

Yarn's Not Dead and Neither Are You: A Punk Knitter's Journey to Uncovering the Soft and Squishy Superpowers of Knitting

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Abstract

Yarn's Not Dead and Neither Are You: A Punk Knitter's Journey to Uncovering the Soft and Squishy Superpowers of Knitting: A Research-Creation Project

Jessica Blanchet

In 2022, I moved to Paris and everything in my life fell apart. Little did I know, knitting was going to become my lifeline. This is a research-creation thesis that describes my journey through a non-linear, unconventional healing process that led me to realize that there are so many benefits to being a knitter, on both the personal and educational aspects of life. The research is supported by a theoretical foundation of punk scholarship. I argue that punks share a lot with knitters in many aspects of their ethos. Most prominently, they both consider DIY as their core value. Furthermore, I believe that they both display subversive behaviors by not conforming to the established ideas of commercial beauty. The creative portion of this project is made up of 12 shawls I have knitted in the past two years. These woolly, emotionally complex landscapes of fears and self-doubt, but also of joyful reminiscence and precious memories, have provided me with an alternative way to process inner darkness by engaging with a colorful, comforting material, as well as highlight the fact that knitting has a lot of pedagogical value, in both formal and informal schooling structures. Together, the shawls form a soft, chaotic and powerful reminder that (a), healing takes many forms, (b), there are alternative ways to develop computational skills and (c), it is ok to be punk, academic and crafty all at once.

Territorial acknowledgement

I would like to begin this thesis by acknowledging that the land on which my university is located is the traditional and unceded territory of the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk), a place which has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst nations. I live and wrote this paper in Trois-Rivières, the traditional territory of the Algonquin Nation.

Acknowledgements

The person I want to thank more than anyone is Dr. Lorrie Blair, who's the most bad-ass supervisor anyone could ever ask for. When I said I wanted to go punk with this, you told me to punk even harder. You've been extremely patient and understanding throughout this whole process. Thank you for putting up with me and my shenanigans.

Thank you, Dr. Vivek Venkatesh, for your open-mindedness and precious contributions.

I also want to thank my ex-partner, K, for saving my ass that one time I needed it the most. Despite being terrible for each other, the hardships of our relationship made me discover an inner source of strength I didn't even know I had, and allowed me to evolve into a much better, more powerful Pokemon than ever.

Big hugs to my family, friends and teachers, who've been nothing but supportive. Special shout out to my sister for making my life so much better just by being in it. Endless gratitude for my colleagues at Le Club Sandwich in Paris, who took care of me like family.

All pictures have been taken by me and Stéphanie Lesieur (thank you!!)

The patterns for Slumbershawl, The Doodler, Dotted rays, Textures unite, Twists and turns, Starflake, Bubbles and brioche, Herbivore and Briochevron wrap are created by Stephen West, my knitting hero. Willow is a pattern created by Veera Välimäki and Peak Color is by Plucky Knitter. Thank you all. I hope you like my shawls.

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Yarn's Not Dead and Neither Are You: A Punk Knitter's Journey to Uncovering the Soft and Squishy Superpowers of Knitting

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CHAPTER 1

Prologue

In 2021, with a heart as full of hope as my suitcases were of stuff, I flew 5507 km away from home and moved to Paris, for what I imagined would be the wonderful, real-life new chapter of my long-distance, love-in-times-of-COVID online relationship.

Boy oh boy did I screw myself over with this one.

If you like walking in dog poop, enjoy being yelled at for no reason and do not believe in customer service, move to Paris. And if you like it extra spicy, add a highly dysfunctional relationship, total isolation from your friends and family and getting your low-confidence, introverted self adjusted to one of the most dense yet extremely unfriendly places on Earth to the mix.

I immediately felt pretty fucking miserable in the city of love. Beautiful on the outside, rotten on the inside. There was a lot of emotional trouble in my relationship and with no social network to escape, vent or talk about it, came lots of anger. I felt so alone. I found myself standing out where no one does. A 35 year-old, blue-haired metalhead tattooed clown trying to fit in the realm of haute couture and Art with a capital A. Becoming increasingly isolated and depressed, I started to knit even more than before, trying to find a way to cope with panic attacks and anxiety through my craft.

Crash hard, knit harder.

Everything fell apart. I hated the place, made no friends, made friends who then ghosted me, broke up, got back together, broke up again, almost broke up, definitely broke up, got back together after that definitely broken up breakup, lost my mind, had panic attacks all the time, felt out of breath every day for two years. Due to the rather crappy and unexpected circumstances of my personal life over there, I hit pause on my degree for a while. During that time, I knitted so much that it became a lifeline, and that's how I decided to change the direction of my thesis. Of course, the research I had done in computational knitting didn't magically go away. Piecing together the elements of my thought process, both from before and after this series of unfortunate events in my life, is how I realized that knitting is in fact doing a whole bunch more for me than I thought. The next 20-something pages are somewhat of a bumpy ride, so buckle up.

Paris, I hated you as much as you seem to have hated me. Sitting in my flat back in Trois-Rivières, I write these lines with very little regrets about leaving you behind. Though I'll miss your croissants and your cheap wine, the emotional crash that I luckily survived after two years in you gave me enough trauma to write 12 theses on why I'd rather be a knitting clown than a Parisian.

*Compressing a million things into one, big a** mess*

Speaking of writing 12 theses, I need to share a little bit of backstory before y'all settle in and read the rest of this. At the beginning of my graduate studies and pre-pandemic, I had this idea of reclaiming a place for knitting within the contemporary maker community by creating small study groups that would consist of digital makers and knitters of all ages. Brought together through a series of discussions and workshops aimed at breaking the boundaries between the analog and the digital, and under the umbrella of computational thinking, I wanted to argue that computational skills can be acquired with or without a computer. When confinement locked us out of community spaces, I realized that having people of all ages share tools in a small room for an extended period of time wouldn't be possible in the near future, and thus went back to square one. I was at a loss for what this thesis should be about. Then everything went south, and I ended up turning this research-creation into a very personal project, without really losing sight of my first goal.

This is a love letter to my craft and its beauty, complexity, and superpowers. Throughout this thesis journey, I wondered:

- How does knitting relate to punk?
- What does “therapy” knitting look like for me?
- Can you knit without computing?

There is more to knitting than just making fabric. I now believe it can improve physical and mental well-being. In the past four years, I have found solace in knitting. For this thesis, I am sharing my journey as a way to navigate my own healing process, and to highlight the wonderful benefits of knitting as a way to feel better while acquiring valuable skills.

Who am I as a researcher?

As I am still at the beginning of my life as a researcher, I found that trying to detach myself from my own opinions to analyze a topic that is so dear to me, while being aware of my own biases, presented quite the challenge. I do not yet have the ability to identify all my assumptions and understand how they play a role in the interpretation of my findings. Accepting this was significant for two reasons. First, it is why I have decided to do research-creation. I wanted to let the work speak for what it is; let my hands do more work than my head and think about it afterwards. Second, it is also why I chose to set my research within a punk framework. I did not have a desire to dissociate myself from the process.

As a knitter

The pre-COVID me was a fierce crocheter. I have been doing it for more than 15 years. I always liked that it gave me clear directives: I did not have to think about how to make something, no need to come up with a concept. I just always followed patterns to create specific items. Crochet eased my insecurities and my feeling of not being creative. I always had a hard time coming up with my own designs/artworks. I struggled with this through art school and it made me feel inadequate. But when I crocheted, I felt safe. I was supposed to follow instructions, and I did it well. Plush toys, cushion covers, blankets, winter accessories: I made so much stuff without asking myself too many questions. My technique improved but more often than not, my personality didn't shine through my creations, with some exceptions.

