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Redress: children's dress in Ireland in the 1960s versus 2000s

RACHEL MORRIS

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I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

**Signed: Rachel Morris**

**Programme / department: Fashion Design**

**Date: 31/01/2022**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1. THE SOCIOCULTURAL HISTORY OF 1960s IRELAND	4
CHAPTER 2. 1960s DRESS CASE STUDIES	9
CHAPTER 3. 2000s DRESS CASE STUDIES	16
CONCLUSION	23
APPENDICES	25
BIBLIOGRAPHY	30

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig.1 Morris, R. (2021). *Family photograph 1962*. [image].

Fig.2 Morris, R. (2021). *God loves everything He made. But he loves some things more than others 1970*. [image].

Fig.3 Morris, R. (2021). *1960's lace childrenswear dress*. [image].

Fig.4 Morris, R. (2021). *Family photograph Loughmore Co.Tipperary 1965*. [image].

Fig.5 Morris, R. (2021). *Fur trimmed petticoat 1960s*. [image].

Fig.6 Morris, R. (2021). *A Lovelywear Garentment*. [image].

Fig.7 Morris, R. (2021). *Mended pocket on petticoat*. [image].

Fig.8 Morris, R. (2021). *Red corduroy smocked dress 2001*. [image].

Fig.9 Morris, R. (2021). *Hand stitch details: red corduroy smocked dress 2001*. [image].

Fig.10 Morris, R. (2021). *Glennons 40th wedding anniversary 2001*. [image].

Fig.11 Morris, R. (2021). *Strawberry intarsia cardigan 2000s*. [image].

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout this research essay I will be discussing the changing production and value for children's dress in Ireland in the 1960s versus 2000s by means of material and cultural study. By looking at a selection of my mother's childhood dress from the 1960s in contrast with my own (2000s) I will thoroughly investigate by means of observation and analysis the change in production of children's dress in relation to social and cultural change in Ireland. By combining all my knowledge from the observation and reflection stages I aim to create a hypothesis which will enrich the study of dress throughout this period. My hypothesis is that children's dress in both 1960s and 2000s Ireland are culturally similar.

Material objects matter because they are complex, symbolic bundles of social, cultural and individual meanings, fused onto something we can touch, see and own. That very quality is the reason that social values can so quickly penetrate into and evaporate out of common objects (Martin, 1993 in Mida and Kim, 2015, p.26).

Barbara Burman discusses how home dressmaking has been a developing experience in the lives of many women across the world in her text "The Culture of Sewing: Gender, Consumption and Home Dressmaking" (1999). As mass produced garments increasingly grow we forget the women from middle and working class backgrounds throughout history, a time when dressmaking was a crucial element to women's lives. The skills home dressmakers acquired has considerably diminished throughout the 21st century. "The making of clothes at home has a history which enfolds a rich spectrum of cultural, social and economic practices" (Burman, 1999, p.1).

By looking at Barbara Burman's text "The Culture of Sewing: Gender, Consumption and Home Dressmaking" (1999), Turney's "The Culture of Knitting (2009) and Mida and Kim's "The Dress Detective" (2015) I will be investigating children's dress, looking at home dressmaking methods in contrast with mass produced dress throughout my own childhood.

“Within the context of dress history in particular, a closer look at home dressmaking offers an opportunity to develop our understanding of some of the important variables present in the age of mass production and mass consumption” (Burman, 1999, p.4).

I will also be discussing the sociocultural history of Ireland throughout the 1960s in comparison to the 2000s. In Tony Farnar’s text ‘Privileged Lives: A social history of middle-class Ireland 1882-1989’ (2010), he talks about five generations of Ireland’s middle classes through the use of documents, publications and photographs. Chapters 13 to 16 discuss various narratives of the middle-class in Ireland during 1963, by focusing on these chapters I will be looking at gender and class differences throughout that time period. “The Irish economy was thriving at the beginning of 1963. The stock exchange was up 60 percent since 1960. Manufacturing output was up 30 percent or more on the levels of 1958.” (Farnar, 2010, p.191)

By relating back to Farnar’s text alongside Catriona Clear’s ‘Women's Voices in Ireland: Women's Magazines in the 1950s and 60s’ (2015) I will be discussing women and sociocultural change in 1960s Ireland in relation to education, employment and parenthood. Clear, 2015 states that many women who reared families in early- to mid-twentieth century Ireland and elsewhere have strong hardship narratives that do not admit to any luxuries.

Alongside referring back to academic texts and newspaper articles I will also be interviewing a family member in relation to the above themes discussed, delving into the sociocultural differences occurring throughout 1960s Ireland and the 2000s. Although the Irish economy began to flourish in the 1960s ‘positive changes in women’s position in society did not come easily...the ideology of the family and the dominant view of a woman’s rightful place had changed little” (Beale, 1986, p.10). In contrast to looking at Farnar’s text I will be referring back to various academic journals and articles discussing 2000s Ireland. “The ‘Irish model’

became celebrated for its successes in creating very rapid growth with virtually full employment during the 2000s” (Auer and Daly in Dellepiane and Hardiman, 2010, p.3).



