

Everyday life as an evolving context of information behaviour

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Received 9 March 2022
Revised 16 May 2022
4 July 2022
Accepted 10 July 2022

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to elaborate the nature of everyday life as a context of information behaviour by examining how researchers have approached this issue. To this end, particular attention is directed to how they have characterized everyday life as a constellation of work-related and non-work constituents.

Design/methodology/approach – Evolutionary concept analysis was conducted by focussing on 40 studies on the topic. It is examined how the conceptualizations of everyday life and the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents have been evolved since the 1990s. The analysis is based on the comparison of the similarities and differences between the characterizations of the above constituents.

Findings – Early conceptualizations of everyday life as a context of information behaviour were largely based on Savolainen's model for everyday life information seeking. Later studies have proposed a more holistic approach to everyday life in times when the boundaries between work-related and free-time activities have become blurred, due to the growing use of networked information technologies and telecommuting. Since the late 1990s, the understanding about the nature of everyday life as a context of information behaviour has become more nuanced; thanks to a more detailed identification of the overlaps of work-related and non-work constituents.

Research limitations/implications – As the study is based on a sample of studies examining the relationships of work-related and non-work constituents, the findings cannot be generalized to concern the contextual nature of everyday life as a whole.

Originality/value – The study pioneers by offering an in-depth analysis of the nature of everyday life as a context of information behaviour.

Keywords Context, Everyday, Everyday life, Information behaviour, Information practices, Information seeking

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Since the late 1990s, the concept of *everyday life information seeking* (ELIS) coined by Savolainen (1995) has established its position in studies on information behaviour and information practices (Hartel, 2019). The ELIS study offered a novel approach to issues that were previously examined in terms of *citizen information needs and seeking* (Warner *et al.*, 1973), or *non-work information needs and seeking* (Chen and Herson, 1982). ELIS research focusses on information seeking occurring in non-work contexts such as consumption, health and leisure, that is, domains that are not directly related to work task performance. While advocating the significance of ELIS research, Savolainen (1995) emphasized that it should not be interpreted as an attempt to create a false dichotomy between work-related and non-work information seeking. This is because there are cases in which non-work and work-related information seeking overlap, thus complementing each other.



Nevertheless, in recent years, there have been critical voices arguing that research on everyday information behaviour needs rethinking because the ELIS model implies a division between work-related and non-work information behaviour (Dalmer, 2019; McKenzie, 2020; Ocepek, 2018). The critique is mainly based on the argument that with the growing use of networked and mobile technologies, the boundaries between the work-related and non-work domains have become blurred in today's information environments. Consequently, the key qualifier of ELIS, that is, *everyday life* should be interpreted more holistically. The ELIS framework was developed almost three decades ago; what was referred to as "everyday life" at that time may no longer be fully descriptive of the features of daily life today. Everyday life is no longer associated with non-work phenomena only because work-related and free time activities have become enmeshed, due to the growing significance of remote work from home, for example.

The present study was inspired by the insightful critiques referred to above. An attempt will be made to elaborate the issue further by examining the nature of everyday life as a contextual qualifier of information behaviour. The main goal of the study is to find out how researchers have characterized everyday life as an evolving context of information behaviour and how they have conceptualized the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life. To attain this goal, evolutionary concept analysis was conducted by scrutinizing a sample of 40 investigations on the above topics. The findings offer a novel contribution to information behaviour research by deepening our understanding about how information needs, seeking, use and sharing, as well as information work and personal information management may occur in overlapping contexts. The findings also reflect how ELIS research may be renewed so that it can realistically examine information behaviour across work-related and non-work contexts.

The article is structured as follows. First, to create background, the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life are reviewed, followed by the specification of the research questions (RQs), research material and methodology. Thereafter, the research findings will be communicated. The last chapters discuss the research findings and reflect their significance.

Background

Everyday life as a constellation of work-related and non-work phenomena

As a context of information behaviour, everyday life is subject to multiple meanings. In information behaviour research, context is traditionally conceptualized in terms of spatial and temporal factors indicating where and when information seeking, use and sharing occur (Agarwal, 2018, pp. 9–18; Huvila, 2019). Contexts of information behaviour can be approached as separate entities, but often it is more interesting to examine them as interrelated sets of factors (Huvila, 2019). From this perspective, contexts of information behaviour, for instance, work task performance and leisure activities can be approached as partially overlapping phenomena. They may occur in certain places, for example, in the office or at home, or in certain times, for example, during working hours or free time.

There is no generally agreed view about what is meant by everyday life as a context of human activities. The terminology is further complicated in that researchers often use the term everyday life interchangeably with *daily life*, *everyday*, *everydayness* and *quotidian* (Ghisleni, 2017). Overall, phenomena related to everyday life tend to be "nebulous, pervasive and ambiguous: obvious to the point of elusiveness" (Scott, 2009, p. 2). This is reflected in the wide variety of characterizations of everyday life presented in diverse fields such as sociology, philosophy, history and cultural studies (Ghisleni, 2017; Højholt and Schraube, 2015). Everyday life tends to incorporate multiple and partially opposite qualities: it can be routinized, habitual and relatively static but also fluid and ambivalent in nature (Gardiner, 2000, p. 6). As a multifaceted phenomenon, everyday life is an inexhaustible research topic.

Given that the present study is primarily interested in the ways in which everyday life as a context of information seeking is constituted by work-related and non-work phenomena, the review of the features of everyday life presented below will be concentrated on the relationship between these phenomena.

One of the pioneers and most influential researchers of everyday life phenomena is Henri Lefebvre (1901–1999) – a French philosopher and sociologist. The first volume of his book *Critique de la vie quotidienne* was published in 1947; the English edition *The critique of everyday life* appeared in 1991. Lefebvre (1991) approached everyday life as a social phenomenon which undergoes changes in history. In pre-modern societies, everyday life was not conceived of as separate from other, more specialized activities, but was fully integrated into a relatively undifferentiated totality of human practices. Productive labour was organically connected to daily life, following the rhythms and cycles of the natural world. There was no separate place or time for work as distinct from everyday sociality. With the transition to modernity, labour was increasingly fragmented and specialized; family life and leisure were detached from work. Along with these developments, everyday life emerged as something residual, “what is left over” after all distinct, superior, specialized and structured activities have been singled out for analysis (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 97).

