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**Exploring the Threads of Clothing Repair Practice:
A Social Practice Approach to Clothing Repairs**

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By

Dimitra Logotheti and Harini Wijerathne

Supervisor: Josefine Östrup Backe

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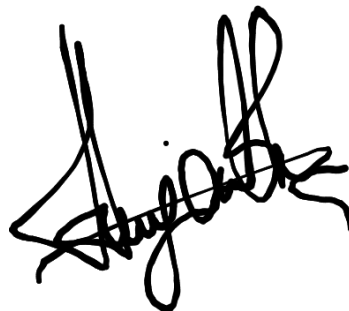
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dimitra', with a large, stylized initial 'D' and a horizontal line underneath.

Dimitra Logotheti

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harini', with a large, stylized initial 'H' and a horizontal line underneath.

Harini Wijerathne

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Abstract

This thesis explores the phenomenon of clothing repair. The fashion industry stands out as one of the most environmentally unsustainable sectors globally, largely due to its adoption of the linear production and consumption model of take, make, and waste. In response to this, the European Union has prioritized textiles in its Circular Economy Action Plan, and within it repair emerges as the most desirable strategy to keep products in circulation. This study, with the aim to contribute to the field of sociological studies of circular consumption, departs from individual's repairing practice and explores how competences, material and meaning intersect within the practice. To fulfill this aim, open-ended interviews with 19 individuals located in Sweden were conducted. Based on our empirical material, we were able to approach clothing repair as practice with interconnected, dynamic elements that adapt to sustain an embodied experience. From these results we can draw the conclusion that, firstly, clothing repair can be utilized as a means to achieve more sustainable consumption, given that consumers are equipped not only with the necessary tools and skills, but also when broader socio-cultural meanings are associated with the practice of repair. Secondly, we conclude that fostering community repair networks can further empower individuals to embrace repair as a sustainable and meaningful practice and, thirdly, that technological changes in infrastructure are welcomed by consumers, given that they provide a balance between virtual and tangible experiences.

Keywords: repairs, clothing, social practice theory, circular economy

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

“This is not a fashionable place to be, and we owe the world a lot better.”
(Charter et al., 2023, p.XXXVIII)

The textile and fashion industry stands out as one of the most resource-intensive, polluting and wasteful industries globally, with significant health, social and environmental impacts evident throughout its entire value chain (Lehner et al., 2020; McQueen et al., 2023; Neto & Ferreira, 2021). Global consumer spending on clothing, footwear and related products and services, has been increasing for nine consecutive years and it is expected to reach a new peak in 2029, projected to be around 20% higher than the levels observed in 2023 (Degenhard, 2023). This escalating spending trend, underscores significant concerns regarding waste generation and textile disposability (McQueen et al., 2023; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013; Potdar et al., 2023) and is closely linked to the growth of the fast fashion industry. Fast fashion prioritizes affordability, availability and plurality of options over durability and repairability of products, perpetuating a linear consumption model and a “take-make-consume-waste” approach (King et al., 2006; McQueen et al., 2023; Pera & Ferrulli, 2023). Despite increasing awareness of fast fashion’s environmental impact, consumer purchasing decisions show limited engagement with sustainable fashion practices (Potdar et al., 2023), and a significant number of consumers lack emotional attachment to fast fashion items, treating these products as easily disposable and replaceable (Ackermann, 2018; Diddi & Yan, 2019; Niinimäki et al., 2020).

According to the European Environmental Agency (2024), Europe faces major challenges in managing used textiles since the volume of textiles exported from the European Union (EU) has tripled over the past two decades. Consequently, the EU has identified textiles as a key priority sector within its Circular Economy (CE) Action Plan, aiming to slow down, close, and narrow material and energy loops (Lehner et al., 2020; McQueen et al., 2023; Pera & Ferrulli, 2023). According to the circular economy model, prolonging the use of products and keeping them in circulation through practices such as repairing, reconditioning,

remanufacturing, and recycling is among the fastest and most effective strategies to mitigate the environmental impacts (Geissdoerfer et al., 2017; Terzioğlu, 2021). Among these strategies, King et al. (2006) explained that repair stands out as the most desirable option in the circular economy (see Figure 1), as it requires minimal investment of resources, time, and energy and avoids complex reverse logistics for returning products to remanufacturing or recycling facilities (Hernandez et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2016; Jaeger-Erben et al., 2020; King et al., 2006). Hence, we recognise the critical role that repairing clothing can play in achieving more circular consumption models, thereby we make repair the focus of this thesis.

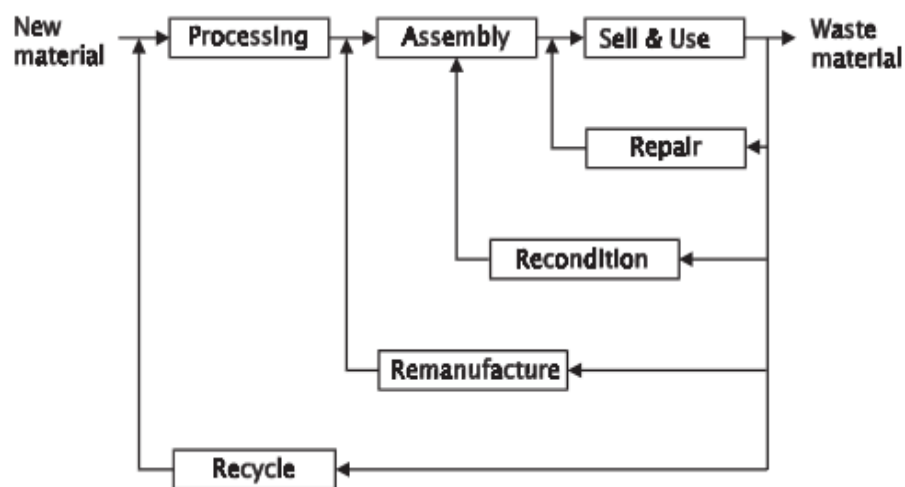


Figure 1: Closed loop design through repair, recondition, remanufactured or recycle by King et al., 2006.

1.2 Problematization

Clothing repair within the context of CE remains a relatively recent and niche field of academic inquiry and is rarely explored as a standalone research topic; instead, it is often viewed as one of several loosely defined strategies aimed at enhancing circularity (Durrani, 2018; McLaren et al. 2020; Schulz et al., 2019). Thus, clothing repair is predominantly examined through a business lens, seen as an instrument for fostering sustainable growth and administered through the application of technological expertise (Diddi & Yan, 2019; McLaren et al. 2020; Savini, 2019). When not approached from a business perspective, clothing repair is understood as an effective and rational tool, with most of the papers focusing on understanding individuals' motivations and barriers related to the action of repairing (Gwilt, 2014; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; McQueen et al., 2022; McQueen et al., 2023). For instance, Norum (2013) suggests integrating formal education within schools

as a vital step in promoting engagement in garment repair practices, while Gwilt (2014) similarly proposes that improving clothing repairability will increase consumer involvement in repair activities. Overall, factors such as skills, tools and cost are identified as essential considerations in the effort to encourage clothing repair practice (Fletcher, 2012; Lapolla & Sanders, 2015; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Twigger Holroyd, 2016).

As explained by Durrani (2018), clothing repair within the framework of CE has approached the topic from two distinct perspectives that have the same basis. The first perspective emphasizes the importance of traditional institutional knowledge, creating the impression that individuals who are taught repair skills will be more inclined to engage in repair activities, while the second one approaches clothing repair by the idea that “a provision of garments based on design interventions, informed by user experiences, will result in altered actions in the use phase” (Durrani, 2018, p.102). Both perspectives thus contrast individuals with external entities, leading to the suggestions that modifying specific cognitive elements will result in changes in consumer practices (Durrani, 2018; Hargreaves 2011). Nonetheless, it is proven that consumers do not consistently behave in a rational manner, and addressing competency or information deficiencies alone does not lead to changes in practices (Hargreaves, 2011; Owens, 2000). It appears that the current study of clothing repair within the context of CE tends to neglect critical aspects highlighted by sociological studies of consumption, particularly overlooking the sociomaterial dimensions inherent in it (Närvänen et al., 2023).

Thus, what we want to draw attention to is the existing gap in understanding how consumers truly engage in clothing repair and how this practice is embedded in an individual’s daily lives. While the aforementioned approaches have shed light on repair drivers and motivations and are beneficial in drawing implications for shaping future interventions and legislations aimed at promoting sustainable practices in the fashion industry, they lack to explain how clothing repair is an everyday practice integrated in the lives of consumers. Having identified this gap, this thesis will delve into consumers’ clothing repair practice, specifically examining how this practice is woven into their everyday lives and routines. To do so, we will utilize social practice theory, and specifically Shove et al.’s (2012) approach to the three-element framework, that allows us to analyze the materials, meaning and competences consumers integrate in their practice. Therefore, this thesis offers qualitative insights into how consumers engage in clothing repairs practice, focusing on skills and

competencies, shared cultural and symbolic meaning, social norms and material infrastructures, so as to provide an additional perspective in the previous research and contribute to the field of sociological studies of circular consumption. Following, we will restate our aim and introduce our research questions and the delimitation of the thesis.

1.3 Aim, research questions and delimitation

The aim of the thesis is to contribute to the field of sociological studies of circular consumption by exploring how consumers engage in clothing repairs practice, taking into account skills and competencies, shared cultural and symbolic meaning, social norms and material infrastructures. To accomplish this, we depart from the following research question:

1. How are competences, material and meaning reflected in consumers' repair practice?

We find it important to clarify at this point, if not already evident, that we approach circular consumption as Närvänen et al. (2023, p.536) propose, “not as a ready-made pattern that end users simply adopt when they make choices about products and services, but as a continuous process and performance”. As such, we take a consumer's perspective to understand how the practice of clothing repairing is made possible, given that the success of CE relies on consumers ultimate right to decide when, where and how they handle their products (Lehner et al., 2020; Pera & Ferrulli, 2023; Terzioğlu, 2021). Our research question is investigated through a qualitative approach and the empirical material is collected through open-ended, semi-structured interviews. The geographical scope of this thesis is limited to Sweden, firstly because we have good access to data in Sweden, and secondly because, according to the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, textiles has been identified as one of the important industries to work within Sweden's circular economy strategy (naturvardsverket, n.d.).

It is also important to mention that depending on the standpoint one chooses to study repair, the definition of it differs. Within the context of CE, repair is most commonly seen as an afterthought (Hernandez et al., 2020; Temesgen et al., 2021; Valenzuela & Böhm, 2017), “undertaken to extend the use period of clothing that is damaged and/or does not fit” (Diddi & Yan, 2019, p.3), while, from a sociological perspective, repair becomes a task that can occur “before or after a break, which aims to make something work in the way that is

needed” (McCorkill, 2021, p.135). For the purpose of this study, we adapt Hernandez et al.’s (2020, p. 4) definition where repair, in opposition to maintenance that consists of a proactive task, “is defined by the event of malfunction” and thus, becomes a reactive in nature activity.

Lastly, in our thesis we will explore various types of clothing repair, including self-repairs performed by consumers themselves, repairs conducted by professional tailors or seamstresses, as well as unpaid repairs; either in the form of personal relations or in the form of community-based initiatives, such as the case of “Repair Café”. With the term “clothing”, we refer to all types of garments worn on the body. Additionally, we will consider both minor clothing repairs, such as sewing buttons or patching small tears, and more extensive repairs, such as altering garment sizes or replacing damaged sections of clothing. We agree with Ackerman et al. (2018) that repair, together with maintenance, falls under the term “product care” defined as any action that expands the lifespan of a product, but maintenance, as well as repurposing textiles, fall outside the scope of this study. Finally, we refrain from using the terms “repair” and “mending” interchangeably, despite their frequent conflation in existing literature. Instead, we consider mending as one of several techniques employed in clothing repair. Other techniques include but are not limited to: patching, sewing, darning, stitching, resizing, replacing missing buttons, replacing broken zippers, as well as adding reinforcement to prevent fraying, fixing pulled threads, snags, tears or holes, reattaching hems, and reinforcing seams.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is structured into six chapters. Following this introduction, the subsequent chapter presents a literature review of previous research on clothing repair. It delves into clothing repair practice, identifies barriers that impede consumers from repairing their clothing, and offers insights into the socio-demographic profiles of repairers. The third chapter introduces the theoretical concepts relevant to our research aim. It reviews the theories of practice and focuses on Shove, Pantzar, and Watson’s approach to the triadic framework as the relevant theoretical framework for this study. The fourth chapter describes the methods we have employed to collect and analyze the data we have collected in order to answer our research question. In the following chapter, we present our findings, while also operationalizing the previously mentioned theoretical concepts, which are used to analyze and to better

understand our data. Lastly, we present a concluding discussion and practical implications based on our findings.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

This chapter delves into empirical studies on clothing repairs from both CE and sociological perspective. The first section conducts a literature review on clothing repair practice, aiming to gain insights into the prevailing trends. This is followed by an exploration of common clothing repair barriers, so as to enhance the understanding of prevalent challenges associated with the practice. Subsequently, the third section provides an examination of the socio-demographic factors of the cohort of individuals that engage into clothing repairs. The final section identifies gaps in the existing literature and outlines the significance of our chosen methodology and theoretical framework in addressing these gaps and contributing to the research field.

2.1 Clothing repair practice

Upon deciding to repair their clothes, consumers have three main options to choose from: self-repair, where individuals repair on their own their clothing, repair as a paid service, where a professional carries out the action, and unpaid repair, where individuals repair clothes for others for free, either through personal relationships or community repair initiatives, such as the case of repair cafes (McQueen et al., 2022; McQueen et al., 2023; Svensson-Hoglund et al., 2022). Previous research has found that self-repair is the most common option of the above three, followed by unpaid and finally paid one (Laitala et al., 2021). Terzioglu et al. (2015), proposes another way to categorize repairs based on the skills or knowledge required: assembly, that does not demand any skill or knowledge to be effectively completed, medium level, which involves some level of skill and knowledge, such as material knowledge, and advanced level, that includes advanced skills and knowledge, as well as available tools.

Self-repair, while often associated with simpler tasks and requiring less specialized knowledge (Laitala & Boks, 2012; Laitala & Klepp, 2018), still demands a necessary skill set and access to essential tools (McQueen et al., 2023). Interestingly, research has shown that the definition of “clothing repair” varies significantly among individuals. Consequently, many consumers who undertake minor clothing repairs, such as sewing on a button, do not perceive these actions as genuine repair tasks (Laitala & Klepp, 2018), suggesting that the

current studies indicating relatively low engagement with clothing repair might not be entirely accurate. On the other hand, paid repair services typically involve more intricate tasks necessitating advanced skills and specialized equipment, such as replacing a zipper, resizing a garment, or achieving specific finishes (Laitala & Boks, 2012; Laitala & Klepp, 2018). These services, other than referring directly to tailors or seamstresses, might include addressing retail stores or clothing brands that offer repair services as a part of their customer support initiatives or warranty agreements (McQueen et al., 2023). Other than these two types, seeking assistance is a frequently observed practice, especially among younger consumers, and is considered a hybrid repair type, most commonly facilitated by an older female relative (Diddi & Yan, 2019; Laitala & Klepp, 2018).