## CHAPTER 1. THE SOCIOCULTURAL HISTORY OF 1960s IRELAND

Although the Irish economy began to flourish in the 1960s not all of the country saw these improvements. For the purpose of this research essay I began interviewing my mother Mary on her experiences growing up in a small rural town in Co. Tipperary. Discussing themes such as childhood, standards of living, education and religion has provided a greater insight into the ways in which Ireland has changed throughout the decades. It has also highlighted the stark differences between 1960s and 2000s Ireland. These will be discussed throughout this chapter. Below is a photograph of my mother as an infant with her grandparents Bridget and Daniel at their home in Co. Tipperary.



Fig.1 Morris, R. (2021). *Family photograph 1962*. [image].

In the 1960s home ownership was a lot more achievable in Ireland than what it was in the 00s. “Tenant purchase did not properly take off until repayments were reduced further in 1951, but by the mid-1960s 80 per cent of rural social housing was owner-occupied” (Central Statistics Office in Norris, 2013) Even though home ownership was at a similar level in both decades, household facilities were drastically different. “The 1961 Census revealed that at least half of all houses outside the urban areas simply had no lavatory facilities whatsoever, indoors or out” (Farmor, 2010, p.243). Although home ownership was achievable, that did

not necessarily mean that homes were equipped with appliances for everyday living. Talking about her experience, my mother discusses the living conditions she experienced in the 60s. Living in a farmhouse built in the late 19th century consisting of a kitchen, sitting room, parlour room and three bedrooms “two of us used to sleep in the loft with Daddy and Mammy, John slept with granny in her bedroom when grandfather died, that was in one of the box rooms, in the other box room was Pat and Donal” (Morris, 2021). Throughout the 1960s electric appliances were at a minimum as “there were only 66 phones per 1000 habitants across the country” (Farrar, 2010, p.199). Having had electricity in her home my mother discusses how it was only used to light both the house and also the outdoor houses where the livestock were kept, the only electrical good they had was a radio. “It would have been the 70s when we had a TV. It would have been in the sitting room area, we had one radio. The phone we used to use was in the village near the school, that was the only way of contacting people” (Morris, 2021). In comparison to the late 1950s “the ESB pumped out 50 percent more electricity in 1963” (Farrar, 2010, p.191).

In contrast to the 1960s “by 2011 the average number of persons per room nationally was 0.51 persons, with little difference between urban and rural areas” (Jordan, 2014, p.11). Overcrowding throughout households was often a difficulty throughout Ireland in the 1960s. As outlined in the Housing Act, 1966 overcrowding refers to “any two persons, being persons of ten years of age or more of opposite sexes and not being persons living together as husband and wife, must sleep in the same room or where the free air space in any room used as a sleeping apartment, for any person is less than four hundred cubic feet” (Jordan, 2014, p.13). Overcrowding occurred as it was very common for Irish women to give birth multiple times. This was a reflection of the Catholic church's influence on family values in Ireland during that period, large families being “particularly pronounced in farming and rural communities, where fertility remained above the national average” (Daly, 2016, p.9).

In Ireland as the economy began to expand so did the opportunities for employment. As half of the population were women, unless unmarried these women did not have the chance to work with the exceptions of their homes. “The Commission on Emigration reported that in this country married women do not usually take up regular gainful employment outside the home” (Farrar, 2010, p.191). With this many job vacancies throughout Ireland were unable to be filled. As women of age began to get married there was no other choice for them other than to leave the workplace and “those mothers who might be tempted to work were discouraged by moral persuasion” (Farrar, 2010, p.192). Employed mothers began to find that they could not carry out their familial duties as opposed to unemployed mothers who could. “The grown man or woman who speaks with love, gratitude and reverence of his mother is rarely found to be a child of a working mother” (Mac Namara as cited in Farrar, 2010, p.192).

My mother reminisces on her childhood and comments on the fact that the man of the house would go to work whereas the wife would stay at home to take care of the children. “Daddy was out all day working in the railway CIE and mammy would be at home, Mammy didn't work outside the home she only worked on the farm and in the house” (Morris, 2021).

Although married women were discouraged to work in the 1960s, “there was still only a tiny fraction of married women working: 5.2 per cent, compared to 20.6 per cent in England and Wales and 20 per cent in Finland” (Ferriter, 2005, p.569). In contrast to the 1960s, the 2000s brought its struggles too as job opportunities began to rise and filling these vacancies was difficult. Unlike the 2000s unmarried women were discouraged to work. The 1990s showed new trends for the approaching decade as “about two thirds of Irish married women between the ages of 25-34 were in paid employment” (O'Connor as cited in Gray, 2003, p.185).