Nevertheless, despite its “residual” nature, Lefebvre (1991) held that everyday life should be approached as a totality. Everyday life is profoundly related to all human activities and encompasses them with all their differences and their conflicts. Although people may feel that work and leisure are separate spheres of everyday life, they are permeable and the ways they interact tend to undergo changes over time (Burkitt, 2004, p. 213). More recently, Højholt and Schraube (2015, p. 2) supported this interpretation by proposing that everyday life comprises all human activities situated in and across a multiplicity of contexts, for example, home, work, educational institutions, shopping venues, recreational arenas and digital spaces.

Diverse human activities and their everyday contexts may be further classified into broader categories. According to Stebbins (2012, p. 47), on the activity level, a great proportion of everyday life can be conceptualized as being experienced in three main domains: work, leisure and non-work obligations. Of these, *work* can be generally understood as performance of useful activity, for example, making things and performing services, done as all or part of sustaining life, as a livelihood. Stebbins (2012, p. 48) defined the second component of everyday life, that is, *leisure*, as “uncoerced, contextually framed activity engaged in during free time, which people want to do and, using their abilities and resources, actually do in either a satisfying or a fulfilling way (or both)”. Finally, *non-work obligations* consist of disagreeable requirements capable of shrinking the leisure space (Stebbins, 2012, pp. 52–53). More specifically, this domain includes unpaid labour, for example, childcare at home and routine grocery shopping. Although the three domains of everyday life are distinctive entities, they should not be seen as mutually antagonistic spheres. It is possible that certain work-related activities are so attractive for people that they even seek them beyond paid employment (Stebbins, 2012, p. 55). It is an extension of the job into the sphere of leisure. On the other hand, leisure may appear in the work domain. Stebbins (2012, p. 56) named this phenomenon as *interstitial leisure*. It may take place, for example, when during work time, someone initiates discussion on a non-work-related current event. The cell phone and the Internet in particular have facilitated interstitial leisure, thus blurring the boundaries of work and leisure in everyday life.

Further support for the above assumptions can be obtained from work life studies (Broadbent, 2016; Gardner *et al.*, 2021; Wajcman *et al.*, 2010). With the growing use of the networked and mobile technologies, the picture of everyday life as a context of human activities has changed particularly regarding the relationships between work and leisure. In many fields of work life, the use of new technologies resulted in the gradual collapse of the geographical separation of the workplace and home, thus blurring the division of the day into working hours and free time. Due to these developments, everyday life is no longer what it used to be in the

pre-Internet era. [Sundin et al. \(2013\)](#) demonstrated that the growing role of the new technologies is manifested in the *search-ification* of everyday life and the *mundane-ification* of information searching. The integration of Google searches in daily practices is perhaps the best example of these developments. Along with them, it is often impossible to distinguish between information searching serving the ends of leisure and work task performance ([Haider and Sundin, 2019](#), p. 4). Thus, for many, the use of information and communication technologies ties work and non-work activities together, resulting in the enmeshing of these spheres of everyday life.

Research questions

The review of prior studies suggested that as a context of human activities, everyday life is a multifaceted phenomenon that undergoes changes over time. Pioneering researchers, most notably [Lefevbre \(1991\)](#) demonstrated that for the constitution of everyday life, the relationships between work-related and non-work spheres are particularly significant. Later studies have refined the picture of these relationships by examining how the work and non-work domains overlap both spatially and temporally (e.g. [Stebbins, 2012](#)). In this regard, particular attention has been directed to how the growing use of the networked technologies blur the boundaries between work-related and non-work spheres ([Broadbent, 2016](#); [Haider and Sundin, 2019](#)).

Drawing on the above findings, the present study elaborates further the picture of everyday life as a context of information behaviour. To achieve this, the investigation seeks answers to the following RQs:

- RQ1. In which ways have researchers characterized everyday life as a context of information behaviour?
- RQ2. How have they conceptualized the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life?

To strengthen the focus of the study, investigations examining everyday life as a context of other domains of information-related activities were excluded. These domains include, for example, information literacy (e.g. [Lloyd and Wilkinson, 2016](#); [Martzoukou and Abdi, 2017](#)). It is evident that the examination of everyday life as a context of these phenomena requires a separate study.

Research material and methodology

To answer the above questions, literature searches were made to identify relevant research material. Ten major databases were searched: Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Digital Library, Academic Search Ultimate (Ebsco), Google Scholar, Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA), Sage Journals Online, Science Direct, Scopus, Springer Link, Taylor & Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library. The searches were directed to the abstracts of peer reviewed studies by searching everyday OR everyday life AND information behaviour. The searches were continued by replacing the term information behaviour by information practices – a closely related term ([Savolainen, 2008](#)). The searches were complemented by using the constituents of information behaviour as search terms. They included the following: information need, information seeking, information use, information sharing, information work and personal information management. The searches identified extensively the literature relevant to the research topic. For example, searching *everyday life* AND *information seeking* retrieved 160 items from the LISA database. As many databases retrieved the same items, it became evident that the research material is saturated; additional searches from other databases would not have resulted in the identification of new material directly relevant to the topic.

The preliminary examination of the retrieved items resulted in the identification of 61 potentially relevant investigations. A more detailed reading of the material indicated that of them, 21 items are less relevant for the analysis because they primarily describe the findings

of prior investigations, for example, depicting Savolainen's (1995) ELIS model. Therefore, these items were excluded from the final sample which includes 40 investigations published within the period of 1973–2021. These studies are listed in Appendix. The years of publication of the items included in the final sample are specified in Figure 1.

Figure 1 indicates that until the end of the 1990s, studies examining everyday life as a context of information behaviour were quite rare. Within the period of 1970–1989, only three investigations were published about this topic. The research interest in this issue increased considerably in the 2010s; the majority of the studies, that is, 21 items included in the sample were published within the period of 2010–2019.

