policy initiatives is slow because the UK government has rejected the advice of its own Environmental Audit Committee to deliver more meaningful measures (Fashion Roundtable 2019).

Bottom-up approaches are important not only because top-down measures have been rejected by policy-makers and have been relatively ineffective, but also because it is increasingly recognised that multifaceted approaches to engage consumers in reducing fashion's impact are required (Cavender, 2018; Ertekin & Atik, 2015; Marchand *et al*, 2010; Hopkinson & Cronin, 2015). An emerging field of literature recognises that people are not simply either green (people who engage in pro-environmental behaviour) or grey (people who do not). There is more complexity than this because

people who engage in pro-environmental behaviour are not a homogenous group. McDonald et al (2012), for example, classify those who engage in pro-environmental behaviour as either translators, exceptors or selectors. *Translators* are not holistic in their approach to pro-environmental behaviour, but try to do the 'right thing' after passively absorbing information about potential lifestyle changes they could make. *Exceptors* are the most anti-consumerist pro-environmental behaviourists, who avoid mainstream media and prefer alternative sources to actively seek out advice on ethical consumption. However, although they are mostly exemplary pro-environmentalists, they do make exceptions to their high standards for things they love (this could be fashion, but McDonald et al illustrate this category with the examples of cars and American-style fridge freezers). *Selectors* are the largest group of pro-environmentalists, who select an area of pro-environmental behaviour (perhaps organic food) and disregard other issue areas.

We use the work of McDonald et al (2012) in our present study as an important starting point. We see this work as a useful lens through which to recognise that the different ways in which individuals think and behave is an important starting point for developing tailored solutions to the slowing down of fashion. Our paper builds on the study of McDonald et al (2012) in four ways. First, we focus particularly on slowing down fashion rather than, as McDonald et al (2012) did, pro-environmental behaviour *per se*. Given McDonald et al's (2012) own admission that some people are selectors justifies our choice to select one issue area. Second, we use Cultural Theory as a tool to distinguish statements and actions that fit different personality types, rather than to pigeon whole people – themselves very nuanced and variable – into behavioural types. Third, we reveal statements and actions that emerged as a result of a longitudinal (9-months) experiential embodied research, working closely with a small number of respondents in clothes making, mending and modifying workshops while charting their experiences, thoughts and feelings using mixed methods. Fourth, we identify a range of bottom-up approaches to slowing down fashion that consumers can engage with. We use the term bottom-up solutions to refer to those solutions derived by consumers themselves, which allow them to make a contribution to fixing fashion through consumption. This approach is particularly important in the UK context, in which our study is situated, where the UK government have explicitly refused to employ top down measures. Our research questions ask:

- 1) What roles and responsibilities for slowing fashion are evoked by people with different cultural traits?
- 2) What practices do people with different cultural traits think will increase the take-up of slow fashion?
- 3) Which aspects of experiential learning from our workshops helped people with different cultural traits to begin to undertake their own journey towards slowing fashion?

- 4) What do these findings tell us about how policy-makers might help individuals to undertake a journey towards slower fashion?

### **Slowing fashion: definitions and challenges**

Shifting consumers away from fast fashion is challenging, even for the more ethically minded. Individuals have different decision-making practices and differential responses to social norms. Even the most ethically minded engage in 'grey' consumption and are susceptible to planned obsolescence of fashion cycles (McDonald et al 2012). There is, thus, a value-action gap in relation to clothing where environmental consciousness does not cohere with behaviours. Other factors responsible for this are the perceived prohibitive price of ethically or environmentally sourced clothing brands (Henninger et al 2016) compared to the low-cost of high-street fashion items, identity, emotion (Cho et al 2015) and trend-consciousness, which feed the drive to acquire new fashionable clothes (Joy 2012). The choice of clothing is one of the most visually obvious ways for people to express their social status, values and individual and/or collective identity. Moreover, contemporary consumers are somewhat trained by current norms and practices to play the game of fast fashion because many of us have been socialised to engage with and accept it (Blazquez et al 2020). Therefore, finding mechanisms that will effectively create a shift to 'identifying' more with sustainable clothing choices is required to close the value-action gap (Jacobs *et al* 2018).

The end goal in closing the fashion value-action gap is for individuals to fully adopt a 'slow fashion' preference. Ertekin and Atik (2015) suggest that the term 'slow fashion' encompasses the whole range of sustainable clothing – eco, green and ethical. Although scholars, stakeholders and the public disagree about the meaning of these terms (Mukendi et al 2020), it is possible to caricature them in the following way: *eco/green fashion* emphasises the reduction of chemicals and environmental resources in clothing production; *ethical fashion* stresses the importance of workers' rights and is therefore resolutely against sweatshops and for fair trade. *Sustainable fashion* merges the concerns of eco/green and ethical fashion. Slow fashion, however, is something entirely different and much more holistic (Blazquez et al 2020). It involves a slowing down of consumption and production processes, and a closer relationship between designers, producers and consumers. It is thought to result, consequently, in better protection for the well-being of workers, communities, and the environment (Pookulangara and Shephard, 2013). For consumers, the slow fashion movement necessitates a shift from quantity to quality focused consumption, engaging in alternate forms of

consumption (such as second-hand markets/vintage) and a commitment to conscientiously dispose (or extend the life) of used clothing (Jung and Jin, 2014; 2016). Slow fashion, in this sense, becomes almost the antithesis of fashion as we currently know it: fashion would no longer be something we must do in order to be trendy, but it would reflect an individual creative choice (Clark 2008). Slow fashion is not reliant on things that are new, it is not obsessed with image, neither is it delivered top down from designers through the cat walk and then emulated by fast fashion retailers. It requires a significant break with current ways of producing fashion, involving systems' redesign, changed power relationships, reflection of the true costs, more control over our lives and balance between economic, social and ecological systems (Fletcher 2010). This might lead some to suggest that slow fashion is an oxymoron (Clark 2008). We disagree that it is an oxymoron, instead viewing it as a vision for the future of fashion. In recognising that the end goal of slow fashion is long and complex and has radical implications for the industry, we wish to highlight that we see the slowing of fashion as a process. Hence, we use the verb 'slowing' to recognise the process of progressing towards the goal of slow fashion, even if the end goal may remain a fairly distant aspiration.