In the 1960s education and the Catholic Church were equally as important. My mother describes her own experiences in school in a positive light although reflecting on this now

there were some dark areas too. The Catholic Church had and still has a great influence on education in Ireland today. My mother describes her experience as follows; “everyone in my class was catholic, everyone in the school was catholic too including the teachers...the parish priest would come in to visit us maybe once a month” (Morris, 2021). In Ireland throughout that period you would have been shamed or frowned upon for not complying with societal norms as “a mere 0.2 per cent of the population refused to declare a religion in the 1961 Census” (Farrar, 2010, p.247). Religious rituals were carried out daily in primary schools throughout Ireland both in the 1960s and also the 2000s as well as religious ceremonies such as Baptism, First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Below is an image from my mother’s religion book from 1970 in which it asks the pupil to ‘draw a circle around the one God loves the most’ and my mother has indicated the baby that has been baptised. As seen the other three are indicated to show that God loves them less.

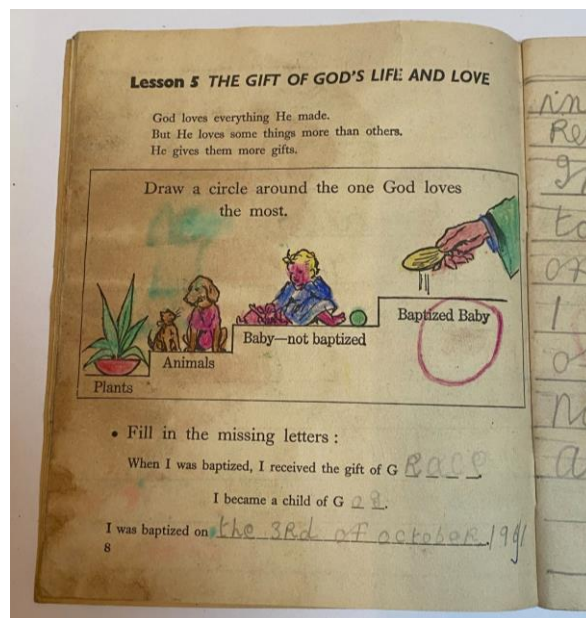


Fig.2 Morris, R. (2021). *God loves everything He made. But he loves some things more than others 1970.* [image].

For every class we had a religion book, they just got us to fill it in, we’d have a prayer book too, our father the hail Mary we were taught all the prayers in school, we just

learned them we didn't really have much of a choice back then. When the clock struck 12 every day we used to have to say the Angelus when we got older. (Morris, 2021)

As religion played a dominant role in education in Ireland throughout the 1960s, attitudes towards the Catholic Church changed in the 2000s. Many Irish Catholics felt a sense of loyalty to church and still accept its key beliefs therefore still identify as Roman Catholic although “an increasing number of Irish Catholics are becoming spiritually and morally detached from the institutional Church” (Inglis as cited in Ganiel, 2016, p.43). Although an increasing number of people are appearing to be detached from Irish Catholic beliefs, the 1961 census showed 94% of the population in Ireland were Roman Catholic compared to 88% in 2002 (Central Statistics Office, 2007). Having a six per cent decrease in Roman Catholics in Ireland throughout those 41 years leaves a question of just how strong an influence the Catholic Church had on Ireland and still has on it today.

To conclude, this chapter looked at the sociocultural differences in Ireland between the 1960s and 2000s in relation to childhood, standards of living, education and religion. By looking at Tony Farnar’s text ‘Privileged Lives: A social history of middle-class Ireland 1882-1989’ (2010) alongside various academic journals and reports I discovered similarities and differences between each of the decades. By conducting an interview with my mother Mary, this played a large role in understanding the 1960s from someone with first hand experiences.

## CHAPTER 2. 1960s DRESS CASE STUDIES

By discussing sociocultural differences between Ireland in the 1960s versus the 2000s, I will be focusing on 1960s children's dress in Ireland. "It was not until the 1960s that shops selling inexpensive mass-produced garments appeared in Ireland and even then they were confined to the main cities and it took time for their impact to reach rural Ireland" (O'Kelly, 2005, p.85). By investigating two case studies during that decade, I will discuss 1960s dress generally in Ireland alongside the two garments belonging to my mother. Looking at the change in production of children's dress in Ireland during that period, I spoke with my mother as she reminisced on clothing during her childhood years.

In the 1960s as the majority of household income was spent on the day today running of the house, there was little disposable income left for the purchasing of clothing items. Due to this many children's wear items were created within the household by mostly women, "Mammy and Granny used to knit us all our own jumpers" (Morris, 2021). As having a wardrobe consisting of everyday clothes and also Sunday dress for attending mass, my mother's wardrobe was kept to a minimum. Anything that was essential was purchased.

Very few clothes were bought, maybe our trousers for school and shoes...Granny would have made a skirt for me for school, it depended. They'd go to the shoe shop to buy shoes and sandals for the summer, boots for the winter time because we'd be walking to school. They were essential items for us (Morris, 2021).

The first case study considers my mother's childrenswear dress from the 1960s. Pictured below is a lace dress that is pink in colour with different variations of fabrics and details used. "This dress was bought in a childrenswear shop in Thurles from what I remember" (Morris, 2021).



Fig.3 Morris, R. (2021). 1960's lace childrenswear dress. [image].