Although the majority of clothing repair traditionally takes place in private settings, the literature notes a growing interest in collaborative repair practices that transfer repair activities into public spaces (Durrani, 2018; McQueen et al., 2023; Niinimäki et al., 2021). Typically organized by environmentally conscious individuals who are often skilled in repair or view repair as a hobby (Durrani, 2018), these initiatives blend socializing opportunities with a hands-on learning approach (Gwilt, 2014). Whether in the structured setting of formal communities, with the “Repair Café” being the most prevalent example, or in informal community gatherings, collaborative repair initiatives encourage individuals to come together and share their tools and materials, such as sewing machines, threads, patches, or damaged clothes, discuss over their repairing techniques and methods and, finally, result in conducting the repair activity collectively (McQueen et al., 2023; Niinimäki et al., 2021). Thus, collaborative repair efforts not only promote sustainable practices, but also foster a sense of community and shared responsibility towards preserving and extending the lifespan of clothing items, while at the same time reframing repair as an enjoyable, community-based, leisure activity.

2.1.1 Challenges in clothing repair practice

The central focus of current repair literature revolves around the various barriers hindering consumers from actively participating in clothing repair (Diddi & Yan, 2019; Laitala & Klepp, 2018; McQueen et al., 2022; König, 2013; Scott & Weaver, 2014). Through a social practice theory lens, these barriers can be understood as extending beyond mere practicalities or behavioural factors, encompassing complex interactions within social,

socioeconomic, systemic, and psychological dimensions (Durrani, 2018). Financial constraints stand out as a significant barrier, with consumers often finding the cost of repairing clothes comparable to or higher than the price of replacing them with new fast-fashion items (Fisher et al., 2008; Gwilt, 2014; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). In this context, given the high level of skills required, clothing repair is also deemed not worth the time (Laitala & Klepp, 2018). Lacking the necessary skills is also commonly identified as a significant barrier, as consumers often state that having sewing or clothing repair skills would increase their likelihood of engaging in repair (McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Niinimäki & Durrani, 2020). Adding to that, Gracey and Moon (2012) found that having more spare time and/or access to clothing repair equipment positively relates with the intention to repair. Moreover, Diddi and Yan (2019) underscore that, apart from the financial costs as well as time and skill constraints associated with clothing repairs, consumers are significantly influenced by the changes in visual aesthetics and fit post-repair.

Furthermore, scholars have found that clothing repair has also been linked to poverty and financial adversity, leading consumers to avoid visible clothing repairs in order to protect themselves and their families from the social stigma of economic hardship (Fisher et al., 2008; Gwilt, 2014; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015). Within today's fast fashion-dominated consumer culture, scholars also note a general detachment from clothing, resulting in diminished motivation to engage in repair practice (Fletcher, 2010; Jones & Girouard, 2021; Potdar et al., 2023). On the other side, fashion-sensitive consumers, who exhibit a strong emotional attachment to their garments and prioritize environmental consciousness, are more inclined to view repair as both a necessary responsibility and a leisure pursuit (McNeill et al., 2020; Potdar et al., 2023).

2.2 Repairer's socio-demographic profile

Research indicates that over the past few generations, the practice of repairing garments has nearly vanished from communities, particularly in the Global North (Gwilt, 2014; McQueen et al., 2022). Turning towards a more circular approach, however, many clothing producers as well as governmental agencies encourage individuals to extend their textiles lifespan by any means that also include repair (McQueen et al., 2022). Recent literature has focused on understanding the socio-demographic factors of the cohort of individuals that still prioritize repairing their garments over disposing them (Finisterra do Paço et al., 2009; McCollough, 2010; McQueen et al., 2022; Parajuly et al., 2021; Potdar et al., 2023; Scott &

Weaver, 2014) and we believe that understanding such factors becomes crucial for grasping the interplay among social norms, cultural values, and material practices, as well as for comprehending how broader societal dynamics shape everyday practices.

According to these studies, gender disparities are evident in the repair of clothing. Textile repair is often treated as a female-oriented domestic task (König, 2013) and women are commonly perceived to be more likely to possess the skills necessary to perform self-repairs adeptly (Laitala et al., 2021). Men are typically found to be less engaged in repair activities (McQueen et al., 2022) and when this happens, they are more likely to proceed to an unpaid repair or purchase repair as a service than engage in self-repair (McQueen et al., 2022). Both genders are found to be more likely to engage with self and paid repair (McCollough, 2010), but less likely to have their clothing repaired for free as they get older (McQueen et al., 2022), a trend that was interpreted by McQueen et al. (2022) as a sign of developing the skills necessary for self-repair over time. Both young male and female consumers (aged 18-24) are not expected to have repair skills, but rather they prefer unpaid repair and are equally likely to have access to individuals who can repair clothing for them at no cost, mostly older female family members, as also explained in the previous section (McQueen et al., 2022). When it comes to community or public repair events, those attract predominantly female attendees with the majority being women aged 70 and above (Parajuly et al., 2021).

Moreover, research suggests that higher income negatively relates to all forms of repairs (McCollough, 2007; McCollough, 2010, Scott & Weaver, 2014). Regarding educational level, however, evidence is quite contradictory. McCollough (2010) finds that higher educational attainments relate to lower engagement with repairs, while McQueen et al. (2022) supports that educational levels positively relate to paid repair behaviour for both women and men. McQueen et al. (2022) go on to interpret this finding, by attributing this relation to individuals' pro-environmental attitudes, since highly educated people are more likely to adapt sustainable consumption patterns, as well as to their financial status, since they are also expected to earn higher income and thus afford the service.

2.3 The need for a social practice approach

While previous research has shed some light on the various repair options available to individuals, ranging from self-repair to paid services, as well as collaborative repair

initiatives, the study of clothing repair practice remains relatively limited. Research manages to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted factors that influence repair behaviors, as well as important information regarding the socio-demographic profiles of individuals who prioritize clothing repair over disposal. However, much of the existing research takes an individualistic perspective, focusing on behavioral aspects and employing quantitative methods aimed at predicting customer behavior. This approach fails to capture how consumers truly engage in clothing repair practice and how this practice intersects with their daily routines. Hence, there is a notable lack of a holistic and in-depth consumer perspective in the current literature.

To provide an additional perspective on previous research, we adopt a social practice approach to examine clothing repair. We employ social practice theory, particularly drawing on the three-element framework as approached by Shove et al.(2012) , which enables us to examine how consumers incorporate materials, meaning, and competences into their practice. As also stated in the introduction, with this thesis we intend to provide qualitative insights, into skills and competencies, shared cultural and symbolic meaning, social norms and material infrastructures and we seek to enrich the field of sociological studies on circular consumption. The following chapter introduces the theoretical framework of the thesis, focusing on social practice theory and Shove et al.'s (2012) approach, which will guide the analysis of our empirical data.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, we present the theoretical framework underpinning our research and interpretation of empirical material. First, we provide an introduction to Social Practice Theory, followed by a focused discussion on the three element framework as approached by Shove, Pantzar, and Watson, which serves as the foundation of this thesis. Next, we explore the role of repair within consumption studies and clarify how the social practice theory is useful in studies of consumption. Finally, we explain the rationale behind the adaptation of this particular framework and outline its application to the empirical data analyzed in the study.

3.1 Introduction to social practice theory

Practice theory evolved as a response to the limitations of behavioral and economic theories in explaining human behavior (Browne et al., 2015) and signifies “a shift in our understanding of the social world, and in the priorities of conducting research and analyzing research material” (Aslan, 2021, p.37). While the study of practice is not novel, there is not a singular, unified practice theory, but rather a range of approaches that fall under this umbrella term (Schatzki, 2001). According to Aslan (2021), one can identify three main generations of practice theory scholars based on their shared perspectives and conceptual similarities. The first generation, consisting mainly of sociologists and represented by scholars such as Bourdieu, Certeau and Giddens, primarily focuses on the interplay between agency and structure. The second generation, exemplified by scholars like Schatzki, Reckwitz and Warde, emphasizes the direct formulation of social practices themselves and, as Postill (2010) adds, it situates practice theory within the wider socio-scientific epistemological and ontological context. The third generation comprises scholars from various academic disciplines who have typically engaged in empirical research, such as Entwistle et al. (2015), Fuentes (2011) and Nicolini (2012) and are focused on integrating materiality in a much broader way (Aslan, 2021).

Despite the plurality of approaches, scholars from all three generations stress that social practices play a fundamental role in structuring and comprehending the social world and

should be used as the smallest unit of social analysis (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki et al., 2001). They perceive phenomena such as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions, and historical transformation, as integral components of the realm of practices (Schatzki, 2001). Consequently, the social realm emerges as a product of interconnected activities influenced by both social and material structures, which, in turn, shapes various social phenomena (Corsini et al., 2019). Moreover, practice theory scholars overcome the classical dichotomies prevalent in the social sciences, including not only structure and agency, but also micro and macro, body and mind, text and act, and nature and culture, by approaching them as dualities that are dynamically interrelated with social practices (Evans, 2020). Especially referring to the link between body and mind, Reckwitz (2002) highlights that individuals who perform practices are not merely cognitive entities, but also possess sensory perception, are conditioned to act in certain manners and to interact in particular ways. Thus, individuals can be perceived as embodying practices (Reckwitz, 2002), or as articulated by Fuentes (2011, p. 35), individuals are regarded as “embodied performers of practice”, with the enactment of practice being comprehensible to others who share a similar understanding, thus inherently rendering practices as social.

The several different accounts to the understanding of practices within literature are not necessarily problematic, but, as explained by Fuentes (2011), they necessitate precision from scholars in interpreting the terms and applying various concepts. In this study, we employ the triadic framework as simplified by Shove, Pantzar, and Watson in 2012, which will be now explained.

3.1.1 Materials, competences and meanings

Shove et al. (2012) utilize a simplified approach, according to which a social practice consists of three elements: materials, competences and meanings. Materials, also referred to as “stuff”, encompass tangible entities utilized in the process of a practice as well as the knowledge they embody (Halkier et al., 2011; Shove et al., 2012). These components comprise both human and non human physical elements such as objects, tools, infrastructure, hardware and even the human body itself. According to Kuijer (2014), stuff is socially shared as similar entities are available to various groups of people, even though they are not equally accessible. Competences represent a blend of diverse understandings and practical knowledge essential for executing a practice and illustrate the skills and know-how necessary to perform a practice (Shove et al., 2012). Keller and Vilhalemm

(2017) note that the focus lies on knowledge acquired through embodied experiences and repetitive actions, rather than passive learning through listening or reading. The mental and bodily know-how needed, and ways of feeling are learned as the body engages with the material (Kuijer, 2014; Shove et al., 2012), all of which is situated within the time at which the practice is performed (Shove et al., 2012). Competences are not solely acquired but are also shared and dispersed among individuals (Kuijer, 2014).

Ultimately, meanings are integral to practices, encompassing emotions, symbolic significance, ideas, desires, and socially shared notions (Shove et al., 2012). Put differently, meanings represent socially and symbolically shared concepts or aspirations linked to a particular practice at a given moment, potentially influencing an individual's self-identity (Ingram et al., 2007). Kuijer (2014) highlights that by acknowledging meaning as an intrinsic aspect of practices, various motivations, norms, or values cease to be viewed as external catalysts for change or action, but rather become ingrained within practices.

According to this framework, social practices are not solely defined by the presence of each element individually; rather, the actualization of any practice requires an interconnectedness among these elements (Shove et al., 2012). Pantzar and Shove (2010) clarify that the constituent elements of practices are not static entities, but they require continual reproduction to sustain the practice's existence. Due to their interconnectedness, alterations in one element are intertwined with changes in others (Shove et al., 2012). Thus, when a particular element undergoes change or a link is disrupted, it may result in alterations to other elements, a transformation in the practice itself, or even the fading of the practice (Watson, 2017). Apart from the interconnectedness among elements, practices can also undergo changes due to external influences or through the evolution of associated practice (Geels et al., 2015), such as, the introduction of new technologies in the market.

3.2 A practice theory approach to consumption and clothing repair

Practice theories have gained considerable attention across multiple disciplines and are very much prominent particularly in research on consumption, including energy (Shove, 2003; Warde, 2005; Wilhite, 2008), food (Evans, 2011; Fuentes & Fuentes, 2021; Fuentes et al. 2022) and transport (Spotswood et al., 2015), and have also a strong link with the sustainability field (Corsini et al., 2019; Sahakian & Wilhite, 2013; Spaargaren, 2011;

Watson, 2017). According to Warde (2005, p. 137) “most practices, and probably all integrative practices, require and entail consumption” yet “consumption is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice”, and as such is deeply embedded in individuals’ everyday lives (Kropfeld, 2022, p.137). Moreover, consumption extends beyond the act of purchasing and is commonly conceptualized as encompassing various phases, namely the three As: acquisition, appropriation, and appreciation, as well as the three Ds: devaluation, divestment, and disposal (Evans, 2019). The practice of repair can be approached as situated within consumption and specifically within the phase of devaluation, followed by a (re)appropriation of value (Warde, 2005). To clarify, when an item becomes damaged, it experiences a depreciation in value, whether in terms of physical deterioration due to wear and tear or the loss of cultural significance, such as becoming outdated. Once the item is repaired though, it again undergoes a process of reassigning meaning and integrating it back into one’s daily life.

Even though practice theories are growing within the study of consumption, as stated above, repairs are rarely approached in this way (Fletcher, 2012; Gill et al., 2016; Laitala et al., 2015; Woodward, 2014). However, during our effort to familiarize ourselves with the topic, we discovered that repair practice can involve a wide range of activities, influenced by individuals’ diverse backgrounds. Additionally, various legal frameworks and specific business models can either encourage or discourage repair activities. Moreover, we realized that repair activities require not only particular skills and expertise, but also emotions and feeling play a significant role. Altogether, we believe that repair is a complex action and the interconnected relations and activities outlined above underscore the importance of examining it through a practice-oriented lens.

To do so, we have chosen to utilize Shove, Pantzar, and Watson’s (2012) approach to the triadic framework of material-competencies-meaning, as outlined above. This framework offers a holistic lens through which to analyze and interpret repair activities, while its simplicity facilitates clear and structured analysis, making it a valuable tool for understanding the intricate dynamics of clothing repair practice (see Figure 2). Simplified, but still effective, Shove et al.’s (2012) approach considers the interplay between the symbolic significance of repair (meaning), the tangible elements involved in the repair process (material), and the skills and knowledge required to perform repairs (competencies). Repair, as Durrani (2018, p.105) explains, is “widely available and forms part of people’s

everyday tangible word”, allowing for a direct link between materials, tangible elements and repair.