The 40 investigations included in the final sample were chosen for analysis using two criteria so that an individual study included in the final sample meets at least one of the following requirements. First, a study explicitly characterizes the features of everyday life as a context of information behaviour (e.g. Hektor, 2001; Savolainen, 1995). Second, an investigation analyses the relationships between work-related and non-work elements of everyday life (e.g. Dankasa, 2016; McKenzie, 2020).

The research material was examined by means of *evolutionary concept analysis* (Rodgers, 2000). This method was chosen because it allows for understanding the historical nature of a concept and how it changes over time. The analysis includes six major steps:

- (1) Identify the concept of interest and associated expressions.
- (2) Identify and select an appropriate setting and sample for data collection.
- (3) Collect data relevant to identify the attributes of the concept, and the contextual basis of the concept.
- (4) Analyse data regarding the above characteristics of the concept.
- (5) Identify an exemplar of the concept.
- (6) Identify implications for further development of the concept.

In the present study, the concept of interest is everyday life (Step 1). More specifically, as reviewed in the literature review above, everyday life was conceptualized as a contextually sensitive multifaceted phenomenon. Drawing on the study by Lefebvre (1991) in particular,

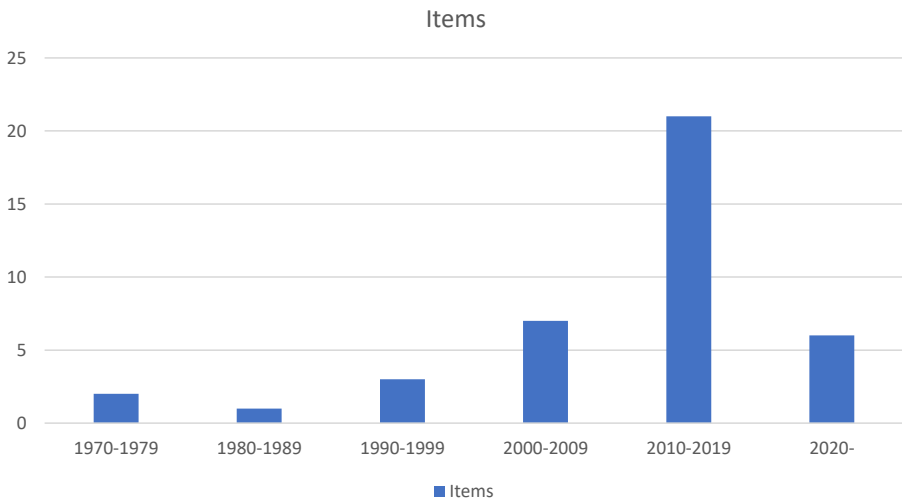


Figure 1.
The publication years
of the studies included
in the sample ($n = 40$)

it was assumed that in this regard, the relationships between work-related and non-work spheres are particularly significant for the constitution of everyday life. The data collection is described above (Step 2). As to Step 3, the terminology proposed by Rodgers (2000) was slightly modified in that the present study prefers the term constituent, not attribute while examining the characteristics of everyday life. At the next phase (Step 4), the relationships between the constituents of everyday life were analysed. First, the research material containing altogether 40 items was read carefully to obtain an overview. Thereafter, the research material was coded by the present author by identifying text portions characterizing (1) everyday life as a context of information behaviour and (2) the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life. To strengthen the reliability of the coding, only explicit expressions indicative of the above issues were coded. According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 65), check coding the same data is useful for the lone researcher, provided that code-re-code consistencies are at least 90%. Following this idea, check coding was repeated several times, and the initial coding was carefully refined so that there were no anomalies. After the coding, the analysis was continued by identifying similarities and differences from the characterizations of everyday life, as well as the relationships between their work-related and non-work constituents presented by various researchers. For example, it was compared how the characterizations presented by Dalmer (2019, p. 715) and Savolainen (1995, p. 266) differ regarding the relationships between work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life. The scrutiny of this kind also served the fifth step of the analysis, that is, identifying exemplars of the concept. Finally, implications for further analysis of everyday life as a context of information seeking were identified (Step 6).

Findings

Approaches to everyday life as a context of information behaviour

Studies on everyday information behaviour date back to the 1970s. In early investigations on citizen information needs and seeking, however, the nature of everyday life as a context of information seeking was not examined (e.g. Warner *et al.*, 1973). Nevertheless, the term *everyday* was sometimes referred to. For example, Dervin (1976, pp. 25–28) presented a taxonomy of everyday information needs, qualified as needs experienced by average citizens. Early studies on everyday information behaviour also include investigations examining the impoverished information worlds of people living in the margin of society, for example, janitors and retired women (Chatman, 1991, 1992). In her investigations, too, no explicit attention was devoted to the construct of everyday life because the focus was placed on the normative factors affecting the formation of people's information worlds, more specifically, the ways in which they prefer or avoid information sources of certain types.

The introduction of the model for ELIS proposed by Savolainen (1995) marked a turning point in the study of information seeking occurring in mundane contexts. The development of this model was motivated by the need to strengthen the conceptual basis of the research field previously known as studies on citizen information needs and seeking or *non-work information needs and seeking* (Dervin, 1976; Chen and Herson, 1982). There was a need for the renewal of the research tradition because the former approach was mainly associated with people's rights and obligations towards social institutions as voters, for example. The term non-work information needs and seeking was seen as problematic because it leads to think that information needs and seeking occurring outside work-related contexts would be less significant in daily life. However, as Savolainen (1995, p. 266) argued, information seeking not directly serving the ends of work task performance is important in its own right; it is not merely a residual of work-related information seeking.