Firstly I will begin by observing the dress, “capturing the information from the dress artifact” (Mida and Kim, 2015, p.27). This mid-length dress has a bodice of pink lace fabric with a high round neckline measuring 28.5cm. The front bodice consists of a single piece of fabric with two darts measuring 5cm, two cotton flowers are placed at the bottom of the dart, 9cm from either side seam. The sleeves are created using two variations of finely woven nylon mesh, the lighter fabric is placed underneath giving the sleeves a structure. Around the neckline these same fabrics are used, unlike dresses created today this garment does not contain any facings, a method used to prolong the garments longevity. The back bodice is made up of two pieces of material, on the right four button holes and on the left four pink plastic buttons. One belt-like loop sits inside the waistband measuring 4cm. The pink satin ribbon around the waist measures 3cm in width and 39cm in length.

The paper nylon skirt attached to the bodice, pink again in colour is pleated from the waist down, each pleat measuring differently. The over skirt contains 4 panels of lace from the

waist down; the first measuring 8cm, second 4cm, third 10cm and lastly 5cm. Underneath the second and fourth panel of the skirt is the pink satin ribbon used also around the waist.

The second stage of analysis moves from the object itself to the relationship between the object and the perceiver. It involves the empathetic linking of the material (actual) or represented world of the object with the perceiver's world of existence and experience (Pearce, 1994, p.136). By means of reflection I will discuss this piece of clothing engaging in an emotional and sensory engagement with the artifact in order to help identify cultural and personal biases (Prown, 1980 in Mida and Kim, 2015, p.29). This childhood dress depicts bow motifs across all of the lace pattern creating a feminine look relatable to childrenswear in the 1960s. Girls dress consisted of dresses, skirts, and floral patterns in contrast to boys dress, gender was defined by the way in which the parent dressed them.

The weight and material of this fabric is light and no lining is present suggesting the dress to be low in value, due to the fact that having a lining would be more expensive to produce. The pink satin trims suggest the maker is adding valuable details to what would have been a simple style of dress. In contrast to this the lace pink fabric suggests this was to be worn on formal occasions. Having little to no appearance of any wear this suggests it was only worn a handful of times. The texture of this garment is scratchy which would have been unpleasant and may have been itchy and uncomfortable for a child to experience therefore it was likely to have only been worn for short periods of time. The movement of the garment creates a noise similar to rustling of leaves, as this garment was kept in the attic for many years it is stale in smell. This dress lacks a branded label suggesting that it was a handmade piece of clothing. All seams are overlocked and sewn with what looks like both a domestic sewing machine and overlocker. "I used to wear this dress when people would visit the house, my grandmother's brother would visit from England sometimes, or if any of us had a birthday in the house, I wore it during the summer too going to mass on a Sunday" (Morris, 2021).





Fig.4 Morris, R. (2021). *Family photograph Loughmore Co.Tipperary 1965*. [image].

In the 1960s the value and importance of clothing was much greater than it is today. “The economy has frequently been stated as a motivation for home sewing... approximately 20 percent of all women’s and females children’s clothes were made at home, and that women sewed an average of four to six garments per year” (Sew and Reap, 1958 in Bruman, 1999,p.99). Above is a photograph of my mother’s family, in the middle ground she's pictured wearing the pink lace dress pictured previously with a cardigan over it.

“Fundamental to any dress historical analysis to be drawn out of photographs has to be identification of the sitter’s place in society. Photos are only of use to the dress historian if this can be at least attempted” (Taylor, 2002, p.170). This photograph was taken in the parlour room of my mothers childhood home, “I don't know why it was taken, but I presume we had friends visiting who took the picture” (Morris, 2021). There was a large correlation between social status and wealth, my mother recalls, as luxury dress was either worn on

Sundays for mass or if any family or friends visited the home. “Any other days we wore anything that was available to us like Mammy's jumpers she'd knitted” (Morris, 2021).

Secondly I will investigate another piece of dress from my mothers childhood, a red wool petticoat as pictured below. “I would have been about 4 or 5 years of age when I wore this, I remember my grandmother used to sew elastic onto our gloves during the winter and then attach them to the coat just so we wouldn't lose them. I mainly wore this to mass too or for any sort of special occasion during the winter months" (Morris, 2021). This coat shows aspects of wear especially on the lining inside as well as a pocket mended on the outside of the garment. Labelled twice on the inside, firstly by the brand name itself “A Botany Weaving Mill, Fabric; made in the Republic of Ireland " and secondly “A Lovelywear Garment " with an x motif surrounding the label. “This coat was a present from my great uncle” (Morris, 2021).



Fig.5 Morris, R. (2021). *Fur trimmed petticoat 1960s*. [image].

This long-length coat worn by my mother in c.1966, created using a herringbone woven red wool, is constructed using ten patterns of material; two fronts, two backs joined at the centre back and two, two part sleeves, two cuffs and a two part collar. The style of this coat has a raglan sleeve created to increase movement for the arms and shoulders. This garment is 47cm in length with 3 buttons next to the centre front and button holes on opposite sides, there is a popper clasp just underneath the collar to the right hand side. The front pockets are rounded and placed 13cm above the hem, there is one button on each pocket as a design feature, each pocket measures 11.5 x 11.5cm. The cuffs measuring 6.5cm in length also have one button on each not to be used as a functional piece. Each sleeve measures 39cm and is created using two panels of fabric to create the raglan sleeve. The top collar measuring 29cm in length is deep brown shearling fabric. The under collar appears to have added stitching, possibly used in order to repair the coat at some point in time.