The complexities of getting to this end goal make immediate behaviour change difficult to achieve. In our own [anonymised] previous work we identified that sustainable clothing intentions and demonstrated behaviour are not linearly matched because individuals markedly differ from one another. Given that people interact with clothing in different ways, a shift towards slow fashion requires a multifaceted approach, suited to people of different cultural types, rather than relying solely on industry- or government-level top down policy drivers.

The paper proceeds as follows. In the next section we provide more details on our use of Cultural Theory as a holistic device. We then provide more information on our methodology, before presenting our findings and making a set of recommendations for a bottom-up approach to slowing fashion with tailored solutions. Recognising that consumers differ from one another, we suggest incentivising mechanisms targeted at Cultural Theory's three 'ideal types' archetypes – the egalitarian, the hierarchist and individualist (explained later). In our experiential workshops, our participants provided their reflections on shifting towards and encouraging slower fashion through a variety of research methodologies that resonate across the range of cultural types.

### **Our approach**

In this paper we use cultural thematic schemata (from Cultural Theory) as a heuristic device to recommend a set of recommendations that could reduce the value-action-gap by encouraging the slowing of fashion. Applying heuristic devices to structure understandings of environmental discourses is a longstanding practice in social research. Commonly-used schemas include the New Ecological

Paradigm (NEP) (Dunlap and VanLiere,1978) and O’Riordan’s (1981) scale of sustainability. Most involve a unidimensional axis on which individuals’ environmental worldviews are situated. However, Stern (1993) suggests that analysing complex environmental controversies requires more sophisticated differentiation of the reasoning underpinning worldviews than those offered by a binary ecocentric–technocentric divide. Cultural Theory asserts that structures of social organisation endow individuals with perceptions that reinforce those structures in competition against alternative ones. The theory was first presented in Mary Douglas’ (1970) book *Natural Symbols*. Cultural Theory has given rise to a diverse set of research programs that span multiple social science disciplines, including the analyse of policy-making conflicts generally (Jacobs *et al* 2018; Pendergraft, 1998; Markle 2019; Rippl 2002; ANONYMISED *et al* 2010; Van de Graaff 2016; Verweij 2006).

We deploy Cultural Theory to capture some of the complexity of ranging opinions and behavioural intentions related to fashion, allowing for the development of bottom-up initiatives able to trigger a shift towards slow fashion across broad swathes of the public. Studies eliciting perceptions of environmental issues and behaviour change must investigate the social constructs underpinning those perceptions (Meader *et al.* 2006). These include not only pro- or anti-environmental attitudes, but also broader worldviews. Cultural Theory is a post-positivist approach that helps decipher how individuals rationalise their viewpoints on environmental issues and consumption (Ellis *et al* 2007). One of its most common applications has been in exploring emerging and complex public perceptions of climate change (Douglas, 1970; Thompson and Rayner, 1998; Verweij and Thompson, 2006; Hulme, 2009). Markle’s (2019) study demonstrates that applying such theoretical perspectives to the social problem of environmental degradation can facilitate the development of targeted strategies for bringing about impactful behavioural change.

Cultural Theory is a longstanding and recognised heuristic device deployed to understand environmental discourses. It is based around two axes, consisting of a ‘grid’ and a ‘group’ (Figure 1). The ‘group’ dimension classifies people according to their extent of connection with communities or other social groups. As Wildavsky (1987:p.6) states ‘the group dimension gives the answer to the fundamental question “who am I?” or more precisely “who am I with?”’. The ‘grid’ dimension categorises people according to the social rules and norms informing their behaviour in social interactions and ‘gives the answer to the fundamental question “how should I behave?”’ (Wildavsky 1987). These dimensions provide the basis for four ideal-type categories that summarise the ways in which people perceive the world: individualist, hierarchist, egalitarian and fatalist. Individualist discourses favour competitive markets and believe the environment is tolerant to anthropogenic impacts. Egalitarian discourses favour social equality and believe nature is fragile to anthropogenic activities. Hierarchist discourses allocate particular importance to the role of institutions and

regulation in regulating human–environment relations, but believe natural systems can withstand some degree of human disturbance. Fatalist discourses believe events are determined principally by fate, and so conceive of nature as capricious and unmanageable (Schwarz and Thompson, 1990). Note that the fatalist is not perceived as active in politics, and is therefore excluded from many applications of Cultural Theory, including our own.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

**Figure 1. Cultural Theory Ideal Types**

Cultural theorists nevertheless assert that democracy is only achievable when all three active ideal types participate in policy decisions (Thompson *et al.*, 1990). Inclusion not only makes political decisions fairer, but also yields more reliable outcomes by incorporating multiple opinions. Despite this, Pendergraft (1998) suggests that even when it is agreed that ‘issues’ require policy intervention, conflict can still arise from divergent notions of what is real, right and equitable. For example, although everyone would like a healthy environment, how healthy it needs to be and a willingness to bear costs may vary greatly. The cultural lens through which the world is viewed by an individual at a point in time can thus inform responses to environmental problems. We therefore stress its importance in shaping bottom up approaches to encourage the slowing of fashion.