To this end, a positive label for the new research domain, that is, everyday life information seeking was proposed (Savolainen, 1995, p. 266). On the other hand, the meaning of everyday life

as a context of information seeking was not explicated in his study. Instead, the phenomena characteristic of everyday life was examined in terms of *way of life*. Its nature was made understandable by drawing on the construct of *habitus* – a socially and culturally determined system of thinking, perception and evaluation, internalized by the individual (Bourdieu, 1984, pp. 170–175). From this perspective, way of life was conceptualized in terms of “order of things,” which is based on habitus-based choices made by individuals (Savolainen, 1995, pp. 261–262). “Things” stand for various activities taking place in the daily life, including not only job but also necessary reproductive tasks such as household care and voluntary activities (hobbies); “order” refers to preferences given to these activities. Because in most cases order of things is a relatively well-established constellation of work and non-work activities taking place during a day or a week, one easily takes this constellation as the most natural or normal way to organize his or her everyday life. The construct of way of life thus defined suggests that the most central attributes of everyday life are familiar, ordinary and routine and they qualify the structural conditions of action, for example, the recurrent rhythms of work and leisure hours. Although Savolainen (1995) did not ground his view on the findings of everyday life research, the above characterizations come close to the ideas presented by Lefebvre (1991).

Later on, Savolainen (2008) revised the ELIS framework by preferring the term *everyday information practices*. In this study, the attribute of *everyday* was generally qualified as regular, repeated and familiar in nature (Savolainen, 2008, p. 2). On the hand, it was acknowledged that characterizations such as these may not go beyond a common-sense understanding of mundane phenomena and that everyday life can incorporate paradoxical features. Even though everyday life is an un-escapable context of human action, this context is often seen as something trivial that is not worth talking about in more detail.

The lack of a more detailed characterization of everyday life is due to that distinct from the ELIS framework; Savolainen’s (2008) new approach draws on social phenomenological ideas proposed by Schutz (1962). As a consequence, the concept of way of life was replaced by the construct of *life-world*. Savolainen (2008) drew on the study by Schutz and Luckmann’s (1973, p. 3) characterization of life-world as “that province of reality which the normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense”. Life-world was also understood as “the province of reality in which man continuously participates in ways which are at once inevitable and patterned” and “the province of practice, of action” (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973, p. 3). Savolainen (2008) justified his preference for the concept of life-world by the developments of reflexive modernization suggesting that in the conceptualization of everyday life, constructs such as habitus proposed by Bourdieu (1984) are no longer sufficient to explain how individuals make sense of their world. Although socially and culturally determined classification systems internalized by people affect the ways in which people seek information, it is more important to conceptualize how individuals perceive their everyday life-world and how they make sense of it by engaging in diverse everyday projects, both work-related and non-work such as leisure hobbies.

Since the late 1990s, the ELIS model proposed by Savolainen (1995) has been used in numerous studies examining information seeking in mundane contexts (e.g. Agosto and Hughes-Hassell, 2006a, b; Greyson, 2017; Naveed *et al.*, 2021; Yan and Schroeder, 2021). Common to these investigations is that the nature of the qualifier of everyday life is not reflected; the construct is taken for granted. Similarly, in McKenzie’s (2003) pioneering study of information seeking in accounts of everyday life information seeking, no attempt was made to explicate the meaning of everyday life as a context of information practices.

All in all, the construct of everyday life has attracted only occasional interest in the field of information behaviour research. Hektor (2001) offers an early example of this interest. According to him, everyday and everyday life refer to the distinct type of context of activities. However, everyday should not be taken to mean specifically every single day or workday; rather it is intended to mean every private aspect of an individual, whenever and wherever

the individual is; in the household or at the workplace, for example (Hektor, 2001, p. 12). Neither should everyday life be understood to cover only such activities that are habitual, routine and non-dramatic because this approach limits the opportunity to study novelties and changes in the daily contexts where an individual lives.

The dynamic aspect is emphasized in the construct of the *practice of everyday life* proposed by Certeau (1984). Distinct from Lefebvre (1991), he approached everyday life as a site with opportunities for spontaneity and the potential for diverse outcomes (Kalekin-Fishman, 2013, p. 717). De Certeau highlighted the aesthetic pleasure to be derived from the beauty of the unforeseen actions that make up much of daily living. While the capitalist classes worked out institutionalized, definitive “strategies” of domination, the subjectively driven everyday actions of the working class should, to his mind, be read as resourceful “tactics”, that is, sparks of effective resistance. Rothbauer (2010) made use of de Certeau’s concepts of spatial tactics to theorize the role of the public library in the conceptualizing of reading and information seeking practices of library users and readers.

However, it lasted until 2018 before a call for a more systematic and deeply-going analysis of everyday life as a context of information behaviour was presented. In a programmatic article titled *Bringing out the everyday in everyday information behaviour* Ocepek (2018) identified several weaknesses in prior conceptualizations of ELIS research and proposed ways in which they could be avoided. To give background for this project, Ocepek reviewed the characterizations of everyday life presented by Lefebvre (1991), Certeau (1984) and Schutz and Luckmann (1973). Although Ocepek’s review did not reveal anything really new about the nature of everyday life, her study is important as an initiator of discussion. Ocepek emphasized the significance of scrutinizing the features of mundane life, as well as people’s taken-for-granted-attitudes that as contextual factors affect information behaviour. Inspired by Lefebvre (1991), Ocepek (2018, p. 399) called for research on “the banal and quotidian parts of life”, along with more traditional information behaviour domains, such as work and serious leisure so that information behaviours are approached as “embodied in the totality of lived experience”. From this perspective, it would be particularly important to develop holistic research approaches, thus avoiding the examination of the diverse spheres of everyday life as separate entities.

Conceptualizing the work/non-work relationships

Early approaches. Ocepek’s (2018) call for holistic research on everyday information behaviour is particularly relevant for the elaboration of the relationships between work-related and non-work spheres of everyday life. A pioneering contribution to this issue was offered by Savolainen (1995). While introducing the ELIS model, he stressed that information seeking may occur in both work-related and non-work contexts (Savolainen, 1995, pp. 266–267). This means that the conceptualization of ELIS phenomena should not be interpreted as an attempt to create a dichotomy between processes of job-related and “other” information seeking because job-related information seeking and ELIS can complement each other. For example, seeking information about language courses may serve both professional ends and leisure-time hobbies.