Fig.6 Morris, R. (2021). *A Lovelywear Garmment*. [image].

The lining inside is made using a beige nylon fabric, created using seven patterns. A front and back facing can be seen just inside the coat giving it prolonged wear. The coat hanging loop can be seen to be mended using a cross stitch method. Attached to the lining of the cuff, the elastic used to attach my mothers gloves to the coat can be seen cut off. Each pocket is mended on the closest side to the centre front using a whip stitch, on the left hand side using red thread and on the right black thread. It is seen to have been mended multiple times.



Fig.7 Morris, R. (2021). *Mended pocket on petticoat*. [image].

To conclude, this chapter has provided an introduction to the themes and texts that will be used throughout this research project. These themes include family and childhood within 1960's Ireland. In doing this, we can see that dress was an integral part of life for my mother and her family as it was an important sign of their dedication to their faith. This was seen in the special garments worn to Mass every Sunday.

### CHAPTER 3. 2000s DRESS CASE STUDIES

By means of material and cultural study I will be looking at two other case studies of children's dress from 2000s Ireland in contrast with those from the 1960s. In 1990 the clothing manufacturing business was one of two dominant sectors in Ireland "22,000 people were employed...in 1989 when export sales reached £600m" (RTÉ Archives, 1990). As the 2000s approached, mass production of clothing paved the way for the importation of cheaper clothing therefore home dressmaking started to diminish and so did clothing manufacturing in Ireland. "In 2005 a report commissioned by the Irish Clothing and Textile Alliance (ICATA) documented the significant decrease in both output and employment in the textile and clothing sector. Between 1990 and 2005 production had decreased by 75 %" (Irish Fashion: Textile & Clothing - Second Skin | National Design & Craft Gallery, Kilkenny, Ireland, n.d.). As my mother describes her own experiences, the accessibility to cheaper clothing became readily available in the 2000s. "I didn't think it was necessary to make any of your clothes in the 2000s, Rachel, I was living in Dublin then and Pennys was just up the road. The clothes would have been cheaper to buy than to make then" (Morris, 2021).

Firstly I will analyse a garment from 2000s children's wear in Ireland. By observing my own childhood dress by means of "measurement and recording of the physical dimensions of the object, an expansive description of the materials used in creating it, and an analysis of the decorative properties" (Prown, 1982 in Mida and Kim, 2015, p.28). Pictured below is my red corduroy smocked dress from 2001, although it is not definite I presume this garment was created to be worn by a female. The fabrics used in making of this dress are 100% cotton, although they are different qualities. All of the fabrics used are natural in composition. The majority of this childrenswear garment is red in colour with trims of yellow. There is pattern throughout the trims on the dress and also embroidery. There are three labels attached to the garment, two of which are branded and the other states the composition and care of the

garment itself. “Garments...are distinctly different in material form and character from other objects in material culture, in that objects of dress bear some relationship to the body that wore them” (Mida and Kim, 2015, p.27).



Fig.8 Morris, R. (2021). *Red corduroy smocked dress 2001*. [image].

This mid length dress consists of fifteen pattern pieces. Two for the front, back, sleeves and cuffs of the garment. The scalloped collar is created by using a two piece pattern and the hem a three piece one is used. Two pieces are used for belting the garment and the other, a loop for hanging it. The front of the dress is created by using a hand smocking technique alongside the use of embroidery giving the smocked fabric extra strength. “Direct smocking is a hand-stitching technique that gathers fabric into small shapes as the threads are pulled tight on the back of the fabric. The stitches are sometimes visible to help organize the folds in direct smocking, too” (Irwin, 2015, p.175).The smocking on the upper section of the dress creates pleating and fullness for the wearer. The length of the centre front on the dress is 42cm, the centre back measures 47cm. The sleeves are created using a single piece pattern which is

sewn into the shoulders of the dress using a pleating technique, measuring 30cm the cuff measuring 2. This dress has a button stand in which 6 buttons are placed 5.5cm apart from each other from the neckline. The hand smocking on the front of the garment is 7cm in length and 13cm in width. The neckline of this garment measures 31.5cm inclusive of the button stand. Each belt pattern measures 55cm. This garment is fully lined in contrast to the 1960s pink lace dress, suggesting that in the 2000s more material was readily available for the maker. The labels on this garment read 'Chicaloo', 'hand smocked' and also the care instructions for the item.