We defend our use of Cultural Theory, despite three broad classes of criticism: (1) its rigidity does not account for individuals swapping ideal types overtime; (2) it does not recognise individuals’ ability to believe and use multiple discourses in a single discussion; and (3) there is coarseness and ambiguity in stereotyping society into four categories (Boholm, 1996a, 1996b; Thompson *et al.*, 1990). The

suggestion that Cultural Theory does not accommodate changes in social life and individuals' ability to swap ideal type (Sjoberg, 1996, 1998) has received particular attention (Douglas, 1982; Thompson *et al.*, 1990; Schwartz, 1999). Thompson (1982) examined how such switches can be recognised by Cultural Theory, and suggests that individuals are more likely to affiliate themselves with one ideal type when their situation is stable, because they learn to see phenomena in certain ways and to use their cultural screens to rationalise situations. However, individuals may also detect discrepancies between what they expect and see. A few surprise events may be viewed as anomalies, but an accumulation of anomalies may result in individuals searching for more reliable ways of understanding the world. Thompson (1982) suggests that this could result in an individual moving between ideal types within a format still encapsulated by Cultural Theory. The ability of individuals to utilise multiple discourses was illustrated by Harrison and Burgess (1994), who used a citizens' jury to explore the development of the Rainham Marshes, UK. Jury members admitted seeing environmental issues as expendable despite expressing conservation concerns. The authors attribute this to contextual social and political pressures, with developers, for example, adjusting rhetoric to respond to and show they understood opponents' claims. Schwartz and Thompson (1990), however, suggest that 'rhetoric stealing' does not discredit Cultural Theory but indicates deliberate changes in discourses made by policy-actors and individuals to retain support and control arguments.

The final criticism of Cultural Theory is its social stereotyping and neglect of the multiple interactions between lived experiences and personal worldviews (Sjoberg, 1996; Boholm, 1996a). However, Verweij (2000) argues that one of Cultural Theory's strengths is its potential to encapsulate multiple meanings into smaller sets of super-meanings. Douglas (1982) recognised this, suggesting that Cultural Theory should only be utilised within specific contexts and not literally. Milton (1991) even ventures that Cultural Theory stereotyping is not an issue, because heuristic devices are not constructed as accurate descriptions of cognition and action, but as tools to assist understanding and comparison. As such, Cultural Theory offers proxy ideal types to compare against the 'real' world, and ideal types should be seen as fictional characters that coincide with ways of life without expecting individuals to adhere to a singular archetype (Verweij, 2000).

Individuals' thoughts and actions will include elements of various ways of life and will also vary between social domains. In line with this approach, we do not seek to categorise individual research participants but, rather, to identify discourses broadly representative of cultural-theoretic-ideal-types. We allocated story-lines to ideal-types to help us tailor approaches to encourage greater public acceptance and take-up of slow fashion suitable to each task. Thus, we provide plausible summaries of how different stances towards the slowing of fashion are rationalised (Verweij and Thompson, 2006). Despite the above criticisms, there is clear evidence of the ability of Cultural Theory to

categorise environmental policy development into a more coherent form (Adams, 1995; Milton-Kelly, 2004; O’Riordan and Jordan, 1999; Thompson and Rayner, 1998; ANONYMISED et al, 2010).

In summary, the strengths and weaknesses of Cultural Theory suggest that it is most fruitfully used to provide snapshots of environmental issues, enabling a structuring of the multiple and complex ways issues are perceived; exploration of the parameters of debates; and assessment of the implications of worldviews. Additionally, issues such as ‘stealing rhetoric’ provide an extra dimension to studies of public perceptions of the environment, because identifying stolen rhetoric highlights deliberate discursive shifts that individuals feel the need to make to support a viewpoint. We extend use of Cultural Theory in a novel way, using it to develop policy recommendations for slowing fashion that are applicable to broad swathes of the public.

### **Research design**

The project was designed on the basis of embodied research, which invites participants to use physical, tactile activities to explore and generate knowledges (Spatz, 2017a; Spatz, 2017b; Thanem and Knights 2019; Vachelli 2018). Our main intention (derived from social practice theory, Pazar and Shove 2006) was to provide our participants with three classes of stimuli that are known to shape behaviour. These are: 1) infrastructure and equipment; 2) senses of meaning developed through conversation with peers, and 3) skills and knowledge. We delivered this knowledges generation experience through 20 one-day workshops in January-September 2018, in Cornwall, UK. The workshops illustrated an alternative, slower way of doing fashion. In the workshops our participants gained hands-on experience working with natural yarns, natural dyes, hand-spinning and weaving, making do and mending, ethical clothing and upcycling. Our emphasis was on generating in-depth of understandings about the meanings with which participants imbued their relationships with fashion, rather than a wide breadth of experiences. Hence, we judged that 12 participants from varied backgrounds would provide sufficient perspective without compromising the depth of our understanding of any shifts in meanings which participants experienced on their journey through our workshops (Flick, 2014).

