

THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE:
CRAFTIVISM AS AN EMERGING MODE OF
CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

by

Sandra Markus

Dissertation Committee:

Professor Ioana Literat, Sponsor
Professor Lalitha Vasudevan

Approved by the Committee on
the Degree of Doctor of Education

Date 22 May 2019

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education in
Teachers College, Columbia University

2019

ABSTRACT

THROUGH THE EYE OF A NEEDLE: CRAFTIVISM AS AN EMERGING MODE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Sandra Markus

There has been a grassroots revival of craftivism leading up to, and following the 2016 U.S. presidential election. This qualitative dissertation explores the experiences of women within three craftivist groups to facilitate a deeper understanding of their conceptions of craft, activism and feminism, the salience of older women within these communities, and how the affordances of new media are potentially reshaping craftivism. Drawing on interview data, as well as offline and online participant observation, this study found that craftivists have highly diverse personal trajectories and understandings of feminism and activism, that older women—many with a lifelong history of activism—play a significant role in craftivist groups, and that participation in craftivism, supported through extensive use of social media and online communication, provides a gateway to civic expression and engagement. Beyond deepening our understanding of craftivism in the current political climate, this research makes significant contributions to scholarship on participatory culture, activism, and civic engagement. While these bodies of research have traditionally been youth-centric, this dissertation adds value by shedding light on the participatory practices of older women in creative online sites.

© Copyright Sandra Markus 2019

All Rights Reserved

DEDICATION

To the women I met along this journey—from rural North Carolina, to Berkeley, California, to Ferndale, Michigan—who opened their hearts to me, and shared their stories, thank you. From all of you, I have learnt more than I could have imagined.

Women’s work, particularly craft, is often devalued or seen as frivolous. As women, we often doubt the validity of our own work. These perceptions need to change, and we need to understand that our participation in craftivism has contributed to a fundamental shift in grassroots democracy in this country. I hope this dissertation represents your stories, and helps you see how important your work truly is.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was with some trepidation that I entered into writing my dissertation. I had been warned that the dissertation would be difficult, time-consuming, and lonely.

Yet, I found the opposite to be true. In the two years I have worked on this research, I felt supported and part of a generous community of family, friends, fellow students, faculty, and last but not least, my participants.

To my sponsor, Ioana Literat. You were truly amazing. Your vision, generosity, and unwavering support have been beyond extraordinary. You have been challenging, encouraging, always available, and helpful. I am a better researcher, writer, and thinker for your mentoring. I am forever grateful.

To my committee members, Drs. Lalitha Vasudevan, Mary Hafeli, and Haeny Yoon, I am grateful for your willingness to share your expertise and providing me with meaningful feedback to improve the quality of the dissertation.

To Dr. Marie Volpe, without you, I would not have taken those first steps in starting the dissertation. You teach with love and put your whole heart into helping students; you are an inspiration.

To my dissertation posse, Kathryn and Michelle. Your friendship and encouragement helped me get to the finish line. Here's to many more summers of writing together.

To my parents, Arthur and Kayla Markus. From both of you, I learnt the importance of education. Thank you for supporting my book habit since I was a child. Dad, I wish you were here to see me graduate.

To my family, David and Sarah. Thank you. David, you married me, hardly suspecting that the next nine years I would constantly be working. Your support and belief in me have been unfailing. To Sarah, I started this academic journey just as you began your own academic journey to college, and then to graduate school. Your passion

for learning and love of life have been a constant inspiration to me. I love you both oceans and galaxies.

S. M.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I—INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Context.....	3
Overview of the Study	6
Significance of the Study	8
Personal Relevance	9
Chapter II—LITERATURE REVIEW	11
Craftivism in a Theoretical and Historical Context	12
The Gendered History of Art and Craft	12
The Hierarchy of Art and Craft.....	13
Stitching Voice: A Feminist History of Textile Art.....	14
Embracing Craftivism: Third-Wave Feminism	18
Contemporary Issues in Craftivism	20
New Media and Craftivism.....	22
Craftivism as Participatory Culture	22
Participatory Politics and Civic Engagement in Interest-Driven Networks	24
Summary and Conclusion	27
Chapter III—METHODS.....	30
Introduction.....	30
Methodological Rationale	31
Sites and Context	32
The Original Defiant Crafters	33
Women’s Needlecraft and Dissent Society.....	34
Crafting for Change	35
Demographic Data	