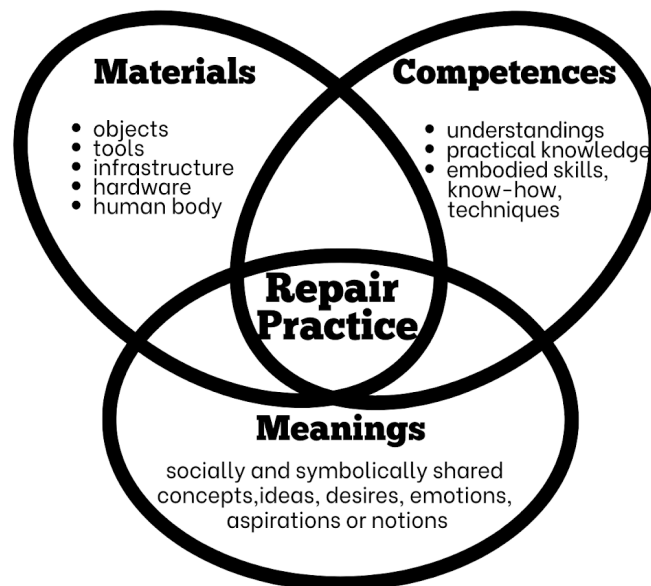


Figure 2: The three-element social practice framework in practice of clothing repair. Adapted from Shove et al., 2012.

Durrani (2018) observes that while tangible elements are essential for repair, like sewing machines, needles, thread, thimbles, scissors, tables for placing the sewing machine and boxes for keeping the threads and needles remain accessible, their consistent utilization has dwindled, possibly reflecting shifting societal attitudes. Although Hazel Clark (2008) remarks on the decline of mending practice, Durrani (2018) contends that contemporary repair practice, particularly in cases such as the Repair Cafes, represent a transformed but sustained embodied experience requiring physical engagement with materials- a perspective that aligns closely with Shove’s (2012, p.104) notion of “maintained and transformed” practices. This aspect is also strongly related with the third and final element, meanings, since community repair events encapsulate a feeling of communal bonding and empowerment, as well as an alternative to prevailing fast fashion and consumption models (Durrani, 2018).

Overall, theories of practice “draw attention away from individual moments of decision making and action” and focus on the complex interconnections of the various elements integrated within the practice (Durrani, 2018, p.14). In essence, as Woodward (2014)

highlights, efforts to repair clothing might not be considered as external additions, but rather as integral components embedded within already existing practices. We believe that by now we have emphasized that by taking such an approach, numerous dynamics involved within the practice of garment repair can be understood. And by utilizing our chosen framework, specific emphasis is given to the material, embodied social, symbolic and cultural dimensions of this practice, that have been till now much understudied. Acknowledging the evolution of clothing repair from a broader perspective, instead of just facing it as a practical, economically beneficial or rational act to perform, is vital if we aspire to craft new approaches to generate and disseminate knowledge that can effectively support existing alternatives within clothing use practices.

2.3 Summary

In this chapter, we have explained how and why practice theory can be used as a framework to study an individual's clothing repair practice as a multifaceted action, encompassing various activities beyond simply fixing garments. We discussed how practice theories offer a balanced perspective that considers both individual agency and structural influences, moving beyond traditional dichotomies in the social sciences. We then introduced Shove, Pantzar, and Watson's triadic framework, materials, competencies and meanings, a comprehensive approach that consists of the base of our framework and we stressed the interdependence of these three elements in shaping repair practice. Drawing on this approach, we emphasized the tangible elements involved in repair, the skills, expertise and embodied knowledge required, and the symbolic significance and emotional dimensions associated with repair activities. In summary, we argue that by embracing a practice-oriented lens we can gain valuable insights into the multidimensional nature of clothing repair practice, revealing its significance as a multifaceted activity deeply intertwined with materiality, skills, and symbolic meanings within both private and communal contexts.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

In this chapter, we aim to clarify the underlying principles guiding our research strategy and design, along with the methods employed for data collection and analysis, aligning them with the objectives and research inquiries of our thesis. We begin by discussing our ontological and epistemological standpoint, qualitative approach, and the use of abductive reasoning. Subsequently, we outline the sampling and data collection methods, focusing on the use of open-ended, semi-structured interviews and their relevance in our study. Furthermore, we delve into the process of data analysis and, lastly, we reflect on research ethics involved in this study and address the limitations and quality of our approach.

3.1 Research strategy

Recognizing the significant role of clothing in daily personal and social life (Odabasi, 2022), and considering the dynamic nature of clothing repair practice influenced by diverse social and cultural contexts (Laitala & Klepp, 2018; Neto & Ferreira, 2021; Niinimäki & Armstrong, 2013), our focus lies on day-to-day activities through which individuals consistently shape and mount their social environments. Therefore, logically, we adopt a constructivist ontological stance, departing from the belief that reality is socially constructed through everyday life practices and social interactions (Silverman, 2022). This ontological standpoint allows us to explore the practice associated with clothing repair from the participants perspective, avoiding the imposition of external interpretations (Bryman, 2016), and recognizing that this practice is shaped by societal norms, values, and cultural contexts, as our theoretical framework suggests. Our research aim and theoretical framework also lead us to a perspectivism epistemology, according to which knowledge is understood as situated within the perspectives and experiences of individuals within their specific social contexts (Fay, 1996). Acknowledging the potential for varying meanings and significance of clothing repair practice among different individuals and communities, we believe that this epistemological stance will enable us to encompass the diverse perspectives and understandings inherent in this practice.

Deriving from a constructivist ontology and perspectivism epistemology, this study naturally utilizes a qualitative research approach to capture rich contextual insights, comprehend diverse perspectives related to the phenomenon under study and explore the underlying dimensions of human practices (Bryman, 2016; Flick, 2018; Silverman, 2022). In order to grasp the perspectives of participants, we employed an abductive research strategy which indicates continuously moving between empirical data and theoretical framework so as to deeply explore the diverse perspectives and meanings that construct the individual's reality (Bryman, 2016). Ultimately, our research strategy is designed to delve deeply into the complex interplay between individuals, their clothing, and the broader socio-cultural dynamics shaping repair practices, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of this practice aspect of everyday life.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Sampling strategy

In this study, we employed a purposive sampling strategy to make sure that our sample is well suited to address the research question effectively (Bryman, 2016). Participants were selected based on three specific criterias, so as to enhance our ability to identify instances where the practice we were interested in were more likely to occur (Silverman, 2022): Firstly, individuals with a considerable level of expertise in clothes repair within the last six months. To address that, upon expression of interest to participate in our study, we asked individuals questions about their background in clothing repairs, the techniques they use, the frequency of their repairs, and their perceived proficiency. We selected only participants who demonstrated a robust understanding of repair techniques, a regular engagement in repair activities, and a moderate to high level of self-assessed proficiency. Secondly, residents of Sweden, and thirdly, individuals who were comfortable with doing an interview in english. Trying to avoid stereotypes that typically associate clothing repair with older individuals, we decided not to limit our sample to specific age groups. Instead, we aimed to include participants from diverse age ranges, recognizing that expertise in repair can be found across generations. We used a sequential sampling approach, progressively adding to our sample, taking into account our research question and theoretical aim, and we also remained flexible to take into account new factors that emerged in our data, such as the use of online platforms, and especially social media, to gain repairing skills (Bryman, 2016).

Initial recruitment was conducted through personal networks (three participants), referrals (one participant), and WhatsApp groups (seven participants) to which we were members of. To further diversify the sample, we also utilized Facebook groups dedicated to clothing repairs across Sweden (six participants). After coordinating with the admins of the groups, we published a post (see Appendix A for Facebook posts and Messages) about our thesis project, inviting individuals to participate in our research. This approach was considered appropriate as such groups typically attract individuals passionate about clothing repair practice. Additionally, we employed a snowball sampling technique (two participants) to expand our participation pool. This involved asking initial participants to refer to others who they believed would be suitable for the study, thereby enabling us to reach individuals who may not have been directly accessible through other recruitment methods (Bryman, 2016).

As explained by Cobern and Adams (2020), the number of participants cannot be pre-determined in qualitative interviewing, given that the aim is to continue data collection as long as new data arise. Following this advice, we achieved data saturation after sixteen interviews, and, after that, we carried out three more to make sure that no further insights were emerging, as suggested by Bryman (2016) and Silverman (2022). The final sample of this study comprised 19 participants (see Table 1), living in six different cities of Sweden, (six in Helsingborg, six in Lund, three in Malmö, two in Stockholm, one in Uppsala and one in Åstorp) and ranging among 24 and 57 years old. From the total participants, 18 participants identified themselves as female and one participant identified herself as a demiwoman. Throughout the process of selecting participants, we continuously reflected on our selected sample and remained flexible to accommodate new factors such as using online tutorial videos to perform a repair and organizing repair events with the purpose of community building that emerge during the data collection process. Aligning with the sampling strategy proposed in qualitative research, we did not maintain numeric significance with sampling (Bryman, 2016), instead we aimed for theoretical saturation. This occurred when 19 interviews were completed and no more conceptual categories were emerging from our data.

Pseudonym	Age group	Social Gender	Duration of the interview
Lily	50's	Woman	69 minutes
Emily	50's	Woman	46 minutes
Ella	50's	Woman	74 minutes
Maya	20's	Woman	43 minutes
Alice	20's	Woman	42 minutes
Luna	20's	Woman	46 minutes
Olivia	20's	Demiwoman	59 minutes
Eliza	20's	Woman	40 minutes
Evie	20's	Woman	58 minutes
Chloe	20's	Woman	47 minutes
Rosse	20's	Woman	45 minutes
Clara	20's	Woman	57 minutes
Betty	20's	Woman	51 minutes
Lola	20's	Woman	40 minutes
Nancy	20's	Woman	77 minutes
Sara	40's	Woman	42 minutes
Jasmine	-	Woman	33 minutes
Isabel	20's	Woman	37 minutes
Ada	30's	Woman	48 minutes

Table 1: Overview of participants.

3.2.2 Designing semi structured interviews

To serve the main purpose of this study which is to understand broader dynamics that are related with clothing repair practice and excess individual's narratives regarding their practice, we consider open-ended, semi-structured interviews as an appropriate data collection method. Unlike survey methods, open-ended semi-structured interviews facilitate a nuanced and thorough exploration of individuals' experiences by allowing interviewers to tailor questions to the conversation's specific requirements, fostering dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee and enabling clarifications and follow-up questions to enhance understanding (Flick, 2018). Instead of imposing predefined frameworks typical for structured interviews, we engaged participants in open-ended conversations providing them with the opportunity to freely articulate the significance they attribute to their practice (Bryman, 2016), while at the same time we maintained some structure to facilitate the comparison and contrast of individuals' responses (May, 2011).

Prior to the interviews, an interview guide (see appendix B) was structured arising from the three main themes of our chosen theoretical framework and informed by previous research. Our interview guide has been crafted with a focus on open-ended questions, allowing interviewees the freedom to express themselves fully and, as such, resulting in richer data for our analysis (Silverman, 2022). As recommended by Bryman (2016), two pilot interviews were carried out before diving into the full study. One interview was carried out in person at the university premises and the other interview was carried out online via the Zoom platform, so as to improve our skills in both in-person and remote interviews (Silverman, 2022). These pilot interviews helped us test the feasibility and effectiveness of the interview guide, familiarize ourselves with the questions, and their transcription resulted in further revising our guide by reordering some questions and incorporating additional probing inquiries to optimize the quality and precision of our data collection process. Given that the pilot interviews resulted in interesting data, we decided to include them in the analysis.

The final interview guide consisted of several types of questions, 43 in total, including ice-breaking questions, e.g. "would you like to introduce yourself to us?", general questions, such as "what is your relationship with clothing?", as well as more specific questions that referred to the three aspects of the theory used. Descriptive questions, such as "Can you

describe the last time you repaired a piece of clothing?” were used to prompt the interviewee to recall past experiences and give input to our discussion (May, 2011). In our interview guide we also included a reminder to request participants to show us the items they had repaired, so as for these items to serve as a stimulus for conversation, revitalizing dialogue when it began to stall. This happened on nine occasions and resulted in in-depth insights. At the end of the guide, questions regarding interviewees age, gender, city of residence, were included and were asked only in case these details had not been previously mentioned during the interview to help us better contextualize the interviewees’ responses during the analysis process (Bryman, 2016). Finally, it is important to mention that our interview guide was used only as a helpful tool to maintain the discussion focused on our research questions and research aim. Thus, even though a certain amount of order was pre-determined in the interview guide to ensure a smooth flow of questions during the interview, following Bryman’s (2016) directions, we maintained our freedom to follow the flow of the interviewee’s answers, asking questions in a different order when needed and directing our attention toward area that seemed to interest the participant more.

3.2.3 Conducting semi structured interviews

Prior to the interview, a document with all the information regarding our thesis (See appendix C) was sent to all participants via their email and participants were asked to read it before signing the consent form (see appendix D). At the beginning of each interview, as Bryman (2016) suggests, we engaged in small talks with the interviewees to make them feel at ease and establish rapport, and following we explained once again the purpose of the interview, reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. At that stage of the interview, participants were also given a chance to ask any questions and clarify any doubts and we explained that their participation was highly appreciated, as also suggested by Bryman (2016). After ensuring consent to record, the interviews began by giving the participants a chance to introduce themselves and then briefly talk about their thoughts regarding clothes in general. During the interview, both formal and informal prompts, such as “yeah”, “That is a good point”, “Mmmm..”, and nodding the head were used to help interviewee’s feel we were actively listening to them and also encourage them to talk more (May, 2011). Similarly, when the responders did not elaborate extensively, we tried to create a conversational tone by sharing our own repair experiences or commenting on interviewees answers.

Moreover, at some points, we tried to clarify and when needed reformulate and confirm the interview's answers by utilizing a lot of probing, specifying and also direct questions, so as to avoid the risk of misunderstandings that are always present in qualitative research (Leech, 2002; Silverman, 2022). In line with qualitative interview practices mentioned by Bryman (2016), we provided the interviewees with the freedom to share their thoughts openly and we remained flexible, adapting our questioning to align with the responses provided by the interviewees. In our questioning, we utilized the words "clothes" or "clothing items" without specifying particular items, granting interviewees the freedom to discuss topics of their choosing. This approach helped us in a wider exploration of interviewees' interpretations of the term "clothes" and the items associated with. Finally, at the end of each interview, we made sure to ask participants if they had any final reflections on our discussion or if they felt they needed to add something we did not touch upon up to that point, which in three cases resulted in valuable insights.

Out of 19 interviews, seven interviews were conducted in person while 12 were conducted via online video call platforms. The interviews lasted from 33 minutes to 77 minutes averaging 50 minutes. In person interviews were carried out at the university premises in a study room, ensuring no noise interruptions. Online interviews were carried out using Zoom and Google meet platforms in a quiet place with uninterrupted wifi connection. The choice of having video-call interviews was driven by the great flexibility they offer in terms of time and place arrangements (Bryman, 2016). Since our sample was located in six cities in Sweden, it was not possible for us to meet all our participants in person. Even though online interviews are often characterized as less interactive (Bryman, 2016), in our case they proved to be equally comfortable and efficient as face-to-face ones, since we did not experience any major differences between the two interview forms.