After observing and analysing the dress, "the stage of reflection is a time of thoughtful contemplation that is separate and distinct from the observation phase" (Mida and Kim, 2015, p.29). This garment is a timeless piece, as although from the 2000s it may have been worn in the 1960s also. "Every little girl should at least have one smocked dress" (Muckenhirn, 1960). By means of reflection I will discuss the smocked dress pictured above. "The reflective phase includes twenty questions, and is divided into three components including: Sensory Reactions; Emotional Reactions; and Contextual Material" (Mida and Kim, 2015, p.63). By holding the garment it is soft in texture due to the corduroy. The material is of substantial weight and has a butter-like feel to it. The hem of the garment has a contrasting material, although this dress is 100 percent cotton the hem is scratchy in contrast to the dress itself. The label is also scratchy in texture which might have made it uncomfortable for the wearer. Having a stale scent this dress was boxed in my attic for a number of years. The shape and construction of this garment drew me in, as it is hand-smocked there are stitch marks inside the front panels of the dress. The maker has even left knots where they have begun and ended the embroidery on the smocking (pictured below). Created using the smocking technique around the bust meant it was comfortable for the wearer as the material flowed from the bust down. Personally having worn this garment as a child in the 2000s

although unable to have remembered wearing this dress by means of photographic analysis I will discuss the garment throughout a stage called interpretation. “Interpretation is the process by which a researcher links together all the evidence gathered during the other phases of research and offers an analysis as to its meaning” (Mida and Kim, 2015, p.76).



Fig.9 Morris, R. (2021). *Hand stitch details: red corduroy smocked dress 2001*. [image].

In contrast to Mida and Kim's method of studying dress I will also use Taylor's approach in the “Study of Dress History” (2002). “Clothing provides a remarkable picture of the daily lives, beliefs, expectations, and hopes of those who lived in the past” (Baumgarten, 2002 in Mida and Kim, 2015, p.76). The interpretation stage is the most creative and imaginative process when it comes to studying dress history. Below is a photograph of myself wearing the garment. Without having the means to examine the physical dress, photographic evidence of this garment alone would have been difficult in relation to looking at the construction of the



dress and also it's labelling. "This dress was bought in a childrenswear boutique shop in Lucan where the Super Quinn used to be in the shopping centre, Dad and I bought it for you for your uncle Pat's wedding" (Morris, 2021). Similarly to my mothers pink lace dress from the 1960s, this garment also was purchased in order to be worn for special occasions. "The majority of your clothes were both in either Pennys or Dunnes, only for special occasions would I have gone to a boutique to buy something extra special for you for the day" (Morris, 2021).



Fig.10 Morris, R. (2021). *Glennons 40th wedding anniversary 2001*. [image].

"The meaning of the photograph is understood to be inseparably tied to social consciousness, culture and custom" (Braden in Taylor, 2002, p.150). Studying dress history by the use of photography is separate from object based research in that we need to consider "why was the image taken, by whom, under what conditions, for what audience and for what use?" (Taylor, 2002, p.163) This image was taken on an old Fujifilm camera, "we were going to the Glennons 40th wedding anniversary that day" (Morris, 2021). Again we see the recurring theme of all the garments being kept as they were special occasion wear only. We also see the

idea that if you were visiting family members or friends the use of better clothing was used to create an image for the perceiver about what type of family you may have been. “The display of one's social standing through dress has become more subtle, eclectic, and non-prescriptive. The key to assessment in the early 2000s is often in the details. Higher status is indicated by a perfectly cut and fitted garment, the use of natural and expensive fabrics, and brand-name wear” (Medvedev, n.d.).



Fig.11 Morris, R. (2021). *Strawberry intarsia cardigan 2000s*. [image].

Lastly, by analysing another garment created in the 2000s I will discuss the culture of knitting. By doing so I will look at my last case study which is a store bought childrenswear cardigan from the 2000s (pictured above). “All throughout my childhood Mammy and Granny would always knit all our jumpers and cardigans, I don't think I ever saw her bring a bought piece of knitwear into the house” (Morris, 2021). With the introduction of new machinery and cheaply imported garments in Ireland the art of knitting began to diminish. “Knitting has historically been a domestic practice; this means that knitting has been as largely undertaken in the home and is therefore both familial and familiar” (Turney, 2009,

p.5). The cardigan above, bought from Pennys, consists of only five pattern pieces and is overlapped to reduce costs when assembling the garment together. The intarsia print of checkerboard and strawberries is created using an electronic double bed knitting machine. In contrast to the 2000s, the majority of knitwear garments were created using 100 percent wool. Unlike the 1960s, knitwear became cheaply available due to advances in machinery and the use of acrylic yarn. “In pennys you could buy cardigans like that for just a couple of pounds, I never saw any need to go out and buy the wool myself to knit your clothes; it just wouldn't have been worth my time or my money” (Morris, 2021). Knitted garments like the above were cheaper to mass produce in the 2000s than to have been made by hand. “Knitting beyond two basic stitches is difficult, skilled and takes time to master, from making a simple scarf to a wearable garment requires a huge conceptual and practical leap” (Turney, 2009, p.219).