Research participants were selected from a range of age groups, with contrasting environmental attitudes and different levels of skill in making and mending clothes. We conducted an opening symposium with 83 interested persons at the beginning of the project, at which participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. From this questionnaire we selected workshop participants ranging in ages, class, cultural backgrounds, attitudes, and prior experience. We recruited 12



participants, but 2 dropped out early in the cycle (the final sample size was therefore 10). Our participants came from a range of starting points, from avid followers of fast fashion, to persons who made all of their own clothes. This was a purposive decision. As we had hoped, persons with specific making skills shared their skills with those who were newer to making practices. Moreover, some participants had deep interest in the environment and ethical concerns, others were more motivated to learn skills for free. All 10 were female as we struggled to attract male participants despite reaching out on social media. Most participants were in the age range 20-44, with one participant in her 60s. Basic biographic information on our research participants is show in Table 1. For ethical reasons, participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

**Table 1: Our research participants**

Participant (pseudonym)	Age	Preferred style	Subjective social class	Frequency with which makes own clothes	Discourse from each ideal type
Rachel	36	Smart/casual	Lower middle class	Never	E, H, I
Betty	36	Functional	None	Sometimes	I, E
Kate	28	Alternative	None	Rarely	I, H
Sarah	37	Artistic	None	Often	H
Ella	44	Casual	Lower middle class	Rarely	E
Fern	35	Preppy / band oriented	Upper middle class	Sometimes	H, I, E
Faye	27	Casual / comfortable	None	Often	E, H
Ruth	66	Casual / urban	Working class	Often	E, I
Star	22	Smart	Working class	Often	E, I
Jade	22	Urban / smart	Working class	Sometimes	I

**Key:** In the discourse column, H refers to hierarchist, I to individualist, E to egalitarian.

Before commencing the workshops, we conducted an audio recorded wardrobe audit of participants' clothing, held individually in their homes for baseline data collection. This was repeated at the end of the project to explore changes resulting from the interventions. Participants estimated the number of items they possessed before making an accurate count of the number of garments. This was followed with in-depth semi-structured interview questions designed to understand how people felt about the clothing in their wardrobes, the turnover of items in their possession, and how they made their purchases. Further qualitative data was collected in the form of informal focus group discussions that took place within the workshops.

Additionally, questionnaires were completed by participants at the project's start and end to enable some quantitative analysis of its impacts. It is important to point out that all of our participants learned much about processes and practices through which fashion could be slowed, and they showed significant changes in the way they think, feel and act in relation to the slowing of fashion (see [anonymised reference] 2019). In this sense, our participants are expert interviewees, with a degree of knowledge about what worked to help them begin to slow fashion as consumers.

Following an initial analysis of the transcribed interviews, informal focus groups and qualitative responses to the questionnaire, conducted to understand the nature of participants' learning journeys, storylines consistent with the three 'ideal types' of individualist, hierarchist and egalitarian began to emerge with regards to attitudes to slowing fashion. Data from the same sources was then coded for statements which fell into these ideal types. Discourses were mapped to an ideal type using a template devised from studies by Markle (2019) and ANONYMISED FOR PEER REVIEW *et al* (2010) study. This approach to discourse allocation was also applied effectively by ANONYMISED (2010). It yielded a comprehensive snap shot of the ideal type's responses to a given subject.

### **Findings and recommendations**

In our analysis we consider how each individual type 1) perceives their role and responsibilities towards slow fashion, 2) thinks we might increase take-up of slow fashion and 3) how the workshops influenced their behaviour change in relation to slowing fashion. From this, we summarise their proposed mechanisms for a paradigm shift towards slow fashion.

### ***Roles and responsibilities***

In line with the *hierarchist* archetype, there were many comments pertaining to the responsibility of 'everyone'. These participants spoke of collective, rather than the individual, responsibility. This is a form of locus control (Kollmuss and Agyeman, 2002), represented by the sentiment of 'why should I engage in slow fashion if no-one else is? There is no point'. In providing messages for hierarchists, policy-makers and social marketing campaigns should focus on normalising slow fashion narratives to make it at least appear that everyone participates in slow fashion.

The *egalitarian* ideal-type considers their role and responsibility at every stage of clothing production, and not only in their purchasing. This ideal type might be persuaded to engage in slow fashion through policy and marketing initiatives that trace the journey and origin of garments, including emotive

stories of garments and the people and the places involved in their production. Additionally, the responsibility is also felt in terms of preservation of the planet and resources for future generations, as indicated by narratives related to participants’ children or grandchildren and the detriment that fast-fashion will bring to these generations. Providing more information about the legacy and length of time to deal with waste from fast-fashion could have greatest impact on individuals with a more egalitarian worldview.

The *individualist* ideal type was represented by individually-driven narratives, such as ‘you just need to buy the right stuff’. This suggests that individuals who adhere to a more individualistic ideal type most likely do not consider that they themselves have much responsibility to shift towards slow fashion. As Harris et al (2016) state, it could be very hard to convince individualists that sustainability needs to be a higher priority when choosing clothes. Indeed, their first consideration may be ‘do I look good in this?’. This must be considered when devising policy for the *individualist* type. Selling slower fashion to individualists needs to draw on their preferences for quality and efficiency in their belongings. Representative narratives of each ideal types’ perceived responsibility and roles are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2. Ideal types’ narratives regarding their perceived responsibility and role in slow fashion**

	<p><u><b>Hierarchist</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We can’t do it on our own (Rachel)</li> <li>• Before I focused on the life of clothing with me. Now I am much more aware of the clothes (sic) life before it reached me, and after it has left my hands. The production needs to be sustainable, a cycle that has maintained without negative consequences to people and environment, and the item needs to leave as small a footprint as possible in the long-term after I have finished with it (Fern)</li> <li>• Everyone needs to be educated and on board (Jade)</li> </ul>
<p><u><b>Individualist</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> <li>• It’s buying the right stuff (Betty)</li> <li>• It’s the whole production that needs to be more efficient, not just final product purchase (Kate)</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Egalitarian</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have already noticed a difference in how I view clothing in general and clothing in my wardrobe. Thinking of the people that made it, the conditions and production values has now made me see clothes in a new light. The project has also given me the courage and inspiration to tackle repairs and modifications, and has normalised sustainability, rather than feeling isolated for wanting to be more sustainable. The group has been fabulous, very supportive and encouraging (Ella)</li> <li>• I want things to change before my grandchildren grow up (Ruth)</li> </ul>

***Increasing the take-up of slow fashion***

Throughout the course of the workshops, most participants offered potential ideas for increasing the take-up of slow fashion, but they were also explicitly asked for their ideas in the final wardrobe audits and questionnaires. In Table 3 we show representative narratives for each ideal-type in relation to increasing the take-up of slow fashion. Given the nature of our embodied research it was unsurprising that nearly all participants mentioned making and mending. In relation to the making and mending workshops, *hierarchist* narratives stressed the need for group dynamics, well-organised workshops and skilled facilitators to ensure good take-up of opportunities. This draws on the hierarchist need for demonstrated collective action. Similarly, Ciasullo *et al* (2017) noted that some consumers appear to be significantly influenced by the people with whom they maintain relations and associative reference groups. Some go so far as to choose garments they do not like, but which fit with their in group – typical of the hierarchist ideal type.