During all interviews, both of us were present, taking turns in asking questions and taking notes of noteworthy responses, hand gestures, facial expressions and interviewers' own reflections on the responses as well. Further, the interviewer was also able to note down responses that were made off the record as these insights could prove valuable during the analysis phase (Bryman, 2016). All the interviews were recorded using a dictaphone voice recorder and transferred to a pendrive using a data cable for added security. After each interview, we discussed our reflections and took notes again when needed. We listened to the recordings and transcribed them using Microsoft Word and then verified them by

listening to the recording while reading and correcting the transcript manually. One of us listened to the recording and made corrections to the transcript, while the other one listened again to verify the transcript, ensuring accuracy and reliability.

3.5 Data analysis

Qualitative research often results in a voluminous and intricate database, due to its use of narrative elements such as interview transcripts and analysis is not always a distinct step, but rather an iterative process that involves fluid movement between collecting and interpreting empirical material (Bryman, 2016; Flick 2018). Therefore, even at the very early stages of data collection, we made sure to comment on our material, discuss our reflections and mark insights that stood out. We also dedicated a considerable amount of time preparing the data for the formal analysis phase, by relistening to recordings, reading transcripts and verifying the accuracy of it. According to the practice theory framework proposed by Shove et al. (2012), social practices are not merely constituted by individual elements in isolation; rather, their manifestation relies on the intricate interplay and interconnectedness among these elements. Hence, our analysis focused on aspects such as the embodied knowledge and skills demonstrated by participants in their repair activities, the material resources and tools utilized, as well as the symbolic meanings attached to clothing repair within their social contexts.

After transcribing the interviews, we carefully reviewed all the transcripts with openness alongside our interview notes to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the body of texts (Bryman, 2016; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). After re-reading through the interview transcripts multiple times and freely discussing over them, we followed a more structured coding process by using Nvivo software to segment the text into smaller units and give them a name. Once completing this step with all the transcripts, we proceed to review the codes and categories them into broader themes, following Rennstam & Wästerfors (2018) directions. This process resulted in 103 initial codes and 19 initial themes, including; Skill development and learning, Family involvement, Economic concerns, tangible materials and tools and Community Involvement (see appendix E). We, following, sorted the data through analytical induction multiple times, until the codes were delineated into three main themes: Self-repairing clothes, Repairing clothes in a social setting, and Out-tasking repairs. Finally,

throughout the whole process, we sought to identify connections or links between these themes and attempted to relate the themes to theoretical aspects as outlined earlier.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Since the outset of our study, we have strictly adhered to the ethical guidelines as outlined by the Swedish Research Council (2017) . According to the guidelines, voluntary participation, interviewees' privacy, informed consent, and safeguarding against mental or physical harm are crucial in every aspect of each and every research. As such, we informed interviewees that their participation was voluntary and, from our very initial communication with potential participants, we ensured to fully brief them on the nature and purpose of our research. Prior to conducting each interview, we collected signed informed consent forms from each interviewee to participate in a recorded interview, while at the beginning of each interview we reiterated the purpose of the study, obtained verbal consent to record, and emphasized the participants right to withdraw or decline to answer any questions at any time. This approach was adapted to make sure the participants felt at ease and not under any pressure to answer the questions, and to achieve that, we also remained meticulous when formulating our interview questions, as well as throughout the whole communication we had with our participants, not to create any discomfort (Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). Moreover, the confidentiality of participants' personal information was explained, but anonymity was not promised even though interviewees' names were not disclosed at any stage of the study and pseudonyms were used in transcripts and analysis. Participants were also informed regarding how we handle all the data they shared with us and we assured them that all data would be used solely for this study, would be securely stored in password-protected folders on personal computers and will be deleted once the research is completed and graded. Regarding potential mental or physical harm, we believe that the nature of our study research and the way we handled the collected data will not cause any damage to the interviewees well-being. Finally, when identifying the gender of participants, we respected their right to self-identify and, thus, only

3.7 Quality considerations

Reflecting upon our chosen method, we find it appropriate to recognise at this point that interviews as a method to understand social practices come with specific challenges, particularly associated with the validity and replicability of results (Bryman, 2016). When

discussing practices, the interviewer needs to be careful not to make the participant feel criticized or even offended for their choices, as well as not to evoke discomfort by touching upon topics the interviewee does not wish to disclose (Bryman, 2016). To address this, we sensitively briefed participants about the interview questions at the beginning of the interview, letting them know that they can decide not to answer a question if they feel like doing so, and we also emphasized their expertise in their own practices, aiming to mitigate any potential feeling of being judged (Hitchings, 2012). Moreover, interviewing individuals about their practices poses the challenge of distinguishing between how the activity is described by the individual and how it is actually performed, as respondents may tend to present themselves as morally responsible when interviewed or might even not reflect upon their own motives and actions (Martens, 2012). However, in alliance with Hitchings (2012), our findings indicate that participants were able to articulate their routines when reminded to detach from their actions, and, thus, we tried to bring their routines into focus so as to help them provide a deeper description of their experiences.

Furthermore, qualitative research is most often criticized for non-representative sampling and limited generalisability (Bryman, 2016; Silverman, 2022). However, in this study we do not aim to make universal claims, but we rather examine repair practice within specific and context-bound environments, particularly those of individuals living in Sweden. We thus, reflect upon the transferability, transparency and trustworthiness of our study, rather than its generability, as suggested by Cober and Adams (2020). For that, throughout the thesis, we strived to offer comprehensive details regarding our data collection procedures, methodological decisions, and overall research context, as proposed by Bryman (2016). Regarding our participant demographics, it is noteworthy that, even though we did not aim for a well-representative sample with strong generalisability, we still aimed to achieve a more balanced gender representation in our sample. However, despite our efforts, the majority of our participants identified as women, with one participant identifying as demiwoman. This imbalance, in addition to arising from our snowball sampling technique that had as a result women recommending other women, can also be understood as a more general difficulty in finding men who repair their clothes and are willing to participate in such a study. Even though we do not seek to stereotypically suggest that clothing repair is a women's task, previous studies (Diddi & Yan, 2019; König, 2013; Laitala & Klepp, 2018) have found that clothing repair is predominantly performed by females and, as such, this imbalance might reflect further societal norms. We recognise, thus, that having used a quota

sampling to achieve gender representation, our finding would most likely differ. Similarly, our sample presents an over-representation of individuals in their 20's, resulting from the social circle and networks of the researchers, which are predominantly composed of young adults. This overrepresentation could potentially skew our findings toward younger perspectives and experiences with clothing repair and, thus, needs to be taken into account when contextualizing our findings. Furthermore, we contextualized this study specifically in Sweden, yet our participants were drawn from only six Swedish cities. However, we do not consider the limited representation of cities of residence among our participants problematic enough to undermine the trustworthiness of the results, given that our focus was primarily on the practices and experiences of clothing repair that most likely do not significantly differ among cities of the same country.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis of findings

In this chapter, we will present and analyze the findings of our analysis using the theoretical framework of social practice theory and specifically, the simplified triadic approach according to which a social practice consists of three elements: materials, competences and meanings. We will in particular consider the different elements of the clothing repair practice and how they interconnect and shape the practice. Approaching clothing repair as an everyday practice integrated in consumers' everyday lives, this analysis provides an additional perspective in the previous research, focusing on skills and competencies, shared cultural and symbolic meaning, social norms and material infrastructures. By analyzing the data gathered, we identified three dominant types of clothing repairs and we base our thematization on them: Self-repair, Repair in a social setting and Out-tasking repair. It's noteworthy at this point that individuals did not exclusively adhere to one specific type, but rather described a range of clothing repair practices. Thus, the thematization we provide is solely for analytical purposes, and we do not mean that individuals strictly adhere to one category, nor do we suggest that these three types of repair are the only ones.

In this analysis, we aim to illustrate the multifaceted nature of clothing repair practice among participants, highlighting how the practice is experienced differently based on the various materials involved, individual competencies, and the significance and meaning attributed to the practice. Before delving into clothing repair practice though, the initial section of the analysis provides an introduction to participants' general reflections on their engagement with repair and emphasizes the common meanings associated with their decision to repair. Subsequently, we delve into self-repair, identifying three key sub-themes: Equipping the repairer, Cultivating self-repair skills, and Clothing repair and daily rhythms. Here we focus on how individuals navigate the selection and utilizations of materials and tools, demonstrating their competence and knowledge in repairing clothing, while also examining the symbolic significance they attach to the practice and how they integrate it into their daily lives. Following this, we shift our focus to the social context of the repair practice, examining how it unfolds within a community setting, highlighting the importance

of creating communal material and knowledge pool, fostering a collective community repair culture, and stressing the importance of group dynamic and sense of belonging in shaping individual's practice. Finally, we explore out-tasking repair to others, considering how lack of competence or material, as well as the meaning associated with a particular piece can lead individuals to this decision. We also focus on the trusting relationship between individual and professional repairer and we draw attention to how individuals internalize familial standards and expectations regarding the practice of repair. In all our three main themes, Self-repair, Repairing in community settings and Out-tasking repair, we address the three elements of the repair practice, materials, competencies and meanings, as interconnected and not as separated from one another, so as to capture the holistic nature of the repair practice, recognizing that materials hold meaning for individuals and communities, while social dynamics influence how repairs are approached and executed.

5.1 Participant's initial thoughts on clothing repair

Given that the definition of repair can vary importantly based on cultural, social, and individual contexts (Durrani, 2018), one of the first questions our participants were called to answer was to explain what they mean by the term "clothing repair". This foundational step was crucial in establishing a common understanding and framework for our exploration of repair practice. Through their responses, we gained insights into the diverse ways in which individuals conceptualize clothing repair, ranging from basic mending of small tears and loose seams to more complex alterations and transformations. What we consider important though, is that in their extended definitions, clothing repair was often described as more than just a technical task, but rather as a practice that holds its significance in reinforcing emotional dimensions associated with prolonging the life of clothing, as well as values of sustainability, responsibility and resourcefulness within individuals' everyday practices. To better clarify, two representative definitions of clothing repair follow as expressed by our participants:

"(...) Having to keep something that you value, while still having it to be in a pristine condition. So, for me that's the idea of repair (...)" - Clara

"Just trying to fix a garment that is broken. Maybe not fixing it to its original state, but into a state where it's like usable or functional again, so you don't have to discard it and produce waste. When I think about like a hole in clothing, so maybe

the hole is covered, but there might still be a patch or there might still be visible mend marks. But as long as it can be wearable after and it doesn't look completely horrendous or doesn't end in landfills, that is sort of my repair idea.” - Eliza

The definitions provided by the participants illustrate how repair transcends mere technicality, highlighting the significance of incorporating the element of meaning into our analysis. This enables us to grasp the multifaceted nature of the practice and its broader implications for both individuals and society. In addition to defining repair, participants were asked about the frequency of their repair activities, revealing diverse patterns of engagement. Some participants repair their clothing regularly as part of their everyday life, while others only repair items when absolutely necessary. Although we will explore these patterns in detail in the following sections, we would like to mention that drawing from Shove et al.'s (2012) approach, we interpret these variations in repair frequency as reflecting both individuals' habitual behaviors and attitudes, as well as broader socio-cultural norms.

Additionally, participants provided valuable information regarding the types of clothes they typically repair. They generally agreed, as evidenced below, that they repair all types of clothing, regardless of whether it be homeware, everyday attire, or formal garments. This broad scope of repair underscores the universality of the practice across various wardrobe items and indicates that individuals perceive the value in prolonging the lifespan of all types of clothing, irrespective of the purpose or the materials it is made of.

“(...) I would say, I would fix all of it. But maybe clothes that I only wear at home or nightwear that would take me longer to repair because the need is not as pressing as with things that I would wear out. But generally, I fix all clothes that need to be fixed.” - Chloe

Thus, as indicated by Chloe, the type of clothing itself is not a crucial aspect in individuals' decision to repair or not. Rather, the motivations that drive such decisions, as Durani (2018) also supports, are multifaceted and can vary from practical considerations, such as, in Chloe's example, the urgency of need, to more sentimental reasons, including the attachment to the garment and environmental concerns. In the subsequent section, we delve deeper into these motivations, exploring the complex interplay of factors that influence individuals' clothing repair practice.

5.1.1 Deciding to repair

As previously noted, clothing repair has emerged as a significant practice in response to growing concerns about sustainability and resource conservation within the fashion industry (Potdar et al., 2023). This trend was also reflected in our participants' answers, where we observed a raised awareness regarding the importance of extending the lifespan of garments, reducing waste, and minimizing the environmental impact of clothing production and disposal. This observation was particularly striking, as the majority of the participants mentioned one or more of these aspects during the interview without being prompted, indicating a genuine concern and consciousness about sustainability issues related to fashion. Betty explains:

“(…) Increasingly, in the last few years, [I repair] because of sustainability reasons and wanting to do, I guess, the right thing and something that’s more sustainable. I want to keep using resources rather than just wasting them (…).” - Betty

This observation aligns with findings in the literature (Potdar et al., 2023; Durani, 2018) that indicate a broader cultural shift towards embracing sustainability as a fundamental value in fashion consumption practices and reflects a desire to align personal actions with broader environmental goals. It also exemplifies how practices are not solely individual actions, but are deeply embedded within social and cultural contexts (Ingram et al., 2007; Kuijer, 2014; Shove et al., 2012), showcasing how broader cultural changes manifest at the individual level. For instance, in the case of Betty, the practice of repairing garments involves more than just making the item functional again and it encompasses the norms, values, and meanings associated with repairing within society.

In addition to environmental considerations, the majority of the participants often cited emotional attachment and financial concerns as key factors driving their decision to repair clothing, a finding in line with recent literature (McQueen et al., 2022; Potdar et al., 2023; Scott & Weaver, 2016). Delving deeper into emotional attachment, individuals expressed a strong inclination to repair clothing items that hold some sort of sentimental value for them, reflected in Alice's explanation:

“(…) there's some sentimental value to some things, which is kind of equal to liking, but sometimes gets a bit more that and then you just don't want to throw it away,

even though it's not in the best condition, but you keep repairing it because you really, really want this piece of clothing.” - Alice

Alice's reluctance to discard the items even when they are not in optimal condition, emphasizes how the personal value attached to them can override practical considerations of their usability or condition, leading individuals to prioritize emotional connections over functional utility. Similarly, suggesting that repairing extends beyond mere maintenance of functionality, Clara shared the connection she feels with her bright red sweater, even though *“it's tough to find tread in this colour”*. Preserving cherished memories and experiences, Betty shared the story behind her coat that she has repaired many times since she *“had it for so long”* and now she feels *“a little bit of nostalgia to actually keep using it”*. Sara's narrative offers another dimension to this emotional bond, intertwining familial ties with clothing:

“(…) the value, because I am receiving some clothes from [city name] that my mother sends me for my kid. And those socks for example that I know they are from [city name], if I know that my mother spent her time collecting that, I can not throw them away. I can not throw them away because it just socks. It's from [city name], so I have to repair them.” - Sara

In Sara's example, the practice of repair becomes not just a practical necessity but a deeply personal gesture, honoring the effort and sentiment invested by loved ones. Thus, by recognizing the significance of emotional attachments in shaping repair practice, we gain deeper insights into how personal meanings intersect with everyday practices, revealing a complex interplay among practicality, emotions, and meanings. The practice of repairing clothes expands beyond mere utility; it evokes feelings of fondness, nostalgia, and familial ties, and, as such, it resonates with Shove et al.'s (2012) approach on how social practices are deeply intertwined with emotions and personal meanings.