FIGURES 1 and 2

Personal project for ARTE606, department of Art Education, Concordia University, 2020



When coronavirus hit us in March 2020, I was a bartender and I lost my job. Thinking this would last a few months, during which I could get paid by the government to relax at home, I decided to pick up knitting. How often, during adulthood, are we suddenly gifted with free time to do whatever we want? Unless you're rich, I'd say almost never. So, it seemed like an appropriate time to learn a new skill. I had tried to knit more than a decade earlier and had not really succeeded.

I fetched some beautiful yarn I had bought the year before at Stephen and Penelope in Amsterdam, my favorite yarn store, picked up my needles, cast on a couple of stitches and gave it a shot. At first, I thought it would take me a while to get the hang of it, but it's as if my hands had been waiting my whole life for this moment. The magic happened. I started to knit and I could not stop. Day and night, skipping meals, going to bed with the sun rising many times, I made a simple hat in no time. Then I made another, more complicated one. And suddenly, three months later, I had made four things and I knew how to kfb, k wyif, ssk, C12B and other fancy techniques that all had been, just a few weeks prior, a mystery to me.

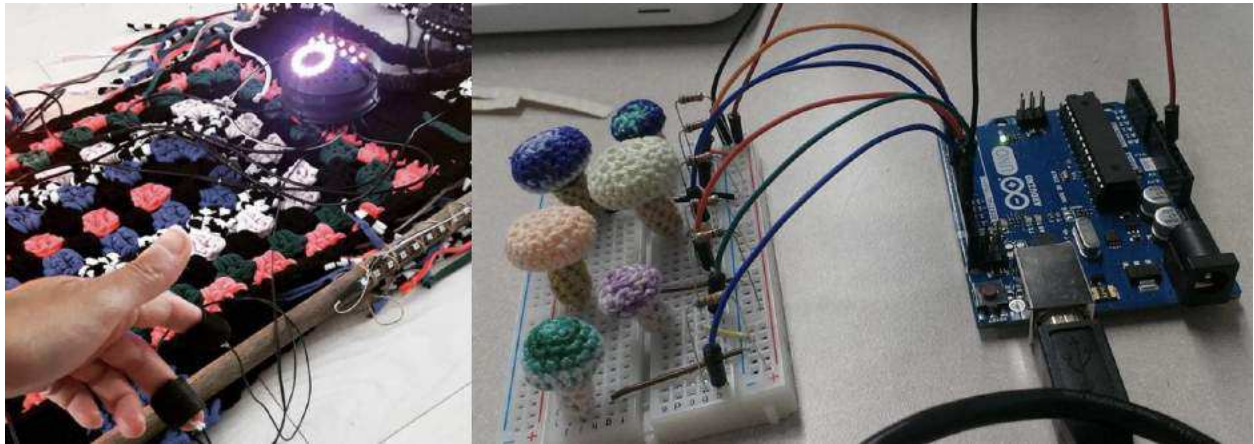
As the pandemic dragged on and on (and on), I picked up my crochet hook less and less because I could not put my knitting needles down. I think that my fear of Covid, the stress it generated and the uncertainty about the safety of the world unconsciously made knitting an act of reassurance for me, a kind of medicine. It allowed me to stay disconnected from everything that was not what my hands were doing and pretend everything was fine. Without realizing it, I ended up *needing* to knit. And because of that, I was able to create a stronger bond with the act of knitting and a more solid connection with the materials than I do when I crochet. I *cared* deeply about knitting because it made me feel better at a point in my life when I needed it the most. My relationship with knitting became intimate and I was able, for the first time in my life, to create using my feelings – my work became more abstract, more meditative, constructing fabric rather than pieces. I slowly started to let go of my need to understand exactly what the result would be and became more open to experimentation. Without knowing, I had started a research-creation process; the materials were informing my work and vice-versa.

As an fiber artist working with tech

My professional background is in makerspaces and interactive art studios. These environments have provided me with a solid context for my venture in better understanding how we define computation today. Moreover, it has kept my interest in fiber work on par with my enjoyment of interactive media. I once saw a TED talk by writer and artist Emily Wapnick (2015) about people she calls *multipotentialites*; those of us with no “one true calling”, the *stuck-in-limbo* group of humans who never seem to fit in one place. These people are my tribe. Rather than letting the horrifying realization that I’d never be ONE thing in life pump up my anxiety to Super Saiyan levels, I’ve decided to let go and embrace it. It has allowed me to draw unexpected parallels between the tangible and the digital, as well as push me to explore what emerges at the intersections of a multitude of seemingly unrelated practices without feeling bad that I don’t always know what the fuck I’m doing.

FIGURES 3 and 4

Personal experimentation at TAG, Milieux’s game lab, Concordia University, 2014-2017



CHAPTER 2

Theory and literature

Theoretical framework : how does punk relate to knitting?

FIGURE 5

Yarn grrrl cowl



Punk and academia don't really seem to go hand in hand, though it would be completely wrong to assume that no punk has ever brought any precious contribution to research in various fields that would not stereotypically be associated with the "spiked hair don't care" culture. For decades, there has been a lot of people within academia who identify with or are influenced by punk culture. Punk is characterized by its emphasis on individuality, DIY ethics, anti-establishment attitude, and a specific creative aesthetic that can be found in music, fashion,

and art. Academics who align with punk culture might integrate its values into their teaching, research, and scholarly work. Take for example the Punk Scholars Network. With members all across the world taking part in conferences, talks, debates as well as publishing punk-related journals like *Punk and Post-Punk* and various books like the *Global Punk* book series, PSN aims to present punk's conflicting and diverse culture “through a genuinely interdisciplinary approach to our subject and the contribution and participation of punk scholars, fans and enthusiasts within and outside traditional models of academia.”¹

Punk/knitting as a subculture

I could not pretend to write accurately about punk without having read Dick Hebdige's (1979) *Subculture, the meaning of style*. Hebdige's extensive account of the birth of punk, its philosophy and its codes was an excellent starting point to establish a frame for this paper. In his book, he argues that “no subculture has sought with more grim determination than the punks to detach itself from the taken-for-granted landscape of normalized forms” (p.19), a statement that, to me, applies to knitting as a subculture within the broader maker culture. In a world of 3D printers and automated machines, knitters form the resistance army pushing back the ever-growing space digital fabrication takes in the maker culture's landscape of today. It is also a concrete, soft and warm action against the cold, sterile consumer mentality. It's a conscious decision to NOT buy what is forced upon you. It's a way to say, “Thank you, capitalism, but I'd rather sit here sipping hot cocoa and make my own stuff than shop your readymade crap.” You might decide to buy second-hand sweaters, unknit them and remake one of your own. You might also decide to spend a lot of money on hand-dyed, hand-spun yarn from a local artisan. Either way, you're either helping the environment or putting money in the pocket of someone who needs it a lot more than big, soulless chain stores.

Knitting is bricolage

Hebdige (1979) goes on to describe how subcultures are constructed around the concept of bricolage, which occurs when a community uses various modes and rituals outside of spoken language to define their style, beliefs and paradigms (p.103). He writes: “These magical systems of connection have a common feature: they are capable of infinite extension because basic elements can be used in a variety of improvised combinations to generate new meanings within them” (p.103). What is yarn if not a knitter's most precious *basic element*? Moreover, I would argue that knitting mirrors punk in terms of the diversity of styles, traditions and cultural elements it borrows from. Hebdige (1979) calls punk a “whole ensemble, literally safety-pinned together, [...] combining elements which had originally belonged to completely different epochs” (p.26). A quick look at Ravelry², one of Internet's most loved pattern directory for knitters and crocheters, demonstrates just that: delicate 1800-inspired lace shawls cohabit with geometric designs that could very well have been knitted by Bauhaus students. Bright neon granny square cardigans can be found in all color combinations and if you're looking for a fair isle cat sweater to keep your hairless house pet warm, look no further, Ravelry's got it all.