The *individualist* was evident in comments related to the economic viability of running the workshops, and the potential to draw business opportunities out of them – even to ‘have a group product to sell’ (Betty). Discourse representative of the individualist also was more egocentric, seeking opportunities to upskill or increase their ‘wellbeing’. Wellbeing and skill development could therefore be utilised by social marketing to encourage more individualistic individuals to attend making and mending workshops.

The *egalitarian* was demonstrated through narratives that looked to pass on knowledge to future generations. Egalitarian discourses were represented within conversations about making and repairing spaces as well, but they were of a different focus to the hierarchist and individualist. They were more about being able to enthuse others and get the community involved – emphasising skill sharing rather than self-gain. For example: ‘have an upcycling pop up in town centres to skill share and enthuse people’ (Betty).

In addition to the egalitarian desire to pass on knowledge and educate, both the other ideal types also touched on education as a mechanism, but in nuanced ways. The *hierarchist* called for traditional home economics lessons to be put back into the National Curriculum. One participant who held this view told of an occasion that she watched a teenage girl throw away a barely worn shirt. It had lost a button, but she had no idea how to sew a new one on.

The *individualist* was present in discourses where it was suggested that the rigidity of the National Curriculum was impacting the next generation, as they were losing the skills to think creatively and dynamically to solve problems, especially in terms of being able to develop environmental solutions to waste.

The wardrobe audits featured highly in participants’ conversations on how to increase take up of slow fashion. One participant stated ‘when I got to item 500 in my wardrobe audit, I had to stop – I had too many clothes’ (Ella), others stated the power of the process in creating a mental inventory of what existed in their wardrobes, stating how that helped them to think, feel and act in new ways in relation to their clothing. Wardrobe audits could then provide a key tool in raising awareness and shifting behaviours, if a programme was rolled out nationally. The *individualist* type could be encouraged to complete a wardrobe audit as an inventory process, allowing them to streamline their wardrobes, and potentially gain economically by reducing consumption. However, it is plausible that the individualist might avoid participation in the wardrobe audit, mistrusting it as a ‘spying, and intrusive’ technique from an outside agency. In contrast, the egalitarian would likely see it as a useful tool for identifying that they have enough or to determine what they might ‘need’, facilitating more considered purchases. The *hierarchist* would likely perceive the wardrobe audit in a similar way to the egalitarian, as a mental inventory.

**Table 3. Ideal types’ narratives regarding improving take-up of slow fashion**

	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Hierarchist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council run workshops and making stations (Kate)</li> <li>• I think having a sewing machine and having people that know what they’re doing on sewing machines has been really, really valuable. I’ve got a little sewing machine at home, but every time I’ve kind of got it set up and tried to make something, I’ve got very impatient with myself, but I think being able to sort of come here and... and like talk to everybody, and get inspiration from people has been really, really beneficial I think. Yeah, I’ll miss... miss that opportunity as well, because I think that’s... it’s one thing sort of sitting at home and mending your own stuff, but actually doing it with other people I think is really beneficial, for productivity as well (Rachel)</li> <li>• Home economics needs putting back in the National Curriculum (Ruth)</li> <li>• Everyone needs to do a wardrobe audit (Ella)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Individualist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think there’d still be a lot of take up if you held workshops but charged for them to cover costs (Fern)</li> <li>• We need entrepreneurs and problem solvers (Star)</li> <li>• Engaging in the activity really helps with my well-being. I am also considering how to extend the life of the clothes I have, or how to make garments out of existing ones (Star)</li> <li>• Have a group product to sell (Betty)</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Egalitarian</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have an upcycling pop up in town centres to skill share and enthuse people (Betty)</li> <li>• Talking to my grandchildren about what I have been doing- think that they are interested. Maybe introducing it in primary schools (Ruth)</li> <li>• Personally, I am going to carry on hands-on crafts with children and woodland folk. I am aware that children have ADHD and autism, so would need it all in short chunks (Faye)</li> <li>• We can organise workshops for the whole community (Betty)</li> <li>• A wardrobe audit- enabled me to have a mental inventory, and remember I have enough of everything! (Fern)</li> </ul>

### ***Behaviour change from workshop participation***

Again, all three types were evident in the discourse about the impact of the workshops (Table 4). The *egalitarian* was evident in narratives that suggested the events ‘had brought them together with likeminded individuals, who also deeply valued the environment’. The egalitarian was also evident in emotive recognition of the workshops’ role in increasing awareness of the whole supply chain and process involved in garment production, for example: ‘I can see it’s affected a change in my thought, feelings and actions, and in discussion; and conversation it appears to have affected other participants in the same way’ (Betty).