Other than emotional attachment, the data reveal that financial motivations play a significant role in participants' decisions to repair clothing items, as also indicated by Fisher et al. (2008). Emily's experience highlights the substantial cost-saving aspect of repairing children's clothes with minor flaws, exemplifying a practical approach to managing expenses:

“(…)So, when I bought an overall [for my daughter], let’s call it ski suit or winter wear, if there was something wrong with it, repairing it was almost for free. So I got her stuff that were already broken, so I could fix them before I gave them to her. Like if you have ski pants and the knees are getting ugly, then if you just put a new patch over the knee, it looks as it was the design and it looks totally new and you paid 50kr instead of 400kr and it looks perfectly new. That really gave me a high, that I could make my daughter look really, really professionally dressed (…).”
- Emily

Emily’s satisfaction in achieving a professional look through repairs underscores the sense of accomplishment and empowerment derived from frugal practices. Other participants echo Emily’s purchasing strategy and they also express a pragmatic view of repair as a financially sensible option that aligns with their values of maximizing the value of their purchases. Alice’s statement about “*making the most out of my money*”, reflects this attitude, suggesting a conscious effort to optimize spending and minimize waste and, likely, reflecting the individual’s broader consumerist ethos. Thus, as individuals assert their agency in resisting the throwaway culture perpetuated by fast fashion industries, the significance of material objects, also highlighted by Shove et al. (2012) and Gwilt (2014) in shaping consumers’ identities and lifestyles becomes evident.

Overall, the decision to repair clothing items emerges as a multifaceted process influenced by broader cultural norms, personal values, and economic considerations, an interplay that underscores the dynamic nature of clothing repair as a social practice. Having examined the primary meanings associated with the repair practice, we will now delve deeper into each repair type separately and explore each type’s unique dynamics at play.

5.2 Self-repairing clothes

Firstly addressing self-repairing clothes, we will show that repairing is not merely about fixing a tear or reattaching a button – it is a multifaceted endeavor that intertwines, among others, personal histories, embodied experiences, familial traditions, socio-cultural norms, and evolving technological landscapes. In this section, we delve into participants’ experiences and perspectives on equipping themselves for repair, cultivating self-repair skills, and integrating clothing repair into their daily rhythms.

5.2.1 Equipping the Repairer

The availability of appropriate tools and materials plays a pivotal role in shaping individuals' engagement with the practice (Halkier et al., 2011; Laitala & Klepp, 2018; Laitala & Boks, 2012). While some participants acknowledged the convenience of online platforms for sourcing materials, the majority of them expressed a preference for physical shopping experiences, noting the importance of tactile interaction with fabrics, exemplified in Emily's description.

“People buy it [materials] off the Net. (...) But I enjoy going through the physical shops and looking for material. You can't go touch the things anymore though because material stores are closing down. And I wouldn't feel really good about buying the materials off the Net because you wanna touch it and feel it and see it in the different lights before you buy material. But people do buy their fabric online.”

- Emily

This sensory valuation of materials, also expressed by Lily, Ella, Clara and Lola, aligns with Reckwitz's (2002) notion that where individual's sensory perceptions and embodied experiences of interacting with materials influence their behavior and preferences. The act of physically touching and feeling materials in stores not only facilitates the selection process, but also contributes to a deeper sensory engagement with the materials, likely influencing individuals' satisfaction with the repair result. Furthermore, Emily's observation about the closure of physical stores underscores the role of infrastructures in shaping material practices. As traditional brick-and-mortar stores diminish in number, individuals are compelled to adapt their sourcing strategies, leading to increased reliance on online platforms. This phenomenon, also observed by Ella, Chloe and Lily, illustrates Watson's (2017) idea that alteration to one practice element results in changes to the other two and highlights how the availability and accessibility of materials are contingent upon infrastructural configurations.

In terms of tools, we noticed a shared recognition of the importance of accessing a diverse range of tools tailored to the specific needs of each repair task, aligned with Halkier et al. (2011). Participants also stress the significance of having these tools readily at hand, a sentiment that resonates with findings from previous research indicating that readily available tools enhance repair engagement (Laitala & Boks, 2012). What we find interesting

though, is that, beyond their utilitarian function, sewing kits in some cases carry profound emotional and symbolic weight, serving as tangible reminders of familial heritage. To clarify, Clara reminisces about her grandmother's well-equipped sewing kit, which served as a cornerstone for their family's repair practice:

“Unfortunately, I didn't bring the cookie thing [the box her grandmother used to keep her tools] with me when I moved here. She used to keep everything there, tons of threads and needles and materials. The only thing that I brought is safety pins. (...) Then, I had to buy everything again to do it [repair] myself, but it's expensive here. I still do not have not even half of what I had with my grandmother in the cookie thing.” - Clara

Clara reflects on how, upon moving out, she had to assemble her own toolkit to continue the tradition of repair independently. Similarly, Evie mentions receiving a sewing set from her mother, that, even though she does not use it often, she still keeps it, as she recognises the cultural significance attached to it and it has now become an item that holds sentimental value.

“(...) I have it [sewing kit] at home usually. And it's something that I guess is also cultural. It's something that my mum would also give me, like a little sewing set. So usually I will have it around. When I moved abroad, I brought it with me, even though I don't use it as much. I still have it, because it's from my mum.” - Evie

Thus, as Clara and Evie's reflections illustrate, sewing kits hold significance beyond their utilitarian function, representing the continuity of family tradition and the passing down of skills and tools through generations. Despite their infrequent use, sewing kits carry considerable symbolic importance and become cherished possessions imbued with personal and cultural meaning.

Moreover, our data indicate that the choice of tools, from needles and threads to specialized equipment like sewing machines, is not only dictated by the task at hand but also by the repairer's familiarity and comfort with using them. For instance, while some participants express confidence in navigating repairs with basic hand tools, others highlight the convenience and efficiency afforded by sewing machines. Jasmine explains that, even though her mother had a sewing machine, she “*never learnt how to use it*”, so now she prefers repairing “*the traditional way, using my hands*”. Lola, on the other hand, explains:

“(…) Even since my bachelors, I had a sewing machine in my place, which was really convenient for sewing your own clothes. Because sometimes the seams are getting loose, and I’m not really good at sewing with my hand to be honest, it’s not looking nice in the end. But with a sewing machine, it’s really easy and convenient.”

- Lola

This finding emphasizes the role of competences in shaping individuals’ interactions with objects and tools. According to Shove et al. (2012), competences involve more than just technical skills; they also encompass the tacit knowledge and embodied practices acquired through repeated engagement with repair tasks. Therefore, Lola’s preference for using a sewing machine over hand-sewing, reflects her comfort and efficiency with this tool and encompasses both technical proficiency and experiential knowledge. Another interesting example of the interplay among habitual engagement with objects, bodily experiences, emotional attachments, and material practices, is exemplified in Clara’s recollection of the sound of her grandmother’s sewing machine.

“And she [grandmother] had a sewing machine. I don’t know if you’ve seen the classic, the very old vintage ones. I remember the sound. Like ‘tuk tuk tuk’. Oh my God, I love it. (...) We did the inside out approach, we set the machine up, and then ‘row row row’, the machine was so loud! Then I was curious and I said ‘Can you teach me grandma, I want to know how to do it.’ But when you spin the machine, it goes quickly and I couldn’t do it. I was like ‘How can this thing go back? Can you help?’ And then my grandma came to the rescue.” - Clara

Clara’s recollection evokes a sense of nostalgia and highlights the emotional significance attached to material practices within the context of repair. The sound of the sewing machine serves as a powerful sensory cue that triggers memories of bonding with her grandmother when engaging in repair activities together, while her desire to learn from her grandmother reflects the role of intergenerational relationships in shaping individuals’ engagement with repair tasks, further highlighting the idea of social dimensions being inherent in material practices (Keller & Vilhalemm, 2017).

In addition to the selection and utilization of tools and materials, it is also worth mentioning that almost all participants highlighted the significance of storing their repair equipment in a dedicated box. Many of them recall their mother or grandmother having the exact same box,

the “cookie box” as Clara referred to previously, a practice that we understand as, not only ensuring easy access, but also reinforcing the ritualistic aspect of repair. Opening the box, becomes a symbolic gesture of engagement with the repair process, intertwined with familial memories and traditions, evoking a sense of nostalgia for the participants.

“There’s this joke, opening that box of Danish biscuits and finding inside that all the sewing stuff. I don’t know if you seen that box, but that’s exactly what I have. And that’s what we always had at home.” - Rosse

Rosse’s description reflects a shared cultural reference among participants. A Box of biscuits functions as storage for sewing supplies, highlighting the ingrained nature of this practice within familial contexts. By utilizing a familiar household item as a storage box for her sewing kit, Rosse also evokes a sense of comfort and familiarity, deepening the emotional dimension of the practice.

Overall, the analysis in this section indicates that materials and tools intertwine with infrastructural configurations, familial heritage, emotional attachments, and cultural traditions. The sensory valuation of materials, the symbolic importance of sewing kits, the role of competences in choosing tools, the nostalgic recollections of family practices and the ritualistic aspects of practicing repair, all highlights that finding and using the proper resources and engaging with repairing clothes, becomes not merely a practical endeavor. Building upon these findings, we will now delve into participants’ experiences and perspectives on learning how to repair clothing.

5.2.2 Cultivating self-repair skills

The majority of the participants recounted during the interview memories of having a family member, often their mother or grandmother, engaging in clothing repairs. For instance, Clara describes how her grandmother used to do all the family clothing repairs, a practice she took for granted and once she moved out of her family home, she had to learn how to do it herself.

“(..)My grandmother is always so happy or helpful with fixing everything. That’s been really nice and I feel like I took it for granted while growing up. But now I’m seeing that it’s quite difficult process and she did so much for us. She always does

that for every member of the family. And then my sister, she got the really good sewing skills, I guess inherited. She also is very good at sewing, she sort of picked that up and does it herself. Me, I was not that good at this, but since I've moved to another country, I had to learn how to do it (...)." - Eliza

Clara's reference to inheriting sewing skills highlights the embodied nature of repair knowledge within families. In her narrative, along with those of Ella, Maya, Lily, and Nancy, repair practice are not so much taught as they are "*passed down*" through generations, becoming deeply ingrained in individuals' bodily repertoires. Much like the tools discussed in section 5.1.2, this practice is inherited and absorbed through familial tradition, shaping not only skills but also identities and relationships across generations (Ingram et al., 2007).

Other than "*passing down*", most of the participants recall being taught basic sewing skills at some early stage in their life either by their parents or into the context of formal education. As Nancy reflects on her upbringing, she notes: "*That's how my parents grew up. That's what their parents taught them. So, that's what they taught to me*", highlighting once again not only the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills, but also the normalization of clothing repair within familial contexts. Similarly, Luna recalls learning basic sewing techniques in school: "*We have that in school since you're seven. It's 10 years of them trying to teach you to do stuff like that*". This formalization of sewing education serves to institutionalize knowledge and normalizes repair practice within broader cultural frameworks.

Regardless of how they've gained the know-how, almost all participants talked about their skills and the fabrics as they are intertwined elements in the practice of clothing repair, aligned with our theoretical framework. Ella explains that she is "*confident doing repairs in natural materials*" but she "*gets very confused repairing stretched materials*" and she is "*not very good at that*". Similarly, Evie explains that, even though she considers herself a good repairer, "*some materials are a bit hard to work with, like satin*" and if a satin item would get ripped, she is not sure she could repair it. Thus, the familiarity with various fabrics plays a crucial role in determining individuals' proficiency in repairing, and, other than possessing repairing skills, understanding the characteristics and behavior of various materials proves equally crucial in executing the repair task.

When unsure what technique to utilize, we found that participants refer to online video tutorials on platforms such as Youtube to access instructional resources. Olivia characteristically mentions: “*I had no idea how to sew and I kind of just taught myself by watching YouTube videos and stuff*”, while Rosse adds that “*Lately, the world is so easy. You just find things on YouTube. All the techniques you need are there*”. Adding to this, social media platforms, and especially Pinterest, were commonly cited by our participants as a resource to foster inspiration.

“I would say like I can watch like 2 hours of that [videos]. (...) And Pinterest is like heaven for all of these things. Especially for the little flowers that I do think there’s particular stitching for that. So I just watch the video and I’m like “Ok, I can try this here”. I would definitely try if I see something.” - Luna

This shift towards online video tutorials and social media reflects an emphasis on infrastructures, whereby changes in technology reshape the elements that support social practices (Pantzar & Shove, 2010). The accessibility and convenience of online tutorials and short videos not only expands access to knowledge, but also alters the dynamics of skill acquisition, making learning more flexible and adaptable to individual preferences and schedules.

Moreover, we found that among the participants with intermediate clothing repairing skills, the interplay between “*getting a sense of accomplishment*” out of successfully completing the repair and “*feeling frustrated*” due to failing to repair the cloth, represents a central theme in their engagement with repairs. Olivia’s conversation with us exemplifies this observation:

Olivia - “(...) I kind of feel accomplished because I just did that myself and I can take care of my clothes. So definitely I feel good after it. But, I procrastinate on my repairs a lot because I know it’s going to be a frustrating process.”

Interviewer - “Why is it going to be a frustrating process?”

Olivia - “It’s just frustrating because I don’t have the right technique, so I always screw up during the process.(...) So, I kind of need to mentally prepare for it.”

According to Shove et al. (2012), individual's dispositions shape the enactment of everyday practices and, similarly, Olivia expresses a tension between intrinsic motivations and perceived limitations. Likewise, Nancy reflects on her impatience and lack of attention to detail and Betty explains that her biggest difficulty is to overcome this "*What if it looks awful*" fear. In all three examples, individual tendencies and attitudes influence how individuals approach clothing repairs, aligning with the theoretical insights mentioned earlier in this paragraph.

Furthermore, among the participants, trial and error emerged as a fundamental aspect. Eliza describes:

"I've been trying to practice repairing and embroidery. So, in that jean, I tried to do some stitching on the inside so that it didn't look visible. But after a few wears, you could see the stitches and it didn't really cover up the hole. I spent like maybe an hour trying to get there (...) And I tried to watch a video on how to do a stitch that wouldn't show through, but also be really strong, but I don't think I did it correctly."

- Eliza

Eliza's example emphasizes the importance of experimentation and adaptation in refining repair techniques, using resources like YouTube videos as guides. Aligning with Shove et al.'s (2012) and Pantzar and Shove's (2010) perspective on the dynamic nature of social practices where individuals continuously adapt, Eliza turns failures into learning opportunities to evolve her practice and demonstrates a commitment to improve her skills.