There have been many contributions to the topic of punk by amazing (yet often underrepresented) female scholars, artists and researchers that are just as insightful as those by their male peers, and I want to include some of them in this paper. My comparison of punk with knitting is based on Laura Way's (2021) research paper, *Punk is just a state of mind: Exploring what punk means to older punk women*, in which she describes the four pillars of punk: DIY, subversion, political consciousness and community.

¹ www.punkscholarsnetwork.com

² www.ravelry.com

DIY

Way (2021) describes DIY, or “do-it-yourself”, as a way of making things that promotes responsibility, autonomy and community, as in you do things for yourself but also for others. She brings up the notion of *defiant labor* (p.114), which is very much in line with the point I made about resisting capitalist consumerism by knitting your own clothes.

If there's one thing to take away from the COVID pandemic, it's that making stuff yourself is healthy and rewarding, especially during periods of social isolation. Pictures of sourdough bread took social media by storm; diamond painting was all the rage; DIY was at the heart of most people's daily activities. I can't remember how many of my friends showed me their valiant attempts at knitting. Learning a craft and sharing the outcome on social media platforms allowed people to feel a connection to others through various online communities (Robertson & Vinebaum, 2016).

Subversion

The second pillar of punk is subversion. In her research, subversion is associated with the process of identifying (or not) with the societal image of femininity, especially within a male-dominated culture like punk. Hew view echos what Leblanc (1999) says in her book: “It is in resisting these gender norms that girls both subvert and challenge femininity, engaging in a reconstruction of its norms” (p.27). Having to face gender-related challenges to be a part of your community speaks to me in many ways, both as a knitter and a maker. It's no secret that the knitting community is mainly composed of female-identifying members like me. However, when I tell people that knitting is my gig, no one expects that from someone looking like me working in tech. Ironically, when I teach a knitting class at my local yarn shop, people can't believe I do electronics and soldering for a living. As far as gender identification goes, well, do we really need to go into how the maker community is male-dominated and hard to integrate for women, BIPOC and people from the LGBTQIA2+ community? “For some girls, their dissatisfaction with norms of conventional femininity in large part precipitated their entry into punk. Not only do these girls resist the same strictures as their male peers, but they fight femininity on the most hostile of battlegrounds: the boys' turf” (Leblanc, 1999, p.27). Others have written about it much more eloquently than I ever could. Read anything by Lilypad microcontroller's founder Leah Buechley or Jane Margolis and Allan Fisher (2002)'s *Unlocking the Clubhouse: Women in Computing*.

While the knitting community is mostly made up of women, that doesn't mean that the knitting world doesn't have a few male celebrities. I've used the term deliberately: because they are so few, when a male knitter puts good work out there, it seems to elevate them to a higher status rather quickly. I think it's a good thing to see some male representation on that scale and I have huge respect for male knitting artists fighting gender stereotypes. Stephen West³, the Amsterdam-based American knitting superstar, is one of my biggest sources of inspiration. Most of the shawls I've made for this project are knitted from his patterns. He has become one of the most respected knitters worldwide and for a reason: his designs are bold, gorgeous and unexpected. Louis Boria⁴, known as Brooklyn Boy Knits, is an Puerto Rican American knitting designer who rose to fame after posting videos of himself knitting on the NYC subway. He's the owner of his own clothing brand, a teacher, a conference speaker and a great representative of the male and latinx knitting community. To me, their contribution to the knitting community is very punk.

³ www.westknits.com

⁴ www.instagram.com/brooklynboyknits

Political consciousness

Punk adopts anarchist principles. Way (2021) states that the broader principles of punk culture include fighting social injustice as well as supporting movements of anti-fascism and anti-racism (p.116). Knitting has been shown time and again to do just that. Think of the Pussyhat Project, the nationwide effort to knit thousands of pink hats to wear at the Women March against Trump in 2017. Look at Janet Morton's body of work, in which monumental, knitted pieces offer a profound reflection of the socio-economic state of the world and themes like homelessness, the mundane and femininity. Think of all the times you saw something that had been yarn-bombed or covered in knitted fabric in a public space. Expressing disagreement, exposing societal concerns or reclaiming space, whatever it is, knitters can and will have a political agenda. I strongly agree with this but I won't go further into it in the context of this thesis because it isn't the focus of my research.

Community

Concerts, protests, squatting houses, knitting circles, craft fairs, social media groups: crafters, punks and punk crafters all share the need to gather and be among people with similar values and interests. I would agree with Way (2021), who notes that the notion of community is very much embedded in DIY, in the sense that you do/make to take care of people around you (p.118). Punk communities, like knitters', can be direct (e.g., a bar or a yarn shop) or, let's say, *magical* (I totally made that up). Yes. That would be the punk 'scene' around the world or the knitters' community of practice, where all the people having these things in common on the planet are part of this big group, even though they might never meet each other in person. You have an invisible bond to millions of other people who all unconsciously understand and respect your craft/beliefs. At any point in time, you can be sure that many other people are doing the same thing that you love dearly, that you are not alone, and that punk/knitting will live on. There is magic in this world.

Literature review

Mechanics and effects

Knitting is a way to produce fabric using yarn and sticks. One or two strands of yarn are looped through themselves in a series of twists called knits and purls. There are hundreds of knit-purl combinations, called stitches, that can be used to create different styles and textures. A series of stitches forms a row. Each row is built by looping more yarn through the stitches of the previous row and so on. The repetition of this process creates a piece of fabric, which can be shaped as needed through various techniques such as increasing, decreasing, knitting several stitches together or casting on new stitches in specific rows. The sticks used are called needles. Needles are made out of wood, metal, or plastic. They come in different sizes called needle gauges. They are either pointy on one end, double-pointed or linked together by a plastic or metal cable, allowing the knitter to knit tubes or very long rows of stitches without them falling off the needles.

Technically, that is what knitting is. But if that was all, this thesis would be boring as f*ck.

Knitting is not (only) what you think it is

There are significant stereotypes surrounding knitters and knitting culture in general. As Joanne Turney (2009) explains in her book, "This is primarily because the meanings of – or the popular associations of – knitting are rather limited: old ladies, woolly objects, and the old-fashioned" (p.1). Indeed, the perception of what knitting is did not change as much as knitting changed; because knitting rarely makes the news, one will most likely not know how the craft has evolved, unless they are knitters themselves and keep up to date with latest trends

through pattern search engines and social media groups.

****BREAKING NEWS******BREAKING NEWS******BREAKING NEWS******BREAKING NEWS****

- There are no age restrictions for knitting.
- There are no gender restrictions for knitting.
- There are no style restrictions for knitting.

Joanne Turney's book, *The Culture of knitting* (2009), is an invaluable source for my research. It lays the foundation of my thesis by describing how knitting has adapted, survived and evolved since the 70s. Though somewhat dry, I will refer to this book a lot because it provides historical background and connections to various theories, as well as extensive research about the perception of knitting in the society of the 70s, the decade when punk came to life. From necessity to pastime, knitting underwent a series of radical shifts in purpose. Up until the mid-70s, knitting was taught to girls in home economics as part of a needlecraft curriculum, first to keep the constant flow of ready-made, tamed and busy with their hands so they would not get busy with their brain housewives going. Later, it was meant to provide girls with skills required to find employment, "but also as a means of instilling discipline and obedience" (p.13), those prized qualities that made for the perfect, low-maintenance life companion for the busy modern man. In that sense, I find it very interesting that knitting *became* punk. It used the very things it strived to teach (eg. controlled leisure, compliance with gender norms and annihilation of individuality), against themselves. Knitters started to care about their craft. They viewed it as a way to show their creativity. They *wanted* to spend time knitting, thanks to the arrival in the mid-80s of various women's magazines such as *Prima* or *Essentials*. These fashion and home magazines would present a different pattern each month, with emphasis on how cheap it was to make your own clothes vs buy them. That brought women to start knitting colorful and extravagant things for themselves. For fun. Imagine that.