The *hierarchist* was represented through narratives about the impact on their routines. One participant spoke of the positive impact of changing her weekly routines from going clothes shopping as a social activity on a Saturday to attending the workshops. She insinuated that attending workshops was of equal enjoyment. This is an interesting outcome that again highlights the egalitarian’s and hierarchist’s social needs, which need to be explored and played on through advertising, so that potential participants see the social opportunity of going along with friends or meeting likeminded people. The *individualist* narrative stressed how the workshops had given them the skills to continue at home with the making and mending of clothes; and, as already mentioned previously, improved their ‘wellbeing’.

Additionally, all ideal types were represented by discussions about clothing care, waste and recycling. The *egalitarian* was identified in discussion about caring for clothes, and upcycling where possible, to minimise resource use. The *hierarchist* spoke of traditional ways of servicing clothes – ‘not many people anymore know that you can use vodka to remove bodily odours from garments’. And the individualist was evident in conversations focusing on efficiencies and self-gain achieved by maintaining clothing, for example, “feeling satisfying (sic) utilising nice fabrics again, to make new ones for yourself – especially things you have looked after to the point that they can’t be maintain (sic) anymore” (Betty).

**Table 4. Ideal-types’ narratives regarding how the workshops changed participants’ behaviour**

	<p><u><i>Hierarchist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I could still do with a few more like sessions where there’s people that know what they’re doing (Faye)</li> <li>• Also sort of taking us out of our routine [Saturday clothes shopping with friends] or what we’d normally do, but, yeah, I still want to buy stuff, but making is good too... (Sarah)</li> <li>• The S4S project has engaged a group of people who had a prior interest. The steady paced workshops have allowed the acquisition of new skills, watch how others respond and learn hands on, new tips, principles and ideas (Kate)</li> <li>• Yes, I think as far as this group are concerned there has been a positive outcome with lots of creativity, and a growing understanding and awareness of the clothing industry. For me personally it has made me value my clothes more. I already have more confidence to alter items I no longer wear (Sarah)</li> </ul>
<p><u><i>Individualist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I think there'd still be a lot of take up if you held workshops but charged for them to cover costs (Rachel)</li> <li>• Engaging in the activity really helps with my wellbeing. I am also considering how to extend the life of the clothes I have, or how to make garments out of existing ones (Fern)</li> <li>• The hands-on workshops definitely gave me the confidence and drive to have a go at home, and others the confidence and drive to give me their faulty garments!(Ruth)</li> <li>• Pointing me in the right direction, and giving me the confidence to make it look good really (Jade)</li> </ul>	<p><u><i>Egalitarian</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can see it’s affected a change in my thought, feelings and actions, and in discussion; and conversation it appears to have affected other participants in the same way (Betty)</li> <li>• I think like one of the biggest things that I’ve got out of probably the whole process is like meeting other people from like a community of... who are either interested or kind of active makers, and hearing people’s stories (Star)</li> </ul>

**Discussion: using ideal types to facilitate a paradigm shift**

Our research findings show how the three politically and socially active ideal types frame attitudes towards behaviour change regarding a societal shift towards generating a slower form of fashion. Through these ideal types, our participants highlight how policy can be tailored to different outlooks and attitudes in order to encourage ‘slow’ fashion. Below, we examine possible policy responses which are likely to appeal to each ideal type (Table 5).

As mentioned previously, this paper does not seek to label participants with an ideal type, but rather use their discourses to develop archetypes to which mechanisms and policies could be tailored to.

However, it is worth noting, that the participants' discourses in each of the sections were oftentimes multiple. Two participants only used discourse representative of one ideal type, five participants used discourses representative of two ideal types, and three participants drew on all three ideal types (see Table 1). This finding demonstrates that our approach of framing a snapshot of the debate with Cultural Theory was an appropriate application; and our findings are in line with ANONYMISED (2010) which suggests that ideal types have 'fuzzy boundaries'. People will rarely sit in, and draw on just one ideal type.

**Table 5. Summary- Framing the Archetypal Perception of Slow Fashion take up**

	<p><u><i>Hierarchist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility- It's everyone's-but I am not doing it unless everyone does</li> <li>• Information- everyone is going to try and act in regard to sustainable fashion- and information gathering like a wardrobe audit</li> <li>• Making Spaces-Highly visible (perhaps high-street)</li> <li>• Education- Servicing clothes could resonate with the Hierarchist being a more traditional/nostalgic type</li> <li>• Policy- increased tax on non-sustainable clothing</li> <li>• Commercial opportunities- Hiring clothes</li> <li>• Clothing care- preservation and nostalgia era</li> </ul>
<p><u><i>Individualist</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility- It's not top of my priorities</li> <li>• Information- Directory of sustainable clothing companies</li> <li>• Mechanisms- Industrious and financially rewarding/money saving</li> <li>• Education- Circular economy- efficiency of closing the loop</li> <li>• Policy- reduced Tax on sustainable clothing products</li> <li>• Commercial opportunities- technology advancement (eg. Fabric sorter)</li> <li>• Clothing care- preservation and efficiency</li> </ul>	<p><u><i>Egalitarian</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsibility- It's everyone's- and I am going to act now</li> <li>• Information- The clothing origin and process- - and personal gathering information like a wardrobe audit</li> <li>• Making Spaces--Social and community focused</li> <li>• Education- Saving the planet</li> <li>• Policy- Ban fast fashion</li> <li>• Commercial opportunities- upcycling services</li> <li>• Clothing care- saving the planet</li> </ul>