Overall, the analysis in this section indicates a dynamic interplay among family traditions, formal instruction, and self-directed learning through online resources. We also noticed that, while the accessibility of tutorials and social media platforms facilitates skill acquisition, individuals often grapple with personal barriers and challenges, such as the fear of failing to repair. However, our data suggest that, through trial and error, individuals can embrace repair as a process of continual learning and adaptation. This dynamic approach sets the stage for exploring how individuals navigate the complexities of finding time to engage in repair practice, amidst the demands of everyday life.

5.2.3 Clothing repair and daily rhythms

The majority of participants described a common approach to managing the temporal aspects of clothing repair, echoing in Olivia's sentiment: *"I wait for the right time, when I can take the time to actually repair it"*. Eliza, Evie, Betty and Maya all mentioned doing repairs while watching a movie or listening to music, while Chloe, Luna, Olivia find the right time late in the evening, before bedtime. Similarly, Rosse and Sara do the repair early on Sunday mornings when their kids are asleep and Clara prefers to do it on her days off. Thus, participants establish a routine or ritual around the practice of clothing repair, making it a more structured and predictable part of their daily or weekly activities, rather than an external addition that disrupts their daily rhythms, as also indicated by Shove et al.'s (2012) triadic approach.

Among the participants who described having a very busy daily routine, setting time to repair clothes becomes a form of temporal negotiation, where individuals have to balance the demands of repair work with other competing activities in their daily lives. Sara, for example, mentions:

"Sometimes I take the needle and then I start repairing socks myself. But then I think twice: "Should I? Is it worth? What should I do now? Fix the dinner? Repair things? Read? Clean? Take care of my kid?" - Sara

The same negotiation was also discussed by several other participants. Evie talked about balancing among repairing, studying and going to bed early, while Alice similarly mentioned noting clothing repair at her to-do list, alongside cooking and exercising. Thus, we observe that, even though clothing repair often assumes the role of a domestic responsibility consistent with previous research (König, 2013), our data indicate that it extends beyond mere household chores. By equating repair with other essential practices, participants signal the significance of the repair practice as part of their overall lifestyle management and highlight its integration into a range of everyday routines, both domestic and otherwise.

Material elements, such as fabric and repair complexity, were also found to influence the temporal aspects of clothing repair practice. Eliza's distinction between repairing socks during leisure time and waiting to repair larger items, like pants, at a designated weekly session highlights this observation:

“For socks, it’s like I usually do it when I’m watching TV or something. And then, for like pants or anything else that’s bigger, I have to sort of wait to go to Make & Mend which is once a week” - Eliza

Eliza’s example suggests that the perceived complexity and size of the repair task influence the scheduling of repair activities and aligns with the idea that individuals adjust their practice based on the constraints inherent in their personal and social contexts (Geels et al., 2015; Shove et al., 2012; Watson, 2017). Whether or not to prioritize clothing repair over the rest of the daily practices is based on the perceived need or desire to use the item. Rosse, for example, explains:

“When a cloth is damaged, I keep it in the wardrobe and then, when I am really free, I’m going to repair it. But it also depends on what value I attach to it. We always have our favorite clothes. So if it is one of my favorite, then fixing it will be on a priority.” - Rosse

Thus, when a certain cloth holds significance, such as being a favorite item in Rosse’s case, individuals were more inclined to prioritize its repair, altering, if needed, their daily priorities. This finding aligns McNeill et al.’s (2020) observation and indicates the dynamic and context-dependent nature of the repair practice. Eliza similarly explains that repairing it is not her top priority, especially because *“for things like socks or pants, I have other pairs that I can wear”*, a statement that was repeated by Betty, Clara, Lola and Evie.

Moreover, we also found that participants who already have competences in repairing clothing and available tools find it easier to remember to do the repair, as Maya states, *“it just comes to my mind”*. In contrast, those lacking tools or skills need to create memory triggers or actively learn to integrate repair activities into their routines. To manage this, Betty, Evie, Sara, Chloe, Alice, and Olivia, all describe adapting the same strategy. They placed the damaged items in a visible location where they could regularly notice them. Evie explains:

“Well, I do it [repair], but it’s not the easiest thing that comes to my mind. It’s not the most natural thing that comes to me. I guess maybe if you’re very confident with it, you would do it. If I think about my mum and grandma and they talk about when something is broken, there are like ‘take it off, I’ll do it now’. There were, you know, quick with it. I’m not as much. So maybe that will change, but for now I try to give it

some time. I have an open drawer and on the bottom shelf, I just kind of put them [clothes that need repair] there. So, I try to have it in a way still visible so that I can kind of not forget about it.” - Evie

By acknowledging that repairing clothing is not the most natural or immediate action for her, and, by contrasting her approach with the quick and confident response of her mother and grandmother, Evie highlights the influence of past experiences and learned behaviors in her current repair practice. The strategy she created in response to her perceived difficulty in recalling repair tasks, serves as a practical memory trigger and reflects her cognitive effort to invest in managing repair activities. Her experience sheds light on the complex interplay between individual competences, memory triggers, and the integration of repair activities into daily routine.

Finally, another common strategy found among the majority of the participants was to “*collect [the items that need repair] separately and then they get piled up*”, as Chloe describes. Interestingly, postponing repair until a sufficient number of items have accumulated, was not perceived as an act of neglect or indifference towards the clothes. Instead, it represented a way for individuals to better coordinate their repair practice with other tasks or events in their daily lives, optimizing their use of time and resources. Most participants explained that the discomfort caused by the sight of the pile served as a motivator to reinforce the repair into their routine and justify dedicating time to it. This becomes clear through what Maya says:

“Let’s say I let it accumulate four or five pieces. Then, I feel motivated to do it. I mean, it’s not nice to see there’s a pile of clothes. So, I would rather find time to do it, so that the pile disappears. I think that’s the motivation.” - Maya

Maya’s description of feeling motivated to tackle the pile of clothes reflects the influence of environmental cues on shaping individual behavior, emphasizing the role of material and environmental factors in influencing practices (Reckwitz, 2002). Likewise, Betty talked about how she feels “*guilt*” everytime she sees the clothes piling up “*because it’s sitting there in the corner for so long*” and she feels like she “*should be doing it*”. The guilt, also expressed by Sara, Ada and Jasmine, represents a breach of the normative expectations surrounding clothing care and maintenance, triggering a sense of moral obligation to address

the repair tasks promptly, and reinforcing social norms to individual practices as the theory indicates (Shove et al., 2012).

Overall, our analysis in this section shows how individuals incorporate clothing repair into their daily rhythms, viewing it not just as a household chore, but as a meaningful activity intertwined with other essential practices, driven by the need and desire to use the product, as well as by their competences and available resources. Practices such as placing damaged items visibly and accumulating them for dedicated repair sessions were adapted by individuals as a tool to help them manage and prioritize repair tasks effectively.

5.3 Repairing clothes in a social setting

In addition to self-repair, participants also shared experiences of engaging in clothing repairs within social settings, primarily seeking assistance from the “Repair Café” or similar communal spaces, such as the “Make & Mend Café”. Our data, in alignment with previous research (Durrani, 2018; McQueen et al., 2023; Niikimäki et al., 2021), indicate that these spaces individuals with a diverse range of skills, from complete beginners to seasoned sewers, who seek access to a variety of materials and tools for clothing repairs. To clarify, during the interviews, participants frequently mentioned utilizing sewing machines, needles, threads, patches, and other necessary supplies available at these locations, as exemplified below in Betty’s description:

“(…) they have a sewing machine there and other items for whatever you need like fabric scissors, and all sorts of stuff that you might need for fixing things. So I know that’s a local resource in [city] and I’ve used it (…)” - Betty

Betty’s acknowledgment of the convenience and utility of community repair spaces resonates with the experiences shared by the majority of participants who engage in this type of repair and, thus, it highlights how individuals address the lack of tools they may encounter in their own homes. As noted by Laitala and Boks (2012), the accessibility of tools significantly improves repair engagement and, as such, by providing locations stocked with essential tools and resources, community repair spaces lower the barriers for individuals seeking to engage in repair practice. Furthermore, the utilization of community repair spaces reflects an adaptation to infrastructural opportunities within communities, as individuals actively navigate their repair needs within the available infrastructure. This

dynamic interaction between individuals and their socio-material contexts, as outlined by Shove et al. (2012), exemplifies how infrastructural configurations influence everyday practices, with community repair spaces serving as tangible manifestations of individuals leveraging communal resources.

In addition to providing access to repair tools, Gwilt (2014) supports that community repair spaces also serve as hubs for sharing knowledge and skills. During the interview, Betty described communal spaces as centers where she can “*contact with people who know how to do it*”, while Eliza explained how she referred to community repair settings seeking guidance when she encountered difficulty repairing a zipper on her own.

“And also trying to figure out how to get the zipper back on and how to soap the ends of the zipper so it doesn’t come off again or break any of the teeth. (...) It took a while and I asked people for help at Make and Mend, but it ended up getting fixed.” – Eliza

Betty’s and Eliza’s examples suggest that individuals acquire repair skills not only through formal training, but also through informal interactions and shared experiences within their communities and indicate that participants at community repair cafes, utilize these spaces as more than just tool repositories; they grab the opportunity to engage with fellow participants, discuss repair matters and seek advice and guidance for their repair practice, creating in this way a collective pool of expertise. This showcases the close relationship between materials and competencies in repair practice, as well as the communal aspect of repair practice, where informal interactions and shared experiences contribute to skill acquisition and problem-solving (McQueen et al., 2023; Niikimäki et al., 2021).

Furthermore, some of our participants expressed enthusiasm for actively contributing to community repair settings by offering assistance to others, and individuals like Ella and Emily embodied this proactive engagement by not only participating, but by also organizing community repair events. Emily states that, while being in such a setting, she is “*waiting for someone to show up and need help*”, while Ella expresses her frustration regarding spending more time ushering people into the community repair cafe she organizes, rather than focusing on teaching them repair techniques.

“I also felt it was a little frustrating to organize because I had to stand in the door and, like, taking care of like people coming with their things and I have to like, ‘oh,

you go there’ and ‘you go there’ and I couldn’t sit and repair things. I have been learning those new techniques. I want to instruct people and encourage repairing. I don’t want to stand in the door.” - Ella

Their eagerness to assist others reflects their commitment to promoting repair practice within their social circles and aligns with Durrani’s (2018) finding that individuals who are more environmentally aware are more likely to participate in community repair settings. In this particular case, individuals not only engage in repairs for personal benefit, but also contribute to fostering a collective “community repair culture”, where practices become embedded in social norms and values. The frustration expressed by Ella regarding administrative tasks, underscores though the tension between facilitating community engagement and actively participating in repair activities. This tension showcases the complexities inherent in fostering a repair-oriented community, emphasizing the challenges of balancing organizational responsibilities with the actual engagement in the repair practice.

Bringing in light another aspect of engagement in community repair events, Ella, Evie, Eliza and Emily, all highlighted how community repair practice has helped them overcome tendencies of procrastination.

“I tend to postpone and I tend to put things that need to be repaired somewhere and then I forgot about it. So, I have to have a strategy and make a routine. Now I’m part of our sewing group, so I go every once every week and I bring my repair things out of my home to this sewing group (...).” - Ella

Ella acknowledges her inclination to postpone repairs and emphasizes the importance of establishing a strategy and routine to address this. By becoming part of a sewing group, she creates a designated time and space to focus on repairs, demonstrating the influence of social norms and group dynamics in shaping individual habits, as discussed by Shove et al. (2012). Additionally, Ella’s strategy underscores the significance of environmental cues and social reinforcement in sustaining behavioral changes, as she integrates repair activities into a structured routine within a supportive social context, leveraging the collective motivation and accountability of the group to adhere to the established routine.

Additionally, according to Parajuly et al. (2021), such repair spaces hold significance as places for individuals to connect with others in their local community. Likewise, Emily describes that, thanks to her long experience in clothing repairs, she is now in a position

where she “*rarely need to go get material*”, she has the knowledge to “*operate various types of sewing machines*” and, in case she needs help with a technique, she knows how to utilize the Internet and specifically social media platforms to gain guidance. Despite all that, she still states:

“(...) I’ve been digging through everything that I own in order to find things that I could repair to try to use the social opportunity to meet people, so I can be there (...)”

- Emily

It becomes evident that, for Emily, these gatherings offer more than just a space to repair items; they provide a valuable opportunity to socialize with others in her community, as McQueen et al. (2022) also notes. Similarly, for Emma, these community settings make one feel “*encouraged by others*” and, even if one is an introvert, there is always a communication going on to “*push you through the boring thing*”. Thus, community repair spaces become multifaceted in nature, holding significant value beyond the functional aspect of repair. The above examples illustrate that social connections and networks within repair community events contribute to individuals’ well-being, by giving one the chance to interact, and possibly bond, with other individuals and by creating a sense of belonging. Thus, we observe an intricate relationship between material practices and social interactions in shaping individuals’ community repair practice, where individuals attach personal significance to community repair, viewing it, not just as a functional task, but as a meaningful and enriching aspect of their social and communal lives.

Overall, the analysis in this section reveals the multifaceted nature of community repair practice. Community repair spaces attract a diverse range of individuals and not only provide access to tools and materials, but also serve as hubs for knowledge sharing and social interaction. Some individuals showcase a proactive commitment to promoting repair practice within their social circles, reflecting the emergence of a collective “community repair culture”, while others utilize these spaces as platforms for overcoming procrastination tendencies and fostering structured routines. Furthermore, the social connections and networks formed within these events contribute to individuals’ well-being and sense of belonging, elevating community repair beyond its functional aspect to a meaningful and enriching aspect of communal life and communal identity.

5.4 Out-tasking clothing repairs

In addition to self-repairing and community repairs, many participants in our study referred to having someone else perform the practice needed for them, either occasionally or on a more regular basis. This involved both enlisting the help of friends or family members (unpaid) and seeking paid professional services to complete the repairs. In both cases though, a reliance on external assistance became evident.

We found that a recurring theme among participants who tend to out-task repairs, is their perceived lack of, not only competence to perform the repair independently, a finding in line with Niinimäki and Durrani (2020) observation of the role of competencies in shaping everyday practices, but also a lack of confidence in their skills. For example, Jasmine explained that unlike her aunt, she is “*so bad at handcrafted stuff*” because she does not have “*flexible fingers*”. Similarly, Nancy recalls how her mother would tease her for her inability to make repairs neatly.

“My mom says I sew a button like a marine, I sew a button like a soldier. Like not someone who has any finesse to it.” - Nancy

In both instances, participants compared their repairing practice with the ones of their family members, with Nancy characteristically saying that her own repairs “*always looks awful*”, underscoring the role of maternal influence in shaping perceptions of skill and competence. This comparison provides valuable insight into the intergenerational transmission of repair skills and attitudes and suggests that individuals may internalize familial standards and expectations regarding repair practice, further reinforcing feelings of inadequacy when their own skills fall short.