On computation

Entire books have been written about computational thinking as well as blogs, essays, theses and podcasts. According to Denning & Tedre's (2019) book on the subject, computational thinking is "the mental skills and practices for designing that get computers to do jobs for us and explaining and interpreting the world as a complex of information processes" (p.4). It was Jeannette Wing, a kick-ass computer science professor with an extensive and impressive resume, who popularized the term *computational thinking* amongst scholars and educators, thanks to her short 2006 essay in *Communications of the ACM*. It starts with her writing that "[computational thinking] represents a universally applicable attitude and skill set everyone, not just computer scientists, would be eager to learn and use" (p.33). Wow, who would have thought? Definitely not us, knitters, who've been thinking computationally way, way before anyone came up with a word for it...

On knitting and computation

Bruce Sterling's (2013) *A computational model of knitting*, a much too short blog post written for Wired magazine, has to be my all time favorite text on computation and knitting. The father of cyberpunk writing about my favorite craft, even if only for half a page, was enough to catapult me straight into a spiderweb of crazy ideas and intersectionality; a tangled network of yarn and lines of codes. A few researchers have also written on computation and fiber crafts, like how mathematical formulas can be knitted in complex geometric shapes (Craig et al., 2012) or how electronics can be embedded in fabric to create interactive textiles (Buechley & Perner-Wilson, 2012).

On knitting and well-being

A lot of research has been done about the positive effects of knitting on our well-being. (Riley, Corkhill, Morris, 2013; Potter, 2017; Corkhill et al., 2015). Additionally, some essays and books have been written about knitting for the community (Greer, 2008; Wertheim & Wertheim, 2014). I have found this research helpful in defining what knitting represents, here and now, both as an individual tool for self-help and as a vector of community, two important aspects that I dig deeper into later on in this paper.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology and method

Research-Creation

“There is a flurry of excitement about the potential of arts research [...]” (Blair, 2016, p.66) This. This is a statement that makes me want to do research. To *make* research. In research-creation, “art is not used to illustrate the findings, but rather provide a greater meaning of the findings.” (Blair, 2016, p.68). Drawing on Cynthia Noury and Louis-Claude Paquin’s (2020) notion that this type of research “consists in a constant back and forth between exploration, which requires experiential and objective thinking rooted in the imagination and understanding, which requires conceptual and objective thinking rooted in rationality” (p.2), I see this project as a dialogue between what my head thinks and what my heart feels, all while infusing my thought (and creative) process with reading, writing and knitting.

Research-creation encompasses different categories of research, as argued by Chapman & Sawchuk (2015) in an article about their experience co-directing the Mobile Media Lab at Concordia University. The model that I think best describes my project is *creation-as-research*. When talking about their experience at the MML, which they categorize as a *creation-as-research* project, they explain that it is where “creation is approached as a form of research in its own right: research is understood as both a noun and a verb, and creation is not perceived strictly as a stand-in for art making” (p.50). Am I doing research every time I knit? Yes.

Researching, Knitting, Crying, Knitting, Repeat

Being so far away from everything and everyone that I associate with comfort and safety, I found refuge in my hand-made little bubble of softness.

** How to knit yourself a cocoon: a simple guide of (possibly very complicated) steps **

1. *Find a pattern.*
2. *Buy some yarn.*
3. *Suppress doubt.*
4. *Knit it.*
5. *Finish it.*

Of course, being the neurodivergent, hyper practical yet hypersensitive being that I am, my step-by-step process is never that simple.

1. ~~*Find a pattern*~~ Though you've bought about 245987 patterns that you were so excited to knit one day, on the day that you're ready to knit, you have exactly zero exciting pattern. Enjoy a trip down the pattern rabbit hole and see you in a day or a week, who knows. Just don't forget to stay hydrated.

2. ~~*Buy some yarn*~~ Spend hours at the yarn store, carry yarn from one section to the next, leave your color combinations aside, look at them from all angles, change your palette, decide

on something, buy it, go home. Browse online yarn shops out of curiosity, create doubt, make little color palette cards on Illustrator, send them to your friends on Messenger for their feedback. Go back to the yarn store, get a refund, go home, start over. Settle on something else, plan another trip to the yarn store, have a little anxiety attack when you realize they'll be closed for the next two days. Wait in anguish, change your mind a dozen times, walk back to the store, think long and hard and rebuy what you bought to begin with.

3. ~~Suppress doubt~~ Fail this step and go back to step one many, many times.

4. ~~Knit it~~ Talk to yourself a lot. Get comfortable, get a migraine cause you knitted for too long, trade knitting for stretching. Stop knitting to eat something, forget to eat cause you can't stop knitting. Enjoy all the headspace knitting gives you, let it overflow with thoughts about the drama in your life, cry it out until you can't even see what row you're at. Let knitting feed your desire to knit even more and repeat steps one through four as many times as you want or until you run out of space to store unfinished projects at home. If that last condition is met, consider renting a storage unit or proceed to step five.

5. (optional) ~~Finish it~~ Finish part of your knitting, lose motivation halfway through, find yourself with lots of yarn ends that you'll never weave in, and put your project in timeout for eternity. Alternatively, weave in all those damned ends, catch your breath, look at your work with pride, stretch your fingers, drink some water, find out there's a new pattern out from that designer you love. Hello again, step one.

FIGURES 6 AND 7

Left: colors for Slumbershawl and right: colors for Briochevron wrap



FIGURE 8

Choosing colors for Peak color



CHAPTER 4

Shawl Extravaganza

Over the course of my two years in Paris, I have knitted (and crocheted) a bunch of stuff, including 12 shawls, which together form the body of work done for this research. Like Yoko Ono's *Laundry piece*, I took each shawl out of my knitting basket and wrote a little bit about all of them. I even practiced a few times. I would pick one at random and just say whatever came to mind, without thinking about it too much. To write about my own work is a very cathartic experience. Each piece feels very intimate, as it holds so much baggage, both good and terrible. Looking at the shawls as a whole, one thing is obvious: I LOVE COLOR. Colorful fabric is my armor, my confidence suit, my refuge and my way of not showing anyone that I'm scared shit most of the time. Won't stop me from doing crazy things like move to the other side of the world for love, though. Fear pushes me forward, color softens the fall.

In order to understand everything I'll write next, you need to learn a few words of knitter's language.

Scrap yarn: that's what the tiny little bobbins of leftover yarn you have at the end of a project are called. The amount of scrap yarn you end up with varies greatly, so scrap yarn is used in various ways, from barely enough for a couple of stripes to knitting an entire section with it.

Frogging: that's the term we use for ripping out your knitting if you need to redo a section or start over. It's called frogging because "rip it" sounds like "ribbit", the sound a frog makes.