To open our discussion about ideal types and policy to effect behavioural change, we first reflect on feelings of responsibility associated with the ideal-types. Next, we consider the role of making spaces, information, education and clothing care as ways to generate policy that is effective at encouraging slow fashion across a range of cultural types. Failure to take responsibility is a barrier to pro-environmental behaviour change. Often people may not act/respond, despite having support for environmental action, because they believe it is not their responsibility to help solve environmental problems (Jackson 2005). People may also not act because they distrust national the governments and organisations that aim to tackle environmental issues. Utilising Cultural Theory to explore the different lenses through movement towards slower fashion is viewed throughout society allows us to consider



respective responsibility in a structured way. It is clear from the allocation of different narratives to the ideal types that all policies or mechanisms need to consider that there are different interpretations and opinions in relation to responsibility to transition to slow fashion. The need to prioritise slow fashion is never going to be high for individualists, who think the environment and society are generally tolerant. Therefore, policies and mechanisms need to be more focused on persuasion through the widespread availability of quality and durable fashion, which perhaps uses technological solutions to deal with waste – such as swimwear made from ghost nets, which have been retrieved from the sea. The technology, durability and quality would be the main reason for individualists to purchase such items, rather than their sustainability implications. The hierarchist sees collective responsibility as essential component for it to be worthwhile to engage with slow fashion. Therefore, for hierarchists, this should be the central proponent of any policy or mechanism for encouraging behaviour change towards a slow fashion preference/allegiance. Policy and mechanisms that would most likely influence the behaviour of the egalitarian type needs to focus on their sense of responsibility for imperative and immediate personal action.

### ***Making Spaces***

Providing making spaces was one of the most commonly proposed mechanisms to encourage behaviour change towards slower fashion. Part of the reason for this could be that participants were engaging in workshops making and mending clothes. However, our analysis allows us to reveal how such making spaces could be better tailored to suit each ideal type. For the individualist, workshops that provide a financial, or other self-gain opportunity would be well received. Indeed, there is significant potential for new economies to be created around repair services. However, work will have to be done to explore how these services can be socially marketed to individuals, as most people would still opt to buy a new pair of jeans for £15 pounds than pay £15 to have the zip repaired on an old pair of jeans. This could be an easy sell to the egalitarian type, but not so for the individualist. Nonetheless, there are clear opportunities for people to train and provide a range of making and mending expertise, or even to provide workshops to make one off items. This is especially marketable as a ‘wellbeing’ activity, the ‘hipster’s’ equivalent of a spa day.

Making stations could be marketed and enabled in a number of ways. One model could be for organisations such as WRAP to provide making and mending community kits, so that enthused community members could form self-sustaining groups. The community kits could provide clear instructions for upcycling exercises, sewing machines and a large haberdashery box. To suit the hierarchists, skilled teachers could be added. However, this approach may only appeal to the more environmentally-minded hierarchist. A more appealing approach for the hierarchist might involve creating government funded making spaces/studios on the high street, where people could visibly see

the presence of the stations so normalising and mainstreaming them. There is concern that workshops in making and mending like ours will remain niche as long as dominant fashion norms prevail. This is why it is crucial to spread these practices from small groups of participants working in community halls and art spaces, to a normalised practice on the high street. It is further advocated that high street brands should include stations for mending and modifying clothing in their stores (see Saunders contribution to the Environmental Audit Committee Report, 2019).

Moreover, there is potential for offering initial benefits to individuals who bring a friend to a session, to encourage a group/social dynamic. In line with other research (Mahler 2018; Blanton et al 2008), our study elicits that peer group support is crucial in order to be able to maintain momentum for such activities because people have a need to conform to group norms (Boler and Davis 2018; Feola 2016). Our study also demonstrates that the group environment is not just about teaching a prescribed set of approved normative values and behaviours. Instead it provides a space for participants to create their own affective economies, resonances, and webs of cultural meanings based around the knowledges, conversations and practices that they encountered whilst participating in the project. This is demonstrated in the following quote from a participant:

I have already noticed a difference in how I view clothing in general and clothing in my wardrobe. Thinking of the people that made it, the conditions and production values has now made me see clothes in a new light. The project has also given me the courage and inspiration to tackle repairs and modifications, and has normalised sustainability, rather than feeling isolated for wanting to be more sustainable. The group has been fabulous, very supportive and encouraging (Sarah).

To summarise, individualist tailored making stations would have a commercial, self-improvement aspect to them. The egalitarian could be triggered into behaviours to encourage slow fashion if they were provided (perhaps from a governmental organisation or NGO) with facilities and materials to set up and run their own making and mending groups. The hierarchist could be encouraged to join the egalitarian community groups if they were well-structured, with skilled facilitators. Additionally, government funding to provide highly visible, social and mainstream making stations on the high street would also likely appeal to and attract the hierarchist, and, if the ecological benefits were also portrayed, egalitarian types.

### ***Information***

Unaware of the academic literature on the value-action gap, some participants assumed that the non-engaged public need to be 'educated'. They implied that people not following a particular value-set, lack the correct knowledge, and therefore behaviours. Recent research by anonymised self-

reference (2019) suggested that informing people on ethical issues can often be interpreted as being preachy, or applying pressure, both of which can discourage engagement by alienating people. Van Cappellen et al (2018) and Walsh and Kiviniemi (2014) also note that individuals need to feel positive emotional affects. These findings resonate with our research, which also finds that 'preaching' will likely be disregarded by individuals with a more individualistic view of the environment and society. They will likely view it as emanating from untrusted, over-hyping sources. This lack of trust was also identified by Park and Kim (2016), who found that discrepancies in information provided about fashion brands can lead to distrust of the true 'credentials' of garments. Instead, information targeted at the individualistic ideal-type would be best received if it portrayed the role for technological solutions to potentially pending environmental problems, such as waste recovery opportunities. Therefore, in terms of social marketing, it is key to ensure that consumers can believe they are purchasing truly sustainable, quality products, rather than being greenwashed (Park and Kim, 2016; Yatish and Rahman, 2019).