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion to this research essay I aimed to investigate the study of dress history in relation to the changing production and value for children's dress in Ireland in the 1960s vs 2000s. By delving into the sociocultural history of Ireland from both decades it created a broader understanding of what it was like growing up in Ireland in the 1960s versus 2000s. By focusing on main texts such as Farmar's 'Privileged Lives: A social history of middle-class Ireland 1882-1989' (2010) and Ferriter's "The Transformation Of Ireland 1900-2000" (2005) this created a strong starting point when discussing the ways in which Irish lives have changed. "The reality of Irish society in the past twenty- five years has been transformed by individual incremental change, as reflected in family size, women's education, women's participation in paid employment etc." (O'Connor, 1998 in Ferriter, 2005, p.725). To further my knowledge of the sociocultural history in Ireland in the 1960s, I interviewed my mother Mary on her experiences both positive and negative throughout that period. We discussed the following themes; family, education, employment, parenthood, and religion. In doing this, I aimed to prove my hypothesis that children's dress in both 1960s and 2000s Ireland are culturally similar. I believe that this was proved in conversation with my Mother as she explained the importance of dress for special occasions. This was something that I also came across during my own childhood. In contrast to discussing the 1960s with my mother I looked at various texts, academic journals and articles to develop my understanding further about the 2000s.

By looking at Mida and Kim's "The Dress Detective" (1999), Taylor's "The Study of Dress History" (2002) and also Turney's "The Culture of Knitting" (2009) I discussed two cases from the 1960s and also the 2000s. Using Mida and Kims approach to the study of dress history I discussed garments by means of observation, reflection and interpretation. "Because intellectuals live by word, many scholars tend to ignore the important role that objects can

play in the creation of knowledge. Even fashion historians spend little or no time examining actual garments, preferring to rely exclusively on written sources and visual representations” (Steele, 1998 in Mida and Kim, 1999, pp.12,13). By using this approach to the study of dress history I gained knowledge about the garments fabric and its construction. Discussing the object, photograph, and also the memories attached to both provided a deeper insight into 1960s childrenswear dress in contrast to the 2000s. I discovered that although each decade's garments had differences in construction and fabrics there were similarities also. The idea of special occasion garments presented themselves throughout and the idea of these garments only being worn to religious events such as Sunday mass or weddings, or for visiting friends and family. My mother pictured in the parlour room in her pink lace dress and also when I was going to the Glennons 40th wedding anniversary proved my hypothesis that both decades were culturally similar. There's a correlation between dress and class throughout both decades and the ways in which the people around us perceive us in relation to the garments that we wear. By looking at Taylor's approach to the study of dress history I also discussed a garment in terms of photographic analysis in contrast to Mida and Kim's object based approach. In studying each garment with respect to the objects and photographs along with my mothers memories of her childhood, I was surprised to find that each garment was difficult to investigate. Could it be that the missing piece of the investigation was not on the surface, but that we are not living in the same moment of time. A moment in time where all the information we would have needed would have surrounded every aspect of our lives, in what we see, what we listen to and what we read.

## APPENDICES

### Respondent Interview

**Interviewer:** When and where were you born?

**Respondent:** I was born in St Annes nursing home in Thurles Tipperary. Donal, one of my brothers, was born at home in 1962. Pat in St Annes nursing home in 1963 and so was John in 1966.

**Interviewer:** What were the living conditions like when you were growing up there?

**Respondent:** There was 7 of us living in the house there was 8 but grandfather died, so when I was born there was 8 of us, Daddy and Mammy in one room, grandparents in another room, two of us used to sleep in the loft with Daddy and Mammy, John slept with granny in her bedroom when grandfather died, that was in one of the box rooms, in the other box room was Pat and Donal, when I got older I moved down into the parlour room, the parlour room wasn't always a bedroom it was a sitting room we used to light the fire in there to heat the house.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember having a car whilst growing up in the 60s?

**Respondent:** No, we had a little pony and trap for visiting our relatives, we didn't use it that much really we used to walk to mass and school. I was a bit older when I went to shops with Mammy and Daddy, when we first got the car maybe in the 70s.

**Interviewer:** What was it like walking to school?

**Respondent:** Mammy used to put John on the back of the bike because he was the youngest. We used to walk across fields as a shortcut, through a style, a concrete one we used to jump in over it, there was animals and everything, cows and calves.

**Interviewer:** How far was school from your house?

**Respondent:** The school was two miles from our house, it was Loughmore National School.

**Interviewer:** You mention being a bit older when you went to the shops, did you have much to buy there or was most of your food home grown?

**Respondent:** We grew most of our own food, we had an acre of crops, we had potatoes, turnip, fodder beet for animals, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, onions we produced that for the table, we hadn't to buy any vegetables, we had to buy very little meat because we used to have pigs and chickens and just before christmas Mammy would be rearing turkeys

**Interviewer:** Did you slaughter the animals yourselves and how were they preserved for eating?

**Respondent:** When the pigs were reared wed get a man in to kill the pig, the pig meat would be cured in a barrel that's how it would be preserved, maybe not until the 70s we got a small fridge, we produced our own milk, wed buy butter, sugar, flour, and tea from the shop.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you remember about food in the house?