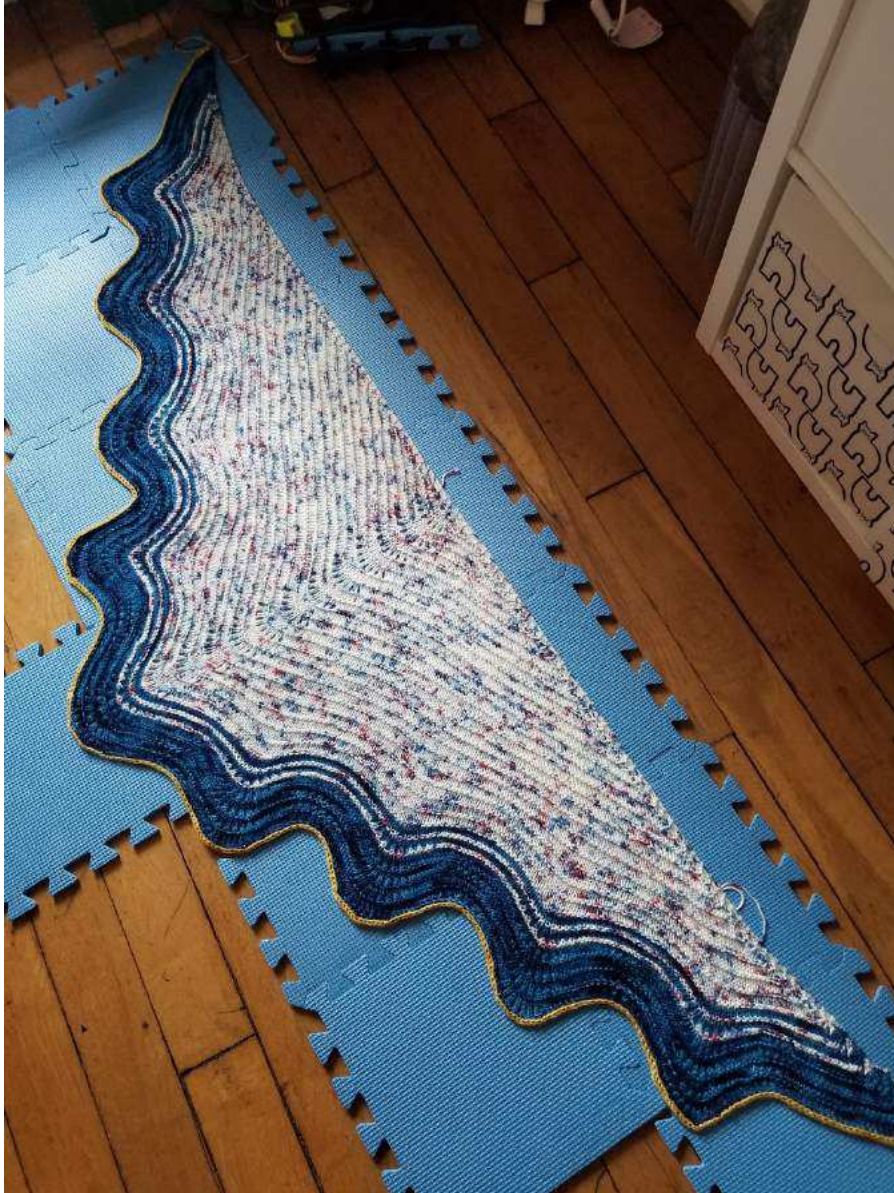
FYI: The next section includes some transcripts from recordings I made of me talking to myself while knitting. I've chosen some excerpts that I feel give a good idea of my general state of mind + offer insightful remarks on the shawls, why I made them and how they make me feel. These snippets of various monologues are unedited, so don't look at the syntax too much (the same could be said about this entire paper but hey, this is a punk thesis).

Improvised shawl

This is the shawl that started everything. The shape is wrong as I was still in my "winging it" phase and didn't know how to properly use all the required knitting techniques for shawl construction. My lack of skills is visible (to me anyway, specially when I compare this work to newer pieces). I absolutely love this color combination. The yarn is from Stephen West's yarn store in Amsterdam. My dad bought it for me during our trip to Europe (his very first time on a plane and outside Canada) to go see a progressive rock concert in the Netherlands in 2019. It is no surprise that Stephen West is the designer behind most of the patterns I've knitted since. We share the same love of color and organized chaos.

Slumbershawl

I started this one in Canada and finished it in France. It's one of Westknit's simplest designs and my first venture into the wonderful realm of weird and fantastical shawl patterns. The color choice is soft and safe. I made this while I was still not too confident in my skills. Looking closely at this shawl now, I can see that it is very tightly knit. Tension is something that improves over time. Today, I am a very loose knitter, which is surprising considering how anxious and insecure I am as a person.

FIGURE 9*Slumbershawl*The Doodler

This is a fun one. Small but fierce, it packs a lot of textures for such a tiny shawl. I remember spending almost half a day choosing the colors for this. Kinda funny how the wavy part goes dramatically up and down, held together by a twisted spiral of screaming pink – this one feels like a very, very accurate prediction of the tumultuous life I was gonna have on the other side of the ocean. On the bright side, when I made this is when I realized I really knew how to knit and I was so fucking proud.

FIGURE 10

Some progress on The Doodler



Dotted rays

I made this in the summer of 2022. I had just moved out of my boyfriend's apartment because things were really starting to fall apart (the first time of many). I found a room in a shared flat with a lady who was not very permissive. With no access to the living room or dining area, I was confined to my room and made this in less than two weeks. It's a lot of grey, but there's a flashy part in the last section of the shawl, which was very much me trying to pretend everything was fine, or maybe it was me screaming for help. Or both.

Textures unite

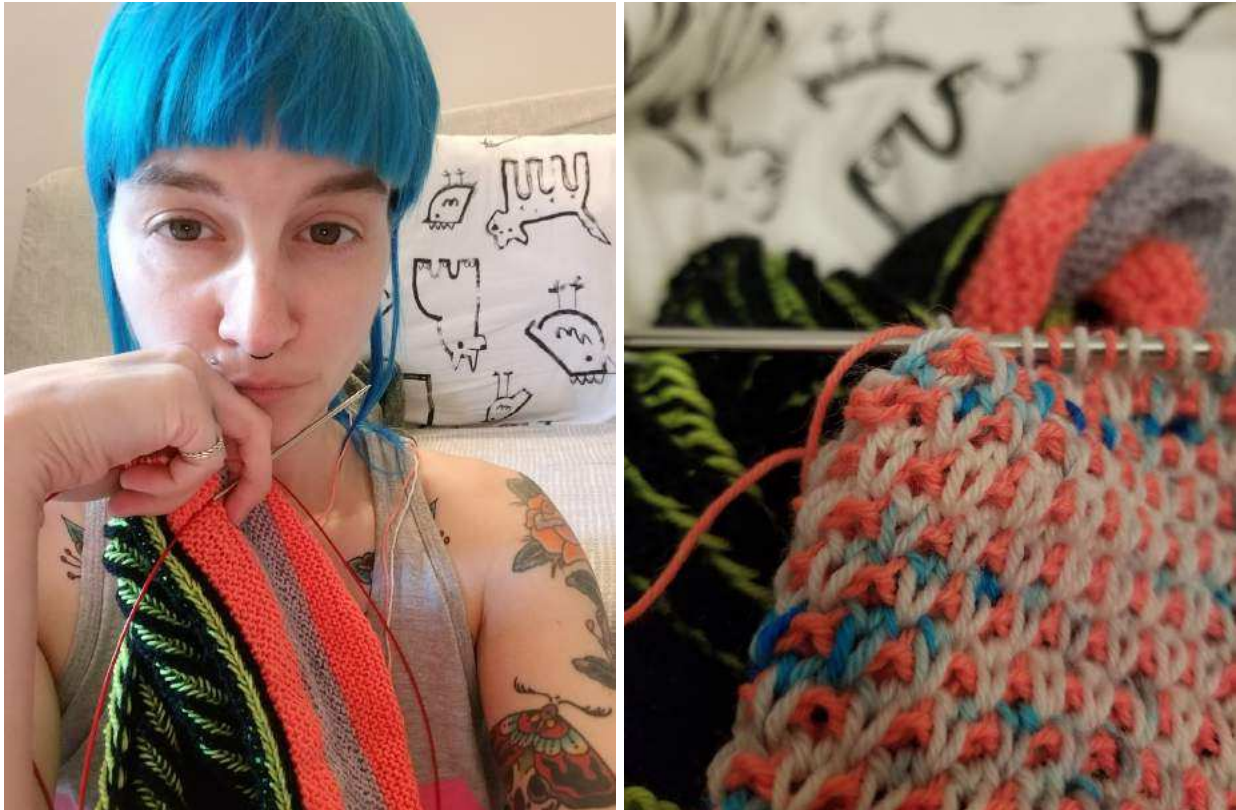
I made a big part of this while on Christmas vacation in Copenhagen. I lived there for two years a decade ago, and to this day, that city remains one of my favorites. It is my second home and it has been a peace haven for me while living in France. I would escape Paris regularly to go chill out at my best friend's in the land of *hygge* and slow living. Lots of colors, textures, chaos, and confused energy in this one. Figuring out color placement took forever. I used yarn that was planned from another shawl (hello, complicated step two!), combined with scrap yarn from another project. I cried so much while making this, trying to figure out if I should go back to Canada or not. Maybe I should have. But then again, would I have knitted all these crazy shawls that I now love so much?