The above interpretation has been taken as a part of departure in several studies drawing on the ELIS model. In an investigation based on the interviews with 25 undergraduates, Given (2002) demonstrated that information needs and seeking occurring in learning-related and free time contexts can interweave in complex ways. Once enrolled, the students’ information needs primarily dealt with their academic work, for example, locating course readings. However, the students also sought information for everyday concerns that arose out of their engagement with the university, and frequently turned to academic information sources to solve these needs (Given, 2002, pp. 22–28). Although the academic environment

clearly influenced the interviewees' ELIS, their everyday experiences also informed their academic work. For example, one of the participants volunteered in a nursing home, which allowed her to explore gerontology as a potential career; she regularly consulted nurses, doctors and residents about this goal. Everyday experiences sparked new information needs and also provided information solutions for academic work. Similarly, the academic context initiated new ELIS needs dealing with childcare, for example. Overall, the undergraduates' experiences reinforced Savolainen's (1995, pp. 266–267) call to avoid the false dichotomy between the work-related and non-work contexts in favour of an examination of the complexities of individuals' information-seeking behaviours.

Later studies have supported the above interpretations. Similar to Given (2002), however, these investigations primarily describe examples of contextual overlaps, without delving deeper into their nature. For instance, Sin (2015) examined the demographic differences in international students' information source uses and everyday information seeking. To this end, 15 pre-defined information needed topics were identified. The topics included, for example, financial issues, housing, health and wellness, transportation and shopping. Moreover, as an information needing topic dealing with the performance of learning tasks, the need for academic information was identified. As the nature of academic information was not specified in more detail, surveys such as these tend to remain silent about how work or learning related information needs overlap with information needs experienced in non-work contexts. This is evident in more recent investigations, too. In a study focussing on ELIS patterns of resident female university students in Pakistan, Rafiq *et al.* (2021) found that students' daily information needs centred on academic institutions, safety, self-help, entertainment, shopping places and transportation. Again, due to the descriptive research approach, the listing of information needing topics left it open how information needs of various types are related to each other and how information seeking triggered by such needs overlap in work or learning related and non-work contexts.

A more nuanced picture of the overlaps of work-related and non-work contexts is presented by Dankasa (2016). In a study conducted in Nigeria, he mapped the everyday information needs of Catholic clergy. Dankasa (2016, pp. 560–562) found that the overlaps between work-related and non-work information needs were experienced most often when attempts were made to meet *essential* information needs. Needs of this type are essential to the clergymen because they have to acquire information on the teachings of the Church and sermons, for example. In contrast, *occasional* needs mostly dealing with individual hobbies or personal issues such as shopping were not overlapping with work-related needs (Dankasa, 2016, p. 563). This suggests that the nature of information needs occurring in an overlapping context mainly depends on the work tasks performed by the individual. In contrast, it is less likely that information needs arising in non-work contexts give rise to such overlaps in work-related information seeking.

The rise of holistic research approaches. Savolainen's (1995) view on the nature of overlapping contexts has also been questioned, giving rise to novel interpretations. One of the earliest critiques towards the ELIS approach was presented by Yu (2012). She argued that the division between studies focussing on work-related information seeking and investigations concentrating on ELIS represents more a "scholars' construction than reality", and in at least some circumstances, this construction "hinders, rather than facilitates the understanding of human information behaviour" (Yu, 2012, p. 4). Examples of such circumstances may be found by examining information seeking amongst certain groups of people, e.g. self-employed shopkeepers, farmers and students. For these people, work-related and non-work activities are often undistinguishable. On the other hand, as the empirical findings of Given (2002) demonstrate, Yu's (2012) critique is not fully justified because the ELIS model does not prevent researchers from examining the overlapping areas of information seeking.

Similarly, [Lingel \(2015, pp. 1248–1249\)](#) voiced a critical view in a study examining the information practices of urban newcomers. She asserted that traditional ELIS research tends to be situated as a counterpart to “professional” information seeking, where context becomes the fundamental divide between ELIS and a more general understanding of information behaviour. In her view, the divide originates from the assumption that the place where information behaviour occurs is a pivotal element of ELIS. The division between work-related and non-work context depends on whether information is sought at a workplace or in free-time contexts such as home. Most importantly, however, [Lingel \(2015, p. 1249\)](#) claimed that with the growing use of mobile technologies, the demarcation of ELIS from other information behaviour becomes untenable. Therefore, as an area of study concentrated precisely on what people do with mobile technologies to meet their information needs, information behaviour research should (re)articulate a definition of ELIS that accounts for the material realities of shifting socio-technical fabrics, which include but are in no way limited to mobile technologies.

Despite this caveat, the “primus motor” role assigned to new communication technologies is not without problems. It is evident that [Lingel’s \(2015\)](#) view incorporates elements of technological determinism. It leads to think that the growing use of information and communication technologies such as mobile phones and laptops would radically integrate information seeking occurring in diverse domains of everyday life and fade away the features characteristic of domain-specific information behaviour. [Aillerie and McNicol \(2018\)](#) shared a similar view by contending that social networking sites (SNSs) exemplify new technologies whose use in information seeking would require a more holistic view than that proposed by [Savolainen’s \(1995\)](#) ELIS model. Amongst teenagers, for example, different uses of SNSs that may appear to be seemingly contradictory (friends and socialization on one hand and educational tasks on the other hand) are mixed. This is an indication of the porosity and interlacing of the contexts of everyday life.

Common to critical studies reviewed above is the claim that the ELIS research approach proposed by [Savolainen \(1995\)](#) has more or less directly encouraged the creation of an artificial division between work-related and non-work contexts of information seeking, thus rendering it more difficult to approach ELIS in a holistic manner. [Ocepek \(2018, p. 409\)](#) and [Dalmer \(2019, p. 715\)](#) repeated this critique, despite the fact that [Savolainen \(1995, p. 266\)](#) had emphasized that these contexts may overlap. Even though in this light such critiques may not appear fully justified, the critical notions also incorporate constructive elements. As noted above, [Ocepek \(2018\)](#) strongly advocated a holistic approach to everyday life as a context of information behaviour. [Dalmer \(2019, p. 715\)](#) elaborated this idea further by depicting overlapping contexts of information seeking. For example, what is a “workplace” for one person is “everyday life” for another. A public library reference question counts as work for the librarian but as everyday life information seeking for the patron ([Dalmer and McKenzie, 2019](#)). Moreover, through the course of a single day an individual may take up roles and identities and engage in information practices in both the workplace and domestic contexts. Conversely, work-related activities are not always confined to workspaces ([Dalmer and McKenzie, 2019](#)). This means that everyday information behaviour is not unencumbered by organizational requirements. Rather, it is shaped by interactions with a myriad of organizations that exist outside of domestic life but touch on it and co-ordinate its work.