**Respondent:** They'd make homemade soup using the stock from the chicken, granny normally would have killed the chickens for us for dinner, we'd each have our own eggs from the hens so we didn't have to buy eggs either.

**Interviewer:** Did you have any fruit growing there at the time?

**Respondent:** We had apple trees growing, cooking apples and eating apples growing in our orchard, we had a plum tree too in one of the fields where the cows were, we didn't have oranges or pear or anything like that.

**Interviewer:** Did granny ever work outside the home from what you can remember?

**Respondent:** No, Daddy was out all day working in the railway CIE and mammy would be at home, Mammy didn't work outside the home she only worked on the farm and in the house. Mammy and granny did all the cooking and baking, baking bread and apple tarts.

**Interviewer:** Was there a lot of work to be done on the farm and did granny ever help?

**Respondent:** We had a horse and plough for sewing our crops in the field, Daddy used to plough the fields himself on the weekend when he was off work, Gran baked the brown bread Rachel she looked after washing the clothes the cleaning of the house the cooking, picking the potatoes yes and milking the cows.

**Interviewer:** What do you think was the main income for the house at the time?

**Respondent:** Most likely Daddy's income from CIE but also Loughmore creamery, they used to sell the milk to, they used to milk the cows and put the milk into the turns, it would have to be at a certain temperature to sent to the creamery"

**Interviewer:** Was there much money spent on utilities in the house like heating etc?

**Respondent:** No, we had an aga cooker for heating the house, we had no central heating, there was an open fire in the parlour room, it wasn't until the 1980s we got central heating. We had our own firewood for the fire but we used to go to the bog to buy turf, we didn't have our own bog at home.

**Interviewer:** What about electricity?

**Respondent:** We had electricity while I was a child, it was just used for lighting the house and giving light to the animals in the outdoor houses for milking the cows and feeding the calves.

**Interviewer:** Did you ever have a tv/radio/phone whilst growing up?

**Respondent:** It would have been the 70s when we had a tv it would have been in the sitting room area, we had one radio. The radio would have been the only sort of electric good in the house. The phone we used to use was in the village near the school, that was the only way of contacting people otherwise we would just normally call to their house if we needed to chat.

**Interviewer:** What about washing clothes? Did you have a washing machine back then?

**Respondent:** Clothes would be washed by hand. It was really only into the mid 70s when we got a washing machine, we'd put the clothes out on a washing line and let them blow in the



wind to dry. Even our water system was created through a pump which we used for washing, making tea, cooking, and even washing ourselves. We were only able to bathe once a week on a Saturday evening.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember much about primary school then? Was there a major emphasis on religion?

**Respondent:** Yeah, everyone in my class was catholic, everyone in the school was catholic too including the teachers, there was just a principal and two teachers, one teacher might have two classes even three. The parish priest would come in to visit us maybe once a month, we only went to mass on a sunday with our parents, we fasted for an hour beforehand.

**Interviewer:** Were there any religious routines during that time?

**Respondent:** On a Good Friday we'd always have fish and for that matter every Friday we used to have fish for dinner, they'd buy it at the local fish shop in Templemore.

**Interviewer:** The religion book you showed me did you always have one of those each year?

**Respondent:** For every class we had a religion book, they just got us to fill it in, we'd have a prayer book too, our father the hail mary we were taught all the prayers in school, we just learned them we didn't really have much of a choice back then. When the clock struck 12 everyday we used to have to say the angelus when we got older.

**Interviewer:** What subjects were taught in primary school? Would you have done painting in art like I did in primary school?

**Respondent:** Irish, English, Maths a lot of history, Irish history really, we used to do some bits of geography, in art we didn't do that much painting really it was mostly knitting and nail boards with threads. We used to do cross stitching too.

**Interviewer:** Did the boys in the class learn the same things the girls did?

**Respondent:** We all learned the same subject work, the boys would do needle work with the girls they'd learn to knit, we used to make nail pictures with them too.

**Interviewer:** Was there central heating in school or was it the same as at home?

**Respondent:** There was an open fire in the school, the teachers would light up the fire to keep us warm. If we were doing any sort of reading work they'd bring us around the fire.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember what you had to eat in school for lunch?

**Respondent:** Our lunch for school might have been a slice of bread with some jam on it.

**Interviewer:** And after school what would you normally have for dinner?

**Respondent:** Our main diet would have been bacon, cabbage potatoes during the week and a chicken on a Sunday and Mammy would have done a dessert then on Sundays for after mass and we might have some ice cream with that as well.

**Interviewer:** Do you remember much about the clothes you used to wear?

**Respondent:** We were able to wear our own clothes going to school, mammy and granny used to knit us all our own jumpers, if Donals shoes and trousers for example were too small they were always handed down to the smaller child in the house. We used to have old leather school bags with buckles on them too.

**Interviewer:** Were many items of clothes bought for you when growing up?

**Respondent:** Very few clothes were bought, maybe our trousers for school and shoes or skirt for school or whatever, or granny would have made a skirt for me for school it depended. They'd go to the shoe shop to buy shoes and sandals for the summer, boots for the winter time because we'd be walking to school. They were essential items for us.

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