"I put a lot of my soul into what I make. Huh, it's very funny, because I usually don't end up wearing the shawls that I make so much, at least I have not so far. And I don't know if it's because they are emotionally charged. Or if it's because I don't really need them once they're done. Like they fulfilled their emotional support role just by being made. But I do feel a strange attachment to them that kind of, mm, that kind of resembles the way you would, like, cherish like a treasure or maybe I also kind of feel, like, they are time bombs and I can't really get so close to them. Because then, they will kind of wear back off on me and then I'll start to feel everything that I was feeling while I was making them.

And that's going to make me uncomfortable or sad. But, I do feel the amount of baggage that they, that they contain. Hmm, there's no doubt about that also because some of them take weeks to make. They're just a part of my daily life and they are a true labor of love. Hum, but also a labor of sadness, and of emotional discharge, and, and difficult memories. They become like, very emotionally complex objects that I'm not always sure how to approach or use."

FIGURES 11 and 12

Left: knitting the Textures unite shawl and right: Textures unite detail



Willow

This is the only one that I made with the purpose to give it away. It's a long overdue Christmas gift for my goddaughter, Jeanne. She's three. We chose the yarn together before I left for France. Every time she video called me, she'd ask "Qu'est-ce que tu tricotes, matante Jess?" [What are you knitting, auntie Jess?] I kept that one a secret from her. Then one day, she left me a voice message on FB, asking if I would show her how to knit. I was in the middle of the street, unlocking my bike after leaving the Canadian cultural center. I started sobbing like a fountain, snot and everything. That little shawl was a very strong connection to home for me. My most precious one in the bunch. I have yet to give her the shawl but since I've been back, I did show her how to use a knitting loom. I'm one proud auntie.

Twists and turns

Twists and turns. How fitting. This one was made with yarn that was gifted to me by a

stranger from one of my Facebook knitting groups. I had broken up with K for good (or so I thought), had moved into my own apartment and I was broke as a joke. I commented on a post somewhere that I was having a hard time and this lady in the US offered to send me yarn. Just like that, one day there was a small package in my mailbox. It even came with a card and a lovely message. I was so moved and still think about how freaking nice that was (cue the fountain again). This design was a big challenge to knit with lots of different stitches and construction techniques. I pushed myself hard, using this opportunity to drown the anger and the sadness in yarn and YouTube tutorials. My head and my heart kept going back to K. I almost frogged that shawl many, many times. I am emotionally unable to wear it, so I gave it to my sister.

FIGURE 13

Twists and turns before blocking



Peak color

This is a patchwork project of scrap yarn and new yarn that I had but didn't know what to do with. Yarn attracts dust and hairs like a magnet, so I kept finding K's beautiful curly hair mixed up in the skeins. Having to pull it out brought up so much sadness and nostalgia every time. On several occasions, I would pick up my knitting and suddenly find hair poking out several rows below. Not wanting to frog my work, I cut as much of it as possible and left the tangled bits in. He's really everywhere... Fucking hell.

Starflake

This is the biggest shawl I ever made. I used a yellow yarn that is absolutely not in my usual color palette. This is quite a complex pattern, which is good to knit when I need a break from my own thoughts. I made this one while working on Peak color and Bubbles and brioche. I always have several works in progress. I'll often knit something easy while working on something complicated to balance things out.

FIGURE 14

Starflake on the blocking mat



Bubbles and brioche

Another scrap yarn project. I had gotten back with K (silly me) and I felt optimistic. This is my favorite shawl. This one traveled with me to a couple of really nice places in France. It

reminds me of the sea in Collioure, the burning sun, the seafood I ate while the seagulls begged for scraps, the train ride to Alsace, the Gewürztraminer I drank in the wine cellar with my friend Regis, the gorgeous, old houses of Colmar and the feeling that everything was gonna be just fine for the queen of wishful thinking.

“But shawls are a kind of space where everything is possible. There's a shawl for every type of emotion. A shawl is meant to keep you warm. And it does just that. And it does for your body, but it also does that for your soul. Mm, shawls are very soothing for the mind as well as for the skin as well as for the, I don't know. For everything.”

FIGURE 15

Bubbles and brioche (detail)



Herbivore

This shawl is extremely special to me and I could write an entire thesis about it, but I'll keep it short. I started this one in the sky between Paris and Tokyo last year. I am terrified of flying, so knitting helps me a lot on a plane, especially if I have 15 hours to kill in seat 38D. My time in France was coming to an end and before going back home, I went on a three week trip around Japan to clear my head, quiet my screaming heart and experience the wonders of my favorite culture and food. I picked a simple pattern that I could knit without having to count stitches or do anything too complicated while on the train around the country. Many extraordinary things happened to me in Japan. As I picked up my knitting in the train between Osaka and Shikoku, we suddenly came to a stop in the middle of nowhere. Policemen and paramedics appeared. The conductor came through the coaches. There had been an accident. We hit someone and they didn't make it. I remember seeing feet with no shoes poking out of a

white sheet. They had white socks on. In Kochi, I found a yarn store by chance. It is owned by an elderly man who inherited it from his father and his grandfather before him. We talked for hours and he gave me some of the yellow mohair I used in this shawl. He wanted to retire but had no one to take over the store. It made me so sad and I would have done it in a heartbeat if I could. In that same city, I got very drunk with a group of *yakuza* at a food market. They were incredibly nice and polite. In Tosashimizu, I witnessed a man pouring the ashes of his deceased wife into the ocean. We watched the sunset together side by side and cried. I took a hot spring bath in the remote mountains of the mysterious Iya Valley, where so many samurai went to hide at the beginning of the Meiji era. This bright yellow shawl is infused with such strong memories, beauty, joy, death, and endless gratefulness that I'm alive and able to experience moments such as these. This was one of the most meaningful trips of my life and this shawl is dedicated to the stranger who died on the train tracks and Atsuko. May they rest easy.

