

# Energy Consumption as Social Practice: "Practicing Energy"

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# Project & background

- Study relationships between energy user “practices” & hypothetical renewable microgrid
- How do practices intersect with renewable output in the absence of storage, with grid supporting technology?
- What opportunities are there to intervene in user practices?
- What is the state of the art in Europe vs U.S. where practice theory is concerned?

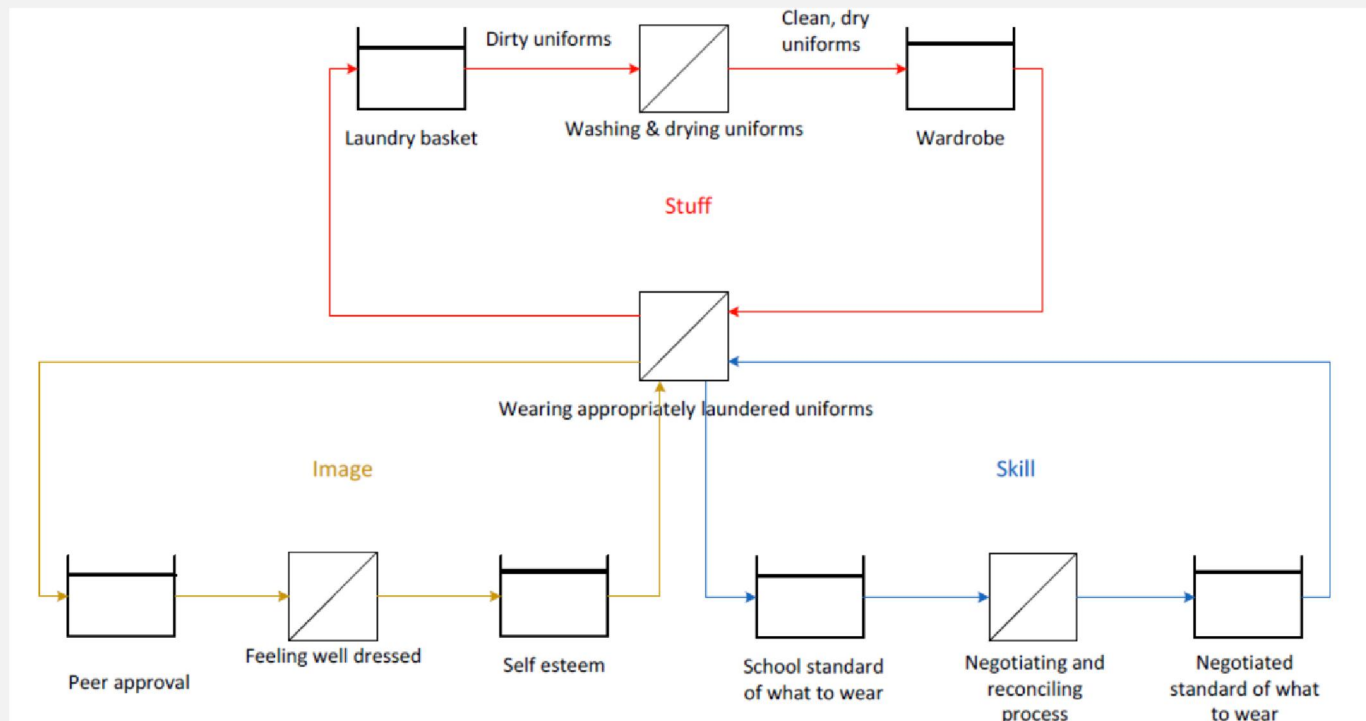
# Social Practice Theory

- Conventional approach is “ABC,” from Elizabeth Shove: “attitude, behavior, choice”--rationality
- Energy uses are not (wholly) dependent upon individual (rational) behaviors
- Socially-normative “appropriate” actions and behaviors in relation to energy-producing and energy-using technologies and systems
- For example, laundry

# Practicing Energy

## Doing Laundry:

Choosing clothes for purposes & contexts involves skills & images



***"changing the school culture would impact on lots of performances of laundry practice and so potentially has a very large impact, whereas changing the washing machine would only alter the laundry practice of the household in which that appliance was kept."***

HIGGINSON, S., MCKENNA, E. and THOMSON, M., 2014. Can practice make perfect (models)? Incorporating social practice theory into quantitative energy demand models. IN: Behave 2014 - Paradigm Shift: From Energy Efficiency to Energy Reduction through Social Change, 3rd Behave Energy Conference, Oxford, UK, 3-4 September 2014, 17 pp., from p. 13

# Research site

- Cohousing site of 16 residential units, ~ 60 people with high-income, similar demographics
- Interview owners about various activities: e.g., traveling, washing, heating, computing, cooking
- Identify social practices as normal or appropriate behaviors, tracing sources and emergence of practices
- Ultimately, monitor electricity demand and appliance operation to relate to practices and behaviors

# Results, so far

- Social practices not the same as patterned behaviors
- Most interviewees identified specific practices w/o full awareness of origins or sources
- Experience, seminal events, parental instruction contribute to adoption of specific practices
- Occupants moving to hybrids & EVs due to availability of “free” solar electricity