The call for more holistic research has inspired exploratory studies examining information behaviour in both work-related and non-work contexts. In an ethnographic investigation, [Lee and Ocepek \(2018\)](#) focussed on one graduate student working in a wet lab. Three recurrent patterns regarding the participant’s information seeking in overlapping contexts were identified. First, the participant liked cross-referencing when deciding if she could trust an information source. Second, she frequently searched her browsing history to see websites she had visited. Finally, in both work-related and non-work contexts, the

participant heavily relied on pictures and images when interacting with information. The above findings are interesting from the perspective of identifying patterns that are common (or possibly even universal) in information seeking, independent of a particular context. Naturally, the significance of common (context-independent) information seeking patterns depends on how they compare with context-dependent ones. For example, [Dankasa's \(2016\)](#) findings reviewed above suggest that the nature of a participant's work tasks is particularly important in this regard.

Examples of information behaviour occurring in overlapping domains have also been identified in health contexts. To examine the potential of holistic research, [Dalmer and McKenzie \(2019\)](#) made use of an expansive understanding of work to make visible the often invisible and unpaid forms of work required to make everyday life possible. More specifically, they examined information work related to caring for a loved one living with a chronic illness at home – a context that demonstrates that everyday life is not contained within particular hours or settings but reaches across and between domestic and organizational contexts. The findings of the ethnographical study revealed that the participants engaged in a great deal of information creation and management work that reveals the close interconnections between home and hospital contexts in the family's life.

The picture of overlapping contexts can be further refined by scrutinizing the features of “boundary work” ([McKenzie, 2020](#)). It includes the ongoing categorization of life domains, the establishment and negotiation of boundary permeability and the crossing of boundaries. The characteristics of boundary work may vary because the boundaries between the domains of everyday life are socially constructed and negotiated differently by different people and by the same person over time as life circumstances change ([McKenzie, 2020](#), p. 97). For example, remote workers whose sole professional office is located in their homes actively made decisions about the permeability of their information boundaries through creating and maintaining physical, temporal and psychological boundaries ([Thomson, 2013](#)). Recently, with the COVID-19 pandemic, an even greater focus has emerged on these topics as many individuals are forced to work from home ([Gardner et al., 2021](#)). There is an increasing overlap between work and non-work domains, given the flexible work arrangements enabled by the use of new information and communication technologies.

To examine the nature of *informational boundary work* occurring in everyday contexts, [McKenzie \(2020\)](#) made an empirical study on how people keep track of municipal waste collection to explore the informational work of managing, maintaining and crossing boundaries in everyday life. Taking this focus reveals strategies of information work that operate beyond single everyday life domains, allowing to see everyday life beyond simply what takes place outside of paid work. The findings indicate that several participants recorded rotating “garbage days” on household calendars or in document collections that they shared with members of their households. The use of a household calendar is a concrete indicator of the ways in which the boundaries between spheres of everyday life can be crossed. The calendar allowed participants to integrate waste collection into work, family and leisure aspects ([McKenzie, 2020](#), pp. 99–100). Attending to the ways in which individual participants conceptualized and recorded information about this minor task reveals the varying characteristics of everyday life as the totality of lived experience ([Lefevbre, 1991](#)).

The above study suggests that informational boundary work – a type of *information work* – may function as a construct which enables an integrative approach to information behaviour, thus helping to bridge the gaps between work-related and non-work information behaviour. According to [Huvila \(2009\)](#), information work refers to the information component of human activity more generally. More specifically, “all work has an information component and presumes some degree of information processing whether the work is manual labour or highly abstract decision making” ([Huvila, 2009](#), p. 697). Thus understood, information work can function as a higher-level concept to tasks and work tasks; information work as an activity can

happen in everyday life, as well as embedded in organizational and institutional work practices (Dalmer and Huvila, 2020, p. 102). From this perspective, studies on information work may not only investigate people's paid work contexts but also the organizational constraints that paid work contexts impose on people's information work in their domestic and community environments (and vice versa).

Naturally, the applicability of the information work as an integrative construct depends on how the qualifier of "work" is defined. If work is generally understood as "performance of useful activity, for example, making things and performing services, done as all or part of sustaining life, as a livelihood" (Stebbins, 2012, p. 48), it is evident that elements of work are most likely to be associated with information work occurring in the context of job performance. In contrast, elements of work may be less characteristic of information behaviour occurring in the leisure context, for example, listening to music or reading light fiction.

Another candidate for an integrative construct is *information experience*. Gorichanaz (2020) proposed that the problem dealing with the division between work- and non-work related contextual components can be solved by approaching "the everyday" as the world of lived experience, that is, an individual's life-world. In this context, information experience can generally be understood as "complex, multidimensional engagement with information" (Bruce *et al.*, 2014, p. 4). Studies on information experience would examine the ways in which people derive meaning from information and engage with it, as they go about their daily life and work. However, given the general level of the above approach, it is evident that the idea about information experience as an integrative construct capable of bridging the gap between work-related and non-work contexts needs further elaboration. Even though it is obvious that information experiences occur in both work-related and non-work contexts, we lack studies demonstrating what kind of experiences are common in both spheres of everyday life. To this end, there is a need to specify the nature of information experience because a general level definition of information experience as a way in which people "engage with information" lacks sufficient distinction power.