Furthermore, showcasing the role of material constraints in shaping repair practice, Olivia describes how she turned to a friend when she did not have neither a sewing machine nor the proper needle to repair her jeans. Bringing up a similar point, Lily, in alliance with literature (Laitala & Klepp, 2018), states that lack of time is the main reason that she does not engage in the practice herself, while Lola refers to the lack of adequate information about certain materials.

“But sometimes I have not enough information about the material. Because for some material you need another kind of sewing machine or another kind of needle and then I don’t know about it and in the end it’s not working.” - Lola

Despite their competence in repairing clothes, we notice that Olivia’s, Lily’s and Lola’s inability to access essential tools, time, information, or put it differently the material and time constraints and the knowledge gap, limited their autonomy in performing the repair practice. Effective clothing repair, according to Shove et al. (2012), demands not only practical competencies, but also access to required tools, infrastructure, suitable daily rhythms, as well as material information, shedding light on the interconnectedness of the practice elements.

When opting for paid repair services, most of the participants, other than lacking competence related to specific techniques or materials, mentioned the delicate nature of the items needing repair as a primary reason for seeking professional assistance. Lily, for example, explained that she has “*a nice winter jacket*” that, in case it is damaged, she would take it to a seamstress, since “*it’s made in a material that’s really delicate*” and she “*wouldn’t try to repair it*” on her own despite knowing how to do it. Likewise, Nancy, Jasmine, Lola and Alice emphasize the importance of “*professional finish*” for maintaining the quality and appearance of the item. Jasmine specifically states that for “*the part that you have to do a patch and make it look like nothing happen, then this might require some professional job*”.

Therefore, from the above examples, we notice that seeking professional repairs reflects a negotiation between the material properties of the item, the meaning assigned to it and the individual’s competencies in handling the repair. The recognition of the delicate nature of the item acknowledges its unique materiality and the potential risks involved in self-repairing attempts. Thus, out-tasking repair gains a symbolic meaning, as it is an option not merely about fixing the physical damage of the item, but mostly about upholding the item’s intrinsic value.

Furthermore, out-tasking repair in some cases could indeed be interpreted as a reflection of broader socio-cultural norms and expectations. As discussed by Ingram et al. (2007), practices are imbued with socially and symbolically shared meanings that can influence an individual’s self-identity. Our participants frequently expressed a desire for professional

repair services to ensure that alterations were undetectable to others, as Nancy highlighted when she mentioned that “*nobody could ever guess it was altered*”. This underscores how individuals may feel societal pressure to maintain certain standards of quality, especially for items with sentimental or monetary value. Moreover, by emphasizing the importance of repairs being virtually undetectable, participants aim to preserve the integrity and aesthetics of their garments, thereby maintaining a desired image of themselves (Ingram et al., 2007), as well as avoid possible social stigma of economic hardship (Fisher et al., 2008; Gwilt, 2014).

When it comes to paid repairs, participants explained that they typically have particular individuals or businesses they rely on, rather than randomly seeking help. These professional repairers were most of the times chosen based on their track record of successful past repairs. Giving a long explanation, Lily states how important it is to find the right professional.

“No, they have to be good (...) I have now three seamstresses that I use. One at work at [shopping mall]. That is in the basement of [shopping mall]. And then I have one here around the corner where we go and do some dry cleaning as well. And she has done a lot of things for us. Then we have another one in the city center of [city] (...) So I had three, but it’s important to find a good one because it’s like a doctor for your clothes. They need to be good.” - Lily

Similarly, Nancy mentions that she often turns to seamstresses or tailors that her family has known for a long time and have built a trusting relationship with, because she finds it important to “*kind of know what to expect from.*” Alice also reiterates this sentiment, explaining that she, her mother, and her grandmother, all prefer the same repair professional, whom Alice has known since she was born. Additionally, Ada, Jasmine, Clara and Nancy, all emphasized the importance of recommendations, stating that they prefer repairers who have been referenced by people they know and trust.

Thus, the participants’ reliance on specific seamstresses or tailors for paid repairs underscores the significance of trust and familiarity in individual’s decision-making process and highlights the meticulousness with which individuals select their repair professionals. Emphasizing the importance of finding someone who consistently delivers quality work, participants’ narratives also suggested an emotional connection to their clothing and the

meanings embedded within them. To clarify, individuals seeked not only functional repairs, but also aimed to preserve the significance and value of their item, by making sure the professional they chose is the right one for the task. This emotional dimension underscores that the selection of repair professionals becomes not only a practical decision, but also a reflection of the emotional attachment and meanings associated with the clothes being repaired.

Overall, the analysis in this section indicates that various factors contribute to individuals' preference to out-task their clothing repairs, including lack of competence or confidence, limited access to essential tools, as well as lack of material information or free time. These findings resonate with the common barriers to repair as outlined in literature (Gracey & Moon, 2012; McLaren & McLauchlan, 2015; Niinimaki & Durrani, 2020). Moreover, we found that individuals are likely to internalize familial standards and expectations regarding their competence to repair, as well as broader socio-cultural norms related to visible and invisible clothing repairs. Finally, we found that the meaning assigned to clothing items also influences the choice of a professional seamstress or tailor who needs to be trustworthy enough and, ideally, referred by the individual's close social networks, so as to be entrusted with the preservation of not just the garment's physical integrity, but also with the emotional significance it holds.

5.5 Summary of analysis

In this chapter we firstly explored consumers' initial thoughts on clothing repair, as well as the main reasons they decide to repair their clothes. We then delved into the three repair types evident in our material and illustrated how competences, material and meaning are reflected in each of them separately. We initially focussed on self-repairing and we stressed its multifaceted nature shaped by personal histories, embodied experiences, familial traditions, socio-cultural norms, as well as evolving technological landscapes. We examined separately participants' experiences and perspectives on equipping themselves for repair, cultivating self-repair skills, and integrating clothing repair into their daily rhythms. Next, we explored repairing clothes in social settings, emphasizing the significance of community repair events as spaces for social interaction, mutual support, tool pools, skill-building, community well-being and sense of belonging. Finally, we focused on out-tasking clothing repairs, where we discussed the lack of skills, tools, or time, the pursuit for professional

finishes, as well as the influence of emotional connections with the clothes to the choice of professional repairer.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion and Conclusion

In this final chapter we present a summary of our findings, reflect on our contribution to previous research, as well as draw and discuss relevant conclusions. Furthermore, we highlight the implications of our study and present directions for future research. At this point, we restate our Research Question: How are competences, material and meanings reflected in consumers' repair practice?

6.1 Discussion

With this research we have explored clothing repair, widely ranging according to our participants from basic mending of small tears and loose seams to more intricate alterations and transformations, beyond just stitching fabric together. We rather approached clothing repair as a practice that encompass a spectrum of tasks; searching for the appropriate materials, acquiring necessary tools, assessing the extent of damage, seeking advice from one's family and social circle, consulting repair guides, tutorials or professional repairers, planning repair strategies, experimenting with new techniques, evaluating the success of the repair and, integrating feedback for future improvements.

Our findings underscore that the diverse pathways individuals navigate in acquiring repair skills, ranging from formal education to informal familial learning and self-education through online resources, are deeply intertwined with distinct meanings. Individuals tend to internalize the norms, values, and skills associated with each educational pathway and, as such, these paths significantly shape individuals' repair preferences, expectations, attitudes, comfort levels with tools and materials, ultimately shaping their repair practice. Our findings also indicate that the availability and accessibility of appropriate tools, materials, and infrastructure significantly influences individuals' involvement in repair practice, in alliance with previous research (Halkier et al., 2011; Laitala & Boks, 2012; Laitala & Klepp, 2018; McQueen et al., 2023). Participants equipped with sewing machines, needles, and threads at hand tended to address sewing repairs promptly and efficiently upon the occurrence of damage, while those facing inadequate access or lacking necessary tools often postponed the practice, sought assistance from community repair spaces, or delegated tasks to professionals, family members, or friends. We also support the theory by finding that participants developed routines and rituals surrounding the handling of repair tools and

materials (Shove et al., 2012), reflecting the integration of repair activities into their daily lives. Particularly, we found that from the habitual arrangement of tools in a dedicated “biscuit box” to the opening of a sewing kit passed down through generations, these routines underscore the profound connection among materiality, memory and meaning, and everyday life, cultivating a sense of tradition and identity through repair engagement.

We further extend previous research in finding that individuals also devised strategies to manage their repair time effectively, such as accumulating items for repair until a sufficient quantity had been gathered and placing them in visible locations as a reminder to prioritize repair sessions. By incorporating these strategies, individuals seamlessly integrated repair tasks into their daily schedules. This ensured that clothes which needed repairs received the necessary attention even amidst other competing demands, as the visibility of these items acted as a tangible cue, influencing behavior and reinforcing resourcefulness in navigating everyday life. Our findings also support that changes in infrastructure result in changes in the rest of the practice elements (Pantzar & Shove, 2010; Watson, 2017), highlighting the dynamic nature of the practice. The rise of online stores for purchasing materials, social media platforms and community repair spaces, causes individuals to adapt their sourcing and learning strategies as a response to the changing infrastructure.

Moreover, our findings also support that individuals act as “embodied performers of practice”, as Fuentes (2011, p.35) suggests and we found that embodied experiences were prevalent in relation to repeated engagement with specific tools. We specifically found that sewing machines and sewing kits were described as expanding beyond their utility value and acting as sensory and tangible reminders of familial heritage, symbolizing the continuity of family tradition and the transmission of skills and tools through generations. We further enhance the field of clothing repair by finding that the choice of specific tools can be influenced not only by their technical functionality, but also by the rich cultural and emotional significance they carry and we highlight the need to consider the symbolic and emotional dimensions associated with the tools used. Finally, we confirm Kuijer (2014) by finding that, approaching meaning as an intrinsic aspect of practice, motivations, norms and values associated with the practice become ingrained within the practice, rather than external influences. Various dimensions of meaning, such as the concept of sustainable consumption, the symbolic importance of tools and habits, emotional attachment to clothing items, and the sense of accomplishment derived from repairing, were all deeply intertwined

with individuals' repair practice, suggesting that the practice was not merely adopted in response to external pressures or incentives, but are deeply rooted in the meanings individuals attribute to their actions.

Overall, our findings reinforce the understanding that social practices are not solely defined by the presence of materials, competencies and meanings individually (Shove et al., 2012; Pantzar & Shove, 2010), but we rather found that, whether undertaken privately or in communal settings, the actualization of the repair practice requires an interconnectedness among these elements. Our results also support previous research that the three elements of practice are not static, but rather dynamic, by finding that repair practice requires continual reproduction due to both internal changes to the elements as well as external influences (Geels et al., 2015; Shove et al., 2012; Watson, 2017). The evolution of technology and the rise of community repair spaces have led participants to adapt their repair practice, seeking to maintain a hands-on experience that involves physical interaction with materials, as observed by Durrani (2018). While our findings correspond with previous research in some respect, we have contributed with an empirical examination of clothing repairs through the three-element practice approach to show how the three elements cannot be treated either as separate entities nor isolated from their socio-cultural context. We thus provide a more dynamic and holistic approach of clothing repairs to the field of sociological studies of circular consumption.

6.2 Conclusions

The findings show that utilizing clothing repairs as a means to achieve more sustainable consumption is feasible when individuals are equipped, not only with the necessary support and resources and skills, but also when broader meanings, beyond mere sustainability, are intertwined with repair activities. While access to tools, materials, knowledge and repair spaces remains fundamental, imbuing repair practice with diverse and meaningful associations is equally crucial. This entails acknowledging and promoting the emotional, cultural, and social dimensions of repair, alongside its environmental benefits. By recognizing the personal, familial, and societal significance of repair practice and framing it as a creative outlet for self-expression, skill development, and personal empowerment, the repair experience is enriched, transcending its practical nature to become a meaningful ritual. Expanding the meanings associated with repair can enhance its appeal and relevance

to a wider audience, thereby fostering a more inclusive approach to sustainable consumption.

Additionally, our findings suggest that strengthening community repair networks can further empower individuals to embrace repair as a sustainable and meaningful practice. Belonging to a repair community offers individuals a support system where they can exchange ideas, troubleshoot problems, and celebrate successes together. This sense of community fosters mutual encouragement and empowerment, motivating individuals to engage more deeply in repair activities and alleviates feelings of isolation and disconnection that they may experience in their consumption practices. Community repair networks also serve as a mechanism for establishing dedicated time and space for repair activities. The group dynamic encourages accountability, reinforcing the positive behavior change associated with sustainable consumption practices.

Moreover, our findings underscore the nuanced response of individuals to changes in infrastructure facilitated by technological advancements. While they demonstrate adaptability, there's a clear preference for maintaining direct sensory engagement with materials, which is often lacking in online platforms. The decline of physical stores offering repair resources has necessitated a shift towards online platforms, yet individuals express dissatisfaction with the absence of tactile experiences. Hence, supporting businesses that provide repair services and supplies, and strengthening the availability of physical spaces for repair activities, can significantly enhance individuals' repair practice. It is noteworthy that changes in infrastructure are better embraced when perceived as supportive rather than replacements to existing practices. The increased utilization of online resources, particularly social media, has positively impacted skill acquisition dynamics by providing accessible learning material. However, to fully capitalize on these resources, it is essential to maintain a balance between virtual and tangible experiences.

6.3 Practical implications of the research

Our findings suggest that although individuals are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their consumption practices, this awareness alone may not be sufficient to motivate them to engage in clothing repair activities. To foster a culture of repair effectively, it is essential to ensure access to materials and tools necessary for repair, acknowledge repair's emotional, cultural, and social dimensions and maintain a balance between virtual

and tangible experiences in facilitating sustainable consumption practices. Thus, supporting local businesses that offer clothing repair services and supplies, advocating for policies that prioritize repair and resource circulation, integrating repair-related topics into formal education, enhancing the accessible infrastructure, such as community repair spaces and online resources, can play a vital role only in relation to broader meanings. The narrative surrounding clothing repair needs to expand to encompass broader dimensions, including creativity, self-expression, communality, traditional heritage and emotional attachment to clothing items, enriching individuals' lives beyond just environmental considerations. By highlighting these additional benefits, we can inspire individuals to embrace repair practice as integral components of their lifestyle, contributing to both personal fulfillment and sustainability efforts.

6.4 Directions for future research

Given the unsustainable practices prevailing in the fashion industry, investigating how clothing repairs contribute to fostering a more circular approach to fashion consumption is an important avenue for future research. Our study concurrently examined various repair types, encompassing self-repair, paid services, unpaid assistance, and repairs within community settings, to comprehend the complex interplay between materials, meanings, and competences. However, there exist additional forms of hybrid repairs, such as digital repair platforms and applications like REPAMERA, CIRCLEWEAR, Sojo, and MendIt, as well as corporate repair initiatives including Nudie Jeans, Patagonia, Norrøna, and Jack Wolfskin. Future research could delve into how these repair initiatives promote more sustainable or circular clothing consumption practices. Additionally, expanding the scope to include consumer groups with different competencies or inclinations toward clothing repair, such as men or individuals across various age demographics, would offer a more comprehensive understanding of repair dynamics. Moreover, addressing the limitations of our study, future research could employ a wider array of data collection methods, potentially incorporating observation techniques to provide a deeper analysis of consumer engagement with repairs.