Information on problems created by fast fashion is not required by the egalitarian ideal-type as they are already signed up to helping address the issues. What they need is more readily available information on tangible and achievable changes they can make themselves. This is, to some degree, already happening through projects such as 'Love Your Clothes' mentioned previously. It is worth noting that the Love Your Clothes campaign (and anything similar) will unlikely trigger behaviour in the individualist type, unless it was to highlight the monetary savings by laundering clothes less frequently and at a lower temperature. In contrast, the hierarchist needs governmental information it can trust. So, advice from Government departments with campaigns or information, again with the clear message that everyone is involved, that sets out clear procedures and availability of infrastructure for recycling, upcycling or maintaining clothes will likely be well received.

Wardrobe audits are also an essential way to consolidate information about personal clothing practices. These were the second most talked about mechanism for changing behaviour among our participants. If a programme, such as 'Love your Clothes' were to do a campaign around wardrobe audits, they could have potential impact on individual consumption. A lasting shift in behaviour could potentially be triggered by an app or something similar that could chart consumers' wardrobe content every 6-months. The app could incorporate recording, profiling and photography tools enabling shoppers to make conscious choices regarding what they really need to buy. Care would need to be taken to a) build trust in participation for the individualist; b) to make it a social activity for the hierarchist; and c) to emphasise resource management for the egalitarian.

## ***Education***

Our participants provided multiple considerations for utilising research and education to induce slow fashion. First, they suggested that the National Curriculum should be revised to include home economics again. This could likely have a huge lasting impact for each ideal cultural theoretic type if the next generation was equipped with the skills to make basic repairs to clothes, or even make simple garments. Individualists could reap economic benefits through repairing and increasing their belongings' longevity. Hierarchists would feel a sense of nostalgia and home-making. Egalitarians would feel equipped with skills allowing them to minimise their environmental footprint. For all ideal types, there are benefits of this sort of education in terms of allowing shared cultural meanings, knowledges and practices to emerge, as shown in Katie's comment:

I think as far as this group are concerned there has been a positive outcome with lots of creativity, and a growing understanding and awareness of the clothing industry. For me personally it has made me value my clothes more. I already have more confidence to alter items I no longer wear.

## ***Clothing care***

One of our project's significant findings is the recognition of fabric as a precious textile, which can be serviced and cared for with potentiality to become something new, by someone with the right combination of creativity and skills. We argue that unless quality and longevity form part fashion identity, it is likely that consumers will continue to seek to pay the lowest price to achieve their intended identity statement. As demand for quality clothing increases in line with growing demand for slower fashion, there needs to be wider societal take up of clothing care and maintenance. This whole system change in how garments are perceived must include acceptance that clothes – like many other consumer goods – require intermittent servicing. Brands such as Patagonia and Finisterre are now providing servicing and repair kits, with 'investment' type items, like winter coats or boots. This mind-set shift could again be potentially triggered in individualist types, by framing it as 'preserving your investment'. For the egalitarian the environmental benefits need to be stressed. For the hierarchist, the incentive is in 'behaving as everyone else is'. Additionally, campaigns to love your clothes by washing less and at a lower temperature will likely be better received if different nuanced messages are put out. These messages are: for the individualist 'economic gain'; for the hierarchist because 'government tells you to', and for the egalitarian to 'protect the earth's resources'.

## ***Conclusion***

At the beginning of this paper, we signalled the importance of addressing the value-action gap where by people hold particular ethical beliefs and attitudes that do not translate into consistent actions

(Blake 1999; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Lucas et al 2008; Peattie and Peattie 2009; Hurth 2010). Identifying the triggers for closing the value-action gap in people's shopping habits is vital in creating a systemic shift away from fast fashion and, as a result, manufacturers would also have to consider their production and product offer to customers.

Our study makes two key contributions to knowledge. Firstly, it uses Cultural Theory as an analytical lens through which we can learn lessons that can help to close this value-action gap, and secondly, it provides practical individual or bottom-up oriented corporate and policy solutions for encouraging a societal shift towards slow fashion. Cultural Theory shows that bottom-up solutions such as making stations, social marketing, wardrobe audits and education are crucial to enabling people to think critically about clothing, and engage with ideas to begin to slow fashion. Our recommendations would work alongside and a number of industry-led governmental and top down policies. Our novel use of Cultural Theory to the problem of fast fashion has provided suggestions for bottom-up solutions which are tailored for maximum resonance with a broad range of people. It was clear for the huge majority of our participants that social interaction was as important in shaping their views and behaviours as the learning of skills. This should be mimicked in any attempt to increase the life of our work, or to upscale our work. Finding ways of expanding our project work from a small niche, to a mass market is crucial.

Moreover, Cultural Theory has provided us with an insightful and effective heuristic device to explore consumer level policy drivers for sustainable fashion. It has provided a lens to explore multifaceted policy options for triggering lasting behaviour change. This paper will be of value not only to academics, but also policy makers and industry, as it offers an innovative way of exploring policy options in terms of influencing consumer-level processes that can encourage a slowing of fashion, never forgetting the end goal of slow fashion itself.

Our findings have incredible depth and richness, but the key lessons from this study will have more credence with policy-makers (who prefer 'hard' evidence with quality over quantity) if it could be replicated with a larger sample size. We also recommend that our suggestions be test-driven in the field because there is huge potential to roll out the findings beyond the niche of participants that responded to adverts to take part in the workshops. This is necessary to engage with the 'unengaged'. We hope that our work will motivate others to use Cultural Theory in application to other environmental issues that require a more multifarious consideration of anticipated and real behaviours within society. Our findings suggest that there is potential to extend our work in this direction, too: by assessing the efficacy of Cultural Theory as a tool to devise structured mechanisms to trigger pro-environmental behaviour change.

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