FIGURE 16

Knitting Herbivore on the Tokyo metro



Briochevron wrap

This shawl is my *bricolage* moment. I started this one in Paris and I have yet to finish it (step five – Finish it – is always optional, after all). It is entirely knitted with leftover yarn from all the other shawls I made for this project. I wanted to knit something that would bring everything together, with no real attention to color placement. Every section tells a bit of another shawl's story, in no particular order. Where I once found K's hair all over the yarn, it has now been happily replaced by the soft, white hairs of my newly adopted cat, Patate. This shawl will be big, meaningful, soft and beautiful; it is everything I wish my life in Paris could have been.

"There's a reason why I made so many fucking shawls, right? Like, I've been so distressed. I've been so depressed. I've been so sad. I've been so isolated. I've created this world of, of softness and comfort. I've wrapped myself into this. This fluffy, beautiful, colorful fabric that I've created with all my sorrows, and my tears, and my efforts, and my energy and my love."

FIGURE 17

Knitting the Briochevron wrap, captured by Andrée



FIGURES 18 AND 19

Twists and turns (detail)



FIGURE 20

Willow



FIGURE 21

So many shawls



FIGURES 22 AND 23

Left: Bergerie Nationale de Rambouillet, France. Right: Stephen & Penelope, Amsterdam

**FIGURE 24**

Yarn scraps



FIGURES 25, 26, 27 AND 28

Top left: Slumbershawl. Top right: Herbivore. Bottom left: Improvised shawl, Dotted rays, Slumbershawl. Bottom right: Textures unite.



FIGURE 29*Dotted rays*

FIGURE 30

Patate and The Doodler



FIGURE 31

Starflake



FIGURE 32

Improvised shawl and Peak color



FIGURE 33

Bubbles and brioche



CHAPTER 5

What does it all mean?

Through my research, I found that knitting is a punk way to compute and a punk way to heal. While I thought I moved away from computation, in reality, it stayed with me throughout this project. I realized that I couldn't write about knitting without including computational thinking, as the very act of knitting IS a form of computation.

That realization helped me make peace with the fact that when I knit, I don't stop developing skills that are considered more *relevant* in our society. I may be punk, but I've also been drilled into thinking that when you're smart, you need to be doing things that are considered smart by the majority, at all times. I'm not kidding. Try to attend school as a gifted kid. Your parents tell you that you were probably just tired if you get anything below A and that you'll cure cancer one day. I've lived an entire life with the feeling that I'm not doing enough, that I'm somehow wasting my potential by investing so much time and pouring so much love into a craft like knitting. This thesis journey has helped me see my craft as my power. Creative people bring so much to the table. I am a knitter and it is not just good enough. It is in fact fucking great.

Knitting is computation

Knitting is often considered a hobby and not given enough space in the realm of maker activities and the culture of making in general. A good example of this is the omission of knitting in one of the most important pieces of literature on makerspaces, Mark Hatch's (2013) *Maker Manifesto*, which goes to show how the definition of making has been narrowed down to only include makers using digital tools and tech. But the fact is that knitting is a great way to learn about computation. When we think of computational thinking, of course we think of a computer (duh). Logical problem solving makes a computer the perfect machine to develop computational skills. Because schools are cutting down arts classes and makerspaces are almost exclusively offering digital fabrication machines to their members, we do not work much with our hands anymore. We forget or simply do not realize that there are other amazing, analog ways to develop our computational thinking skills. As we keep discarding traditional crafts from the school curricula in favor of the obvious technological equipment, we continue to perpetuate the idea that everybody needs to own a tablet, use VR glasses or build robots to learn science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) competencies and thrive in the future.

A pattern is a program.

Drawing from David Liu's (2015) course notes for his class called *Principles of Programming Languages*, as well as Bruce Sterling's (2013) blog post on computational knitting, I want to highlight some areas of similarities between programming and knitting.

- Learning a new language

It can be daunting to read a pattern for the first time. Just like code, knitting is written in a language that is specific to the craft. It uses a ton of normalized abbreviations that will most likely make no sense to the beginner. When you start knitting, your body also needs to learn a whole new way of operating. It is often the hardest thing to get right. When I was a crochet teacher, most of the students found it very difficult to figure out how to place their hands in order for the yarn and hook to cooperate and create stitches. It requires a lot of practice, which eventually leads to the tension being more even and the mechanical rhythm of knitting becoming very natural. Structure-wise, loops can be found in both practices: what's called a

loop in programming is a set of instructions that repeats until a condition is reached. It has the same function as the instructions between asterisks in a pattern, instructing the knitter to repeat these sets of instructions X number of times until the desired pattern is completed.

FIGURES 34 AND 35

Left: excerpt from an example code in Arduino. Right: excerpt from the pattern “Willow” by Veera Välimäki (2014).

<pre>int sensorReading = 0; int ledState = LOW; void setup() { pinMode(ledPin, OUTPUT); Serial.begin(9600); }</pre>	<pre>Setup row (WS): K2, pm, yo, pm, p1, pm, yo, pm, k2. Row 1 (RS): K2, sm, yo, knit to m, yo, sm, k1, sm, yo, knit to m, yo, k2. Row 2 (WS): K2, sm, purl to last marker (slipping all other mark- ers), sm, k2. Work rows 1 and 2 - 19 more times [87 sts].</pre>
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- Understanding algorithms

An algorithm is “a sequence of steps taken to solve a problem” (Liu, 2015). A knitting pattern is made of algorithms, a fundamental element of computation. It is a set of instructions that one follows to produce a desired outcome, exactly like code compiled into a program. In knitting, the *problem* is the fact that your brand new skein of yarn doesn't come in a pre-made sweater. The *solution* is the pattern and the needles, the *steps* are the instructions, and the *resolved problem* is the finished garment you end up with.

- Debugging

Just like in code, errors occur in knitting. You may drop a stitch somewhere without noticing and then suddenly, your whole count is off. Even if just by 1, multiply one by as many rows as your pattern has and it won't be hard to see how much of an impact one little mistake has when everything is interconnected, with yarn when knitting and with commands when programming. Finding and fixing knitting mistakes, which is called *tinking back* or *frogging*, requires the knitter to apply some reverse engineering to the work, like a programmer would when debugging code. That is a critical skill in computational thinking, encouraging attention to details and systematic problem solving.

- Storage and memory

“While the needles constitute the main memory, there is an immense amount of external memory available” (Sterling, 2013). In his short article on computational knitting, Sterling (2013) compares knitting needles to a computer storage space, where unallocated memory (skein of yarn) becomes memory bytes with every stitch stored on the needles. I would add that the memories of the knitter, which travel from the head, through the arms and along the yarn, also nest between stitches. Places you visit, people you think about, emotions you feel, it all gets tangled up in the threads.

One thing is clear to me: knitting CAN and WILL help you learn computation stuff, which is one of the reasons why I argue that knitting belongs in schools, but it does so much more than that. Knitting doesn't have to be taught as computation, as it belongs in a lot of other places. It is art, it is science, it is personal development, it has history, it requires some math here and there, it can be discussed both from a social and a political perspective... Don't tell me that knitting is not the perfect topic to include in any formal schooling curriculum or in any informal schooling programs, because it absolutely is.

The psychological effects of knitting

I strongly believe that knitting HEALS. It does for me and here's how. Whether we knit by necessity or for pleasure, the time spent focusing on what the hands are doing gives the mind a lot of room. Like a fancy fidget spinner, transforming yarn into soft, fluffy fabric turns mindless knitting into a mindful experience with great benefits.

- Chill out.

Knitting can reduce stress and anxiety. Dr. Herbert Benson, author of *The Relaxation Response* (2009), explains that repetitive movements, like the ones involved in knitting, can have the same effect as meditation and help your brain slow down. Grounding yourself in the rhythm of your fingers repeatedly moving soft material around at a regular pace almost feels like a body scan.

- Feel happier.