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Appendix A : Facebook post and messages

Facebook Post

🌟 Participants Needed for Research Thesis Project! 🌟

Are you a resident of Sweden? Have you ever repaired your clothes by yourself or had somebody else do it for you?

Your experience is invaluable for our research thesis!

We are @Harini and @Dimitra (find us in the first comment), Master's students of Service Management at Lund University, Sweden. We are currently working on our final thesis that regards Clothing Repairs and we are particularly interested in understanding consumer's clothing repair practices.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or just started dabbling in repairs, your insights are incredibly valuable.

Participation is voluntary and involves a brief interview to discuss your repair experiences. Your identity and anything you tell us will be kept confidential and the records of this study will be kept private.

If you're interested in participating or have any questions, please comment below or send us a private message.

Feel free to share this post with anyone who might be eligible and interested.

Thank you for helping with this important research! 🌱👕

#SustainableFashion #ResearchStudy #SwedenResidentsOnly

Message to Facebook Groups

Hej hej,

Hope you are having a nice Monday morning.

We are Harini and Dimitra, Master's students of Service Management at Lund University, Sweden. We are currently working on our final thesis that regards Clothing Repairs. We are particularly interested in understanding consumer's repair practice.

We are in search of Interview participants who live in Sweden and would be willing to share their repair experiences with us. We think your community might consist of such individuals, thus we were wondering if you would be interested in helping us reach out to

them by posting about our research in your Facebook group. In such a case, we can provide you with a draft post with all the information about our research.

Your help in this regard would be highly appreciated and, of course, once we submit our Thesis, we could share the research results with you, if that helps you in any way in your future activities.

Thank you in advance.
Best regards,
Dimitra & Harini

Whatsapp Message

Hej everyone,

I and my Thesis partner are looking for participants for our thesis regarding Clothing Repairs and we are particularly interested in understanding consumer's clothing repair practices.

Have you ever repaired your clothes by yourself or had somebody else do it for you? Whether you're a seasoned pro or just started dabbling in repairs, your insights are incredibly valuable.

If you are interested in participating in a brief Interview, please let me know and we will discuss further. Interviews can be done online or in person as well.

Feel free to share this with whoever might be interested in our project. Your help would be highly appreciated. Thank you!

Appendix B : Interview guide

Before we begin, we would like to provide you with a brief overview of our study. Our research focuses on identifying clothing repair practice from a socio - cultural perspective. It's important to note that there are no right or wrong responses. We are interested in your personal opinions and experiences regarding clothing repair. Further, we would also be interested in seeing any clothing pieces you have repaired, if it is not too much trouble.

During the interview, we will ask you a series of questions, which will take approximately one hour to one hour and fifteen minutes of your time. With your permission, we would like to record this discussion to ensure the accuracy of our data. Please be assured that your name will not be included or attached to the recording in any way to protect your privacy. If there's anything you prefer not to discuss on record, we can pause the recording at any time.

Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any point. Anything you share with us will be kept confidential, and the records of this study will remain private. While we may share your name with our supervisor as a person who was consulted, nothing you say will be personally attributed to you in any documentation or reports resulting from this interview.

If you have any questions or concerns to clarify, you can ask now.

Is it okay for us to start the recording and begin the questions?

Warm up question: If you do not mind, would you like to introduce yourself?

General Questions:

1. What's your relationship with clothing?
 - a. Probes: How often do you buy/ Favourite brands
2. What are your thoughts on repairing your clothes?
 - a. Probes: Do you think repair is easy/hard/good/bad?
3. How often would you say you repair your clothes?
 - a. Do you notice any changes in this frequency? Have you always been repairing that often?
4. What is repair for you? What does that include?
5. What kind of repairs do you usually do? (self/paid and what kind)
6. What type of clothes do you usually repair? (formal, everyday etc clothes)
7. How much time do you usually spend on repairing?

Materials and tools required in a repair :

8. What do you usually do with your damaged clothes?
 - a. How do you decide whether it is worth repairing or discarding?
9. Do you have the necessary tools to do repairs? How did you learn to do it?

Knowledge and skills involved in repairing :

10. How do you prioritize repairing clothing items compared to other tasks or activities in your daily life?
11. Can you describe a time when you felt particularly motivated to repair a piece of clothing?
 - a. When? / How? (by yourself? paid someone else, repair cafe)/ What type of repair?
 - b. What influenced this motivation?
 - c. How did it feel? during / after
 - d. Do you always do that kind of repairs?
12. Can you also describe a time when you did not want at all to repair a cloth?
 - a. When? / How? (by yourself? paid someone else, repair cafe)/ What type of repair?
 - b. What were the barriers?
 - c. How did it feel? during / after
 - d. Do you always avoid these kinds of repairs?
13. Why do you generally decide to repair (or not) clothing items?
14. How do you feel about the idea of "mending" as a form of self-expression or creativity?
15. Can you share any experiences where repairing a clothing item unexpectedly led to a creative or innovative solution?
16. What skills or resources do you think are necessary for repairing clothing effectively?
17. What makes repair easy/difficult for you?
18. How confident do you feel in your ability to repair clothing items?
19. What do you think regarding repairing and the time needed to do so?
20. What do you think about repairing and the difficulty to do so?
 - a. Can you mention the most common difficulties you face when repairing?
21. How much money are you willing to pay to buy a repair service?
22. Would you consider learning the skills rather than paying somebody else?
23. Think of the last time you repaired a cloth. Can you walk us through the process? From the moment you noticed the damage till the time you actually repaired it?
24. Do you think you have ever been inspired by advertisements, social media (DIY), or recommendations from friends or family to repair clothing items? If so, how did it happen?
25. Have you ever had a bad experience with repair?

Significance of repairs :

26. What prompts you to consider repairing a clothing item rather than discarding it or purchasing a new one?
27. Can you recall a specific event or circumstance that triggered you to start repairing clothing items more frequently?

28. How do external factors such as cost, time constraints, or environmental concerns influence your decision to repair clothing?
29. Have you ever encountered any cultural taboos or stigmas surrounding the practice of clothing repair?
30. Can you describe any sentimental attachments you have to certain clothing items and how they influence your decision to repair or discard them?
31. Does your social circle (friend/family/neighbors) also do repairs?
 - a. What do they say about it?
 - b. Do you ever discuss/talk about it?

Closing Questions:

32. What do you think are the advantages/disadvantages of repairing clothes?
33. Are you aware there are repair cafes? Have you ever been to one?
34. Are you aware about the right to repair movement/ regulation?
35. What do you think about the repair situation in Sweden?
36. What do you think would have been beneficial to have for you or for the people you know to engage more with the repair behavior?
37. Is there anything else you would like to add?
38. Can you recommend anyone else that you think would be interested in participating in this research?

Demographics

39. Where do you currently live?
40. For how long have you lived in Sweden?
41. Where are you from?
42. Age?
43. Gender

Thank you very much for taking the time and sharing your thoughts with us!

Appendix C : Information regarding the thesis

Exploring the Threads of Clothing Repair Practice:

A Social Practice Approach to Clothing Repair

Purpose

This research thesis is conducted by Harini Wijerathne and Dimitra Logotheti, MSc students of Service Management at Lund University. We are writing our masters' thesis on clothing repair and as such we study the material infrastructure, skills and competencies involved as well as shared socio-cultural meanings involved with clothing repair practice. The purpose in doing an interview with you is to understand your experiences with damaged clothes and repair practices.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, we will ask you a series of questions taking about an hour to 1.15min of your time. We would like to record this discussion so that we can more easily remember what was said, so, with your permission, your answers will be audio recorded. We can stop the recording at any time if there is something you would like to share off the record. Your name will not be included or attached to the recording in any way to protect your privacy.

Risks/Benefits

There is minimal risk involved in your participation in this interview. The questions will not involve sensitive or personal information, and you can refuse to answer any question. Although this study may not benefit you personally, we hope that the results will add to the knowledge about how to scale repair practices to transition to a circular economy in Sweden.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You do not have to agree to participate in this interview and you may change your mind and stop at any time. Confidentiality Anything you tell us is confidential and the records of this study will be kept private. We may share your name with our supervisor as a person who was consulted, but

nothing you say will be personally attributed to you in any documentation or reports that result from this interview.

Appendix D : Consent form

Consent to participate in a Master Thesis at the Faculty of Social Sciences

I agree to participate in: “Exploring the Threads of Clothing Repair Practice: A Social Practice Approach to Clothing Repair”

The above thesis is a student project being conducted by Dimitra Logotheti and Harini Wijerathne, Master’s students of the Service Management Department specializing in Retailing and Consumption in Lund University, Sweden. For the purpose of this thesis, personal data need to be collected. The aim of collecting them is to get a better understanding of the interview participants profiles.

Information on the processing of personal data

The following personal data will be processed:

Name, email-address, age, nationality, country of residence, gender, voice recording

The following sensitive personal data will be processed:

No sensitive personal data will be processed.

Personal data will be processed in the following ways:

Sound recordings are to be made with a Dictaphone and Files containing personal data will only be stored on encrypted USB drives. Access to personal data will strictly restricted to the researchers and their supervisor. Personal data will be stored for the duration of the research project and data is to be deleted when the degree project has been examined and received a passing grade.

We do not share your personal data with third parties.

Lund University, Box 117, 221 00 Lund, Sweden, with organisation number 202100-3211 is the controller. You can find Lund University's privacy policy at www.lu.se/integritet You have the right to receive information about the personal data we process about you. You also have the right to have inaccurate personal data about you corrected. If you have a complaint about our processing of your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at dataskyddsbud@lu.se. You also have the right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority (the Data Protection Authority, IMY) if you believe that we are processing your personal data Incorrectly.

I agree to participate in the study “Exploring the Threads of Clothing Repair Practices: A Social Practice Approach to Clothing Repairs”

Location	Date
Signature	Name clarification

Appendix E : Codes and themes

<i>Number</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Themes</i>
1	<i>Don't enjoy repairing</i>	<i>Difficulty in repairing</i>
2	<i>Don't know how/skills to repair</i>	
3	<i>Don't want to learn</i>	
4	<i>Only do small self-repairs</i>	
5	<i>Patience</i>	
6	<i>Frustration</i>	
7	<i>Common difficulty</i>	
8	<i>Learn through demonstration</i>	<i>Skill development and learning</i>
9	<i>People need to learn to repair</i>	
10	<i>Repair classes</i>	
11	<i>Try fail</i>	
12	<i>Repair requires skills</i>	
13	<i>Video tutorials</i>	
14	<i>Inspiration from social media</i>	
15	<i>Want to learn more</i>	<i>Emotional attachment and sentimentality</i>
16	<i>Emotional attachment</i>	
17	<i>Nostalgia</i>	<i>Repair process</i>
18	<i>Triggers to repair</i>	
19	<i>Utilizing skills</i>	
20	<i>Repair service cost</i>	
21	<i>Asking for help</i>	
22	<i>Repair service duration</i>	<i>Cultural and societal norms</i>
23	<i>Older people repair</i>	
24	<i>Repair is natural</i>	
25	<i>Youth is open to repair</i>	
26	<i>Gender perspective</i>	

27	<i>Repair is dignity</i>	
28	<i>Social stigma</i>	
29	<i>Nobody will see it</i>	
30	<i>Old items not worth repairing</i>	
31	<i>Second hand probably needs repair</i>	
32	<i>Family knowledge</i>	<i>Family involvement</i>
33	<i>Family practices</i>	
34	<i>Ask my mom/ grandma</i>	
35	<i>Secondhand needs repair</i>	<i>Clothing quality</i>
36	<i>Clothes on body feel</i>	
37	<i>Clothes Swap</i>	
38	<i>Use of clothes</i>	
39	<i>Clothes news alteration to fit</i>	
40	<i>Cheap bad quality in not worth</i>	
41	<i>Accessing damage</i>	
42	<i>Recycle</i>	<i>Sustainable aspects</i>
43	<i>Upcycling</i>	
44	<i>Environmental conscious</i>	
45	<i>More awareness</i>	
46	<i>Environment not priority</i>	
47	<i>Money conscious</i>	<i>Economic concerns</i>
48	<i>Money saving</i>	
49	<i>Bad repair service</i>	
50	<i>Expensive clothes worth repair</i>	
51	<i>Value</i>	
52	<i>Resell after repair</i>	
53	<i>Holding to material</i>	<i>Tangible materials and tools</i>
54	<i>Storing tools</i>	

55	<i>Tangible tools</i>	
56	<i>Finding tools</i>	
57	<i>Access to stores</i>	
58	<i>Community repair</i>	<i>Community involvement</i>
59	<i>Friend and neighbors repairing</i>	
60	<i>Access to repair cafes</i>	
61	<i>Discussion with friends</i>	
62	<i>Access to tailors</i>	
63	<i>Bonding community</i>	
64	<i>Paid repair</i>	<i>Types of repairs</i>
65	<i>Repair at stores</i>	
66	<i>Take clothes back home</i>	
67	<i>Visible repair</i>	
68	<i>Will do it for others</i>	
69	<i>Will not do it for others</i>	
70	<i>Self-repair</i>	
71	<i>Repair for others</i>	
72	<i>Invisible repair</i>	
73	<i>Culture of repair in Sweden</i>	<i>Culture of repair</i>
74	<i>Culture of repair in home country</i>	
75	<i>Find the right technique</i>	<i>Challenges</i>
76	<i>Finding time</i>	
77	<i>Time-consuming</i>	
78	<i>Don't want to mess it up</i>	
79	<i>Failed self repair</i>	
80	<i>Criteria for deciding to repair or not</i>	<i>Decision making</i>
81	<i>Reason to repair</i>	
82	<i>Frequency of repair</i>	

83	<i>Procrastinate or not</i>	
84	<i>Wait until have a pile</i>	
85	<i>Discard clothes</i>	<i>Clothe disposal</i>
86	<i>Donate</i>	
87	<i>Repair is entertaining</i>	<i>Personal expression</i>
88	<i>Repair is hard/easy</i>	
89	<i>Self-expression</i>	
90	<i>Repair as hobby</i>	
91	<i>Creativity</i>	
92	<i>Satisfaction</i>	
93	<i>Confident</i>	
94	<i>Sense of accomplishment</i>	
95	<i>Change in reaper behavior</i>	<i>Changes in practices and habits</i>
96	<i>Change of shopping habits</i>	
97	<i>General shopping practice</i>	
98	<i>Repair definition</i>	<i>Perception of repairs</i>
99	<i>Repair everything</i>	
100	<i>Repair is not my top priority</i>	
101	<i>Repair is not a temporal solution</i>	
102	<i>Everyday clothes worth repair</i>	
103	<i>Make the most out of my clothes</i>	