Interestingly, in studies on workplace information behaviour or practices, there are no indications of the critique towards "false dichotomies" between work-related and non-work-related domains (e.g. Byström *et al.*, 2017; Widén *et al.*, 2014). This may be due to that research on work-based information behaviour is conceived as an established and legitimate domain in its own right, without the need to justify its significance in relation to other domains such as leisure. On the other hand, this means that studies on workplace information behaviour seem to be less interested to reflect its relationships to non-work domains of information behaviour, despite the fact that the boundaries between work and free-time activities tend to be increasingly blurred. Thus, at least so far, research examining the overlaps of work-related and non-work contexts of information behaviour has been one-sided. The critiques addressed towards the artificial division of these domains have solely been presented from the quarter of everyday information behaviour research.

Discussion

The present investigation refined the picture of everyday life as a context of information behaviour. The major theoretical point of departure of the study is Lefebvre's (1991) idea that everyday life is a constellation of work-related and non-work phenomena. This idea is particularly important for the novel holistic approaches to everyday life, as recently demonstrated by Ocepek (2018) in particular. The idea of constellation helps to conceptualize work-based and non-work constituents of everyday life as dynamic in nature. This means that work-related and non-work constituents are not approached as separate entities that may mechanically overlap to some extent. Rather, they are dynamic aspects of daily life

mutually permeating each other in time and space. The main findings of the present investigation are summarized in [Table 1](#).

The first RQ dealt with the ways in which researchers have characterized the above context. The findings indicate that in early investigations on citizen information needs and seeking, everyday life was usually thought as a self-explanatory concept. Similarly, [Chatman's \(1991, 1992\)](#) pioneering studies examining the impoverished information worlds of poor people did not thematize everyday life as a particular category relevant to information behaviour research. [Savolainen's \(1995\)](#) ELIS model marked a turning point in that everyday life approached as a major context of information seeking, though in terms of way of life, informed by [Bourdieu's \(1984\)](#) habitus theory. As way of life is indicative of "order of things"; the above construct suggests that everyday life is a relatively stable constellation of routine and habitual activities. A similar, inherently conservative characterization of everyday phenomena was adopted in [Savolainen's \(2008\)](#) later study on everyday information practices because the conceptualization of everyday life drew on the construct of life-world. It suggests that the world of everyday life is largely taken for granted by our common sense thinking, seeming to us to be a natural reality. However, as life-world is maintained and reproduced by

Approaches to everyday life as a context of information behaviour (RQ1)	Approaches to the work/non-work constituents of everyday life (RQ2)	Key developments in the conceptualization of work/non-work relationships of everyday life since the 1970s
Everyday life as a self-explanatory concept in surveys charting citizen information needs and seeking (Dervin, 1976 ; Warner et al., 1973) or people's non-work information seeking (Chen and Herson, 1982)	No explicit conceptualizations; and focus on individuals as solvers of daily problems	An early point of departure: implicit dichotomic approach to work/non-work constituents of everyday life
Conceptualizing everyday life in terms of habitus-based way of life (Savolainen, 1995) Approaching everyday life in terms of life-world (Savolainen, 2008)	Focus on the non-work constituents of everyday life; and acknowledging the existence of work/non-work overlaps in information needs and seeking (Dankasa, 2016 ; Given, 2002 ; Savolainen, 1995, 2008)	Pioneering conceptualization of everyday life as a specific context of information seeking (Savolainen, 1995). The specification of the relationship between work and non-work contexts of information seeking (Given, 2002 ; Dankasa, 2016)
Everyday life as site with opportunities for spontaneity through using resistant tactics (Rothbauer, 2010)	Focus on people's alternative reading and information seeking practices in free-time contexts	None
Conceptualizing everyday life as the totality mundane life, including the banal parts of life (Ocepek, 2018)	Challenging the dichotomy of work/non-work constituents of everyday life (Dalmer, 2019 ; Lingel, 2015 ; Ocepek, 2018)	Conceptual elaboration of how work and non-work contexts permeate in information seeking and personal information management (Dalmer and McKenzie, 2019 ; Lee and Ocepek, 2018)
	Proposing alternative holistic approaches to everyday information behaviour, for example, information work (Dalmer and Huvila, 2020) and information experience (Gorichanaz, 2020)	Elaboration of the nature of informational boundary work (McKenzie, 2020)

Table 1.
Summary of the main findings

the accomplishment of everyday projects, it also incorporates dynamic aspects (Hektor, 2001; Savolainen, 2008). Although everyday life covers activities that are habitual, routine and non-dramatic, it also provides opportunities to changes and renewal of habits.

The dynamic aspects of everyday life are emphasized more clearly in recent studies which make use of the ideas of Lefebvre (1991) in particular. In this regard, Ocepek's (2018) contribution is particularly important because she drew attention to the potential of everyday life theories as a way to renew everyday information behaviour research. Ocepek advocated the importance of approaching everyday life as a historically developing totality of human experiences. To this end, ethnographic studies scrutinizing the details of mundane life were seen as a particularly promising way to bring out the everyday in information behaviour research. Importantly, the holistic research approach also holds promises to overcome the division between work-related and non-work spheres of everyday life.

This notion is central for the second RQ of the present study: how have researchers conceptualized the relationships between work and non-work elements constitutive of everyday life? The findings indicate that for the early conceptualizations of this issue, Savolainen's (1995) ELIS model has been particularly influential. Although the model intentionally focusses on information seeking occurring in non-work contexts such as health, consumption and leisure, the framework does not exclude the study of information seeking taking place in both work-related and non-work contexts. Later on, the picture of information seeking occurring in overlapping contexts was refined by Given (2002) and Dankasa (2016), thus lending support to Savolainen's (1995, p. 266) idea of the complementarity of work-related and non-work information seeking.

Nevertheless, critical voices have argued that the above approach still suggests an artificial division between work-related and non-work contexts (Dalmer, 2019; Lingel, 2015; Ocepek, 2018; Yu, 2012). It is contended that such divisions are based on the drawing of spatial and temporal borders between these contexts. The nature of information behaviour depends on whether it occurs in a particular place, either at workplace or home, or whether it takes place during or outside working time. The findings of the present study demonstrate that such critiques are not fully justified because the ELIS approach explicitly warns against creating false dichotomies. On the positive side, the empirical studies conducted by Dalmer (2019), Dalmer and McKenzie (2019), Lee and Ocepek (2018) and McKenzie (2020) have opened promising avenues for holistic research on information behaviour occurring in overlapping contexts. These investigations demonstrate how the growing use of networked and mobile technologies, as well as working remote from home have blurred the boundaries between work-related and non-work spheres of everyday life as a context of information behaviour.