Why else would anyone spend 234876 hours making stuff that you can sew in half the time or buy with a click? Riley, Corkhill & Morris (2013), conducted a survey on knitting. With more than 3 500 respondents, the research concluded that knitting can improve mood and sense of well-being by boosting serotonin levels. More serotonin = better mood and improved well-being. Again, magic (and chemistry).

- Live a longer, healthier life, thanks to those sweaters you knit.

Because knitting requires a lot of concentration, Riley et al. (2013) state that it improves your cognitive function by simultaneously engaging various parts of the brain. Knitting reduces the risk of cognitive decline as you age, makes you look fabulous and produces the best Christmas presents. Best brain workout ever.

- Enjoy therapeutic benefits for mental health conditions.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Ann Futterman Collier (2012), who runs the Well Being Lab at Northern Arizona University, has researched the therapeutic effects of textile crafts. Knitting has been used as a complementary therapy for various mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Knitting taught me patience. It improved my ability to focus, it is extremely rewarding and has become quite meditative over time. I find that there are no negative side effects to knitting. Yes, it's hard in the beginning. It takes time. But you know what? Even THAT is nice and healthy. Going through hardships to achieve something made me feel good in the long run. It's part of the process. Of any process. Do you skateboard? I bet you bruised your behind a few times when you started. Play an instrument? Your first attempts probably didn't win you a Grammy. Failure is an important part of any endeavor. Marybeth C. Stalp and Therèsa M. Winge

(2017) wrote a beautiful and comprehensive paper on the benefits of failure, in which they state that “failure is an important part of the creative process, and plays a role in most of our lives, although we are hesitant to admit this shared experience” (p.90). Think about all those disastrous *nailed it* cake photos, or the first time you tried to draw someone's portrait. In the wise words of Mr. Miyagi in *Karate Kid*, “First learn stand. Then learn fly.” No way around it.

Knitting is still super relevant, maybe even more now than it has been in decades. In times when resources for mental health are hardly available, it is so, so freaking necessary to explore and celebrate alternative, unconventional, and creative ways of healing. Now, it might come as a surprise, but I'm not a psychologist or a doctor. Hell, I'm not even a life coach. But I know from experience that knitting grounds me in the *now* (I have no choice, otherwise I might lose count of my stitches and that's when knitting makes me want to set something on fire). Because it keeps my hands busy with something other than infinite scrolling on social media, it gives me a lot of head space. It activates my body and allows me to find mechanical, meditative rhythm. Breathe in, breathe out. Knit this stitch, purl this stitch, knit this stitch...

Until suddenly, I end up with the coolest new scarf, sweater, blanket that, whatever it is, I made it MYSELF. That alone makes me very proud and it also makes me very punk. Why? Because DIY is at the core of both punk (Way, 2021) and knitting. Furthermore, when I make something, I pick up colors according to my own definition of beauty and no one else's. That is my way of opposing the normalized, commercial concepts of color harmony and beauty, which is in turn showing that my knitting can be a tool for subversion.

Then I go out and someone says “Holy sh*t, your [what you made] is beautiful! Where'd you get it?” and then I reply “Thanks! I made it” and BOOM! Red cheeks, beaming smile, shaky knees, I'm filled with this huge sense of accomplishment. It boosts my self-confidence, and feeling confident definitely contributes to well-being (Futterman-Collier, 2012).

Life is hard. But here's this amazing craft that slows down time and makes everything a little easier. While knitting has been passed on from a generation to the next for the longest time, we've somehow let that tradition die. While the art world is getting better at embracing fiber crafts (Robertson & Vinebaum, 2016, p.3), we as a society have collectively decided to give traditional crafts less and less space in our everyday life. Crafts are as important as ever and I suggest that we start teaching knitting everywhere, as it would benefit so many for several reasons. The first one is knitting's amazing ability to bridge the gap between generations, helping people to break isolation and create human connections. Yes, YouTube tutorials will take you far, but they'll never compare to a grandmother's masterful hands showing you how to cast on your very first scarf, or a fellow knitter's words of wisdom as you tackle the intimidating fair isle technique. Knitting used to be taught by the community, but the communities are now broken and we need to bring them back together. Why? Because without them, we miss out on precious opportunities to learn from our elders, and share knowledge with our peers. As Robertson & Vinebaum (2016) write in an article on textiles, “making things together helps to foster social bonds” (p.7). Communities provide an opportunity for developing important skills, both crafty and social, and give people a sense of belonging. Makerspaces, knitting circles, community centers, after-school activities: all these communities are vectors of creativity, education, and empowerment.

Work is also hard. That's why you should keep a work in progress in your desk drawer. Take it out when you're stressed. Take it out on long meetings to help you stay focused. Set up knitting lunches with your colleagues. Hire a knitter to organize a team-building workshop for your employees. I can guarantee that you won't find a single downside to knitting at work,

except maybe have a hard time putting the needles down because you've become addicted. Knitting gives you an opportunity to disconnect and reset.

School is hard for so many kids. As a ton of institutions are removing traditional arts and crafts classes from their curriculum in favor of technology-oriented content, I fear that we are cutting off so many creative outlets and channels for students who love to work with their hands, or those who need tangible material to better understand certain notions. Furthermore, the lack of handiwork in schools means that we are giving very little importance to the development of motor skills, dexterity and other abilities that are of the utmost importance in so many lines of work. We don't need to replace every single pedagogical tool with tablets, especially when handicrafts like knitting can help students achieve a lot of curricular goals. Let's blur the lines between fibers and computers. Let's bring the uninvited knitting to the STEM table.

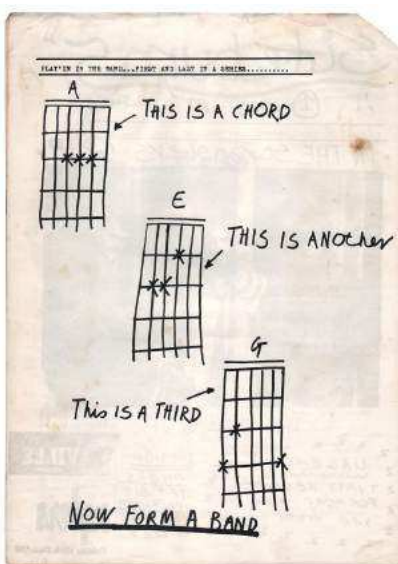
As I hope to continue working with the maker community, I argue in favor of a more inclusive roadmap of future and existing makerspaces, school programs and community centers that includes knitting. It needs to be taught EVERYWHERE.

Knit fast, die warm.

In 1977, on page 2 of the first edition of the punkzine *Sideburns*, Tony Moon drew 3 guitar chords and wrote: "This is a chord. This is another. This is a third. Now form a band"⁵, which became one of the most recognized and iconic sentences in punk history. I wanted to end with this quote because I think it sums up my research project beautifully. You don't need mad skills and a PhD to knit (but you might need some knitting time to get through your PhD). As Toby Mott (2016) explains when talking about the quote in an interview about his book, *Punk in print*, "it is more about the energy and the drive to do something" (para. 9). Knitting is exactly that: a little goes a long way. Learning a few basic stitches will take you really far; you can make very complex-looking things with simple techniques.

FIGURE 36

Page from *Sideburns* punkzine by Tony Moon, issue 1, January 1977.



⁵ <https://www.afka.net/Mags/Sideburns.htm>

I don't knit to earn myself a spot at the Louvres, though I wouldn't refuse one. I knit because it makes me happy, and it might do the same for you. Knitting is a fantastic way to learn valuable skills, develop a creative self care ritual and live a healthier life.

This is a stitch, this is another, this is a third. Now knit a shawl.

FIGURE 37

Briochevron wrap, Patate and a bunch of shawls



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