Holistic studies are also important in that they empirically identify elements common to all information behaviour, independent of a particular context. Thus far, however, the empirical evidence obtained from ethnographic investigations is relatively scarce, partly because they focus on a small number of participants. It is evident that in future investigations on this topic, the identification of features of information behaviour occurring in overlapping contexts depends much on the nature of the work tasks and the free-time activities of the study participants. For example, it is more likely to find intersecting contexts of information behaviour in cases in which work-related activities are closely related to one's hobbies, for instance, music (Kostagiolas *et al.*, 2015). Amongst musicians, music information seeking for the purposes of entertainment is not solely linked with pleasure-oriented reasons but also with work-related pursuits. Moreover, as empirical studies reviewed in the findings section indicated, information behaviour in overlapping contexts is common amongst students, telecommuters and home nurses, for example. In contrast, it may be more difficult to identify such overlaps when examining information behaviour amongst specialists such as neurosurgeons. Moreover, the question about the

relationships between work-related and non-work contexts is not relevant while examining information behaviour amongst special groups of people, for instance, small children, unemployed and disabled individuals.

The possibility of finding an increasing number of cases in which information behaviour occurs in overlapping contexts gives rise to the question about the meaningfulness of conceptualizing information behaviour as a domain-specific phenomenon. Would it be better to talk about information behaviour (in the general sense) in order to avoid a division between work-related and leisure-related information behaviour? This is possible if integrative research approaches based on concepts such as information work (Dalmer and Huvila, 2020) and information experience (Gorichanaz, 2020) are developed further. Thus far, however, we lack sufficient evidence of the potential of these constructs. Therefore, for the time being, it is continually relevant to examine how the features of information behaviour are dependent on the particular requirements posed by its context, for example, performing neurosurgery in hospitals, planning the purchase of an apartment or looking for new fiction books to read in free time. As the requirements of information behaviour may differ considerably in contexts such as these, the domain-specific approach to information behaviour is meaningful because it offers a more nuanced picture of the ways in which relevant sources of information are identified, accessed, evaluated and used. This suggests that it is meaningful to continue examining information behaviour in both work-related and non-work contexts, while acknowledging the importance of analysing cases in which information is needed, sought, used, shared and managed in both domains.

The advocacy for context-specific studies gives rise to a question about the meaningful labelling of the domain of everyday information behaviour research. This problem is not totally new. While proposing the ELIS model, Savolainen (1995) faced a terminological dilemma dealing with the proper naming of the context in which non-work information seeking occurs. The qualifier of everyday life was preferred although this term was used in a double meaning. On the one hand, everyday life referred to the familiar, ordinary and routine features of human activities – both work-related and non-work – characteristic of one's way of life. On the other hand, everyday life was used as a qualifier of the non-work-related part of information seeking. This conceptual dilemma was not discussed in greater detail while explicating of the ELIS model. However, as Savolainen (2017, p. 1507) explained later on, the term everyday life information seeking was chosen because the concept of work-related information seeking is self-explanatory; there is no need to use a more specific expression like “work-related information seeking in the context of everyday life.” Thus, the concept of ELIS could be reserved to denote information acquisition taking place in other contexts such as consumption, health and leisure.

Notwithstanding, the labelling problem is not fully solved by drawing on a conceptual compromise of this kind. The main difficulty is how to replace the qualifier of *everyday (life)* so that a novel label could appropriately depict information behaviour occurring in the domain of leisure, as well as in the domain of non-work obligations such as childcare and routine grocery shopping (Stebbins, 2012). For example, *free-time information behaviour* is problematic as an umbrella term because it is primarily associated with information activities serving the ends of leisure. Therefore, at least for the time being, it might be preferable to retain the established terms *everyday life information seeking*, *everyday information behaviour* and *everyday information practices*. However, taking into account the constructive critiques presented by Dalmer (2019), McKenzie (2020) and Ocepek (2018), the definitions of the above concepts may be broadened so that the overlaps of the work-related and non-work contexts of information behaviour are appropriately acknowledged. As before, *information behaviour and information practices* would serve as umbrella concepts which cover diverse context-specific domains, as well as information activities occurring in overlapping contexts.

Conclusion

The present study offered two main contributions to information behaviour research. First, it was demonstrated that as an evolving context of information behaviour, everyday life has many faces. On the one hand, at all times in history, everyday life incorporates relatively stable, routine and habitual elements. On the other hand, everyday life exhibits changes that are most clearly manifested in the blurring boundaries between work-related and non-work spheres. Second, the findings demonstrate that despite the changing picture of everyday life as a context of information behaviour, there is still need for the study of domain-specific information behaviour, while acknowledging the significance of information seeking occurring in overlapping contexts. As the present investigation is based on the analysis of a sample of 40 investigations, the findings cannot be generalized to concern information behaviour occurring in overlapping contexts of other kinds, for example, intersecting domains of collaborative information seeking and sharing.

Future studies may further refine this picture by identifying common and integrative, perhaps, even universal features of information behaviour independent of the requirements of a particular context. From this perspective, the empirical studies conducted by Lee and Ocepek (2018) and McKenzie (2020) are particularly promising because they demonstrate how work-related and non-work constituents of everyday life permeate, forming a holistic context of information seeking and personal information management. To elaborate the picture received from exploratory investigations of this kind, qualitative research approaches making use of in-depth interviews and diaries would be particularly useful. As it is evident that working from home will become more popular in the future, given the positive experiences obtained from telecommuting in times of the COVID-19 pandemic, studies on everyday information behaviour amongst telecommuters would offer new insights about how work-related and non-work elements are intertwined in practice.

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Appendix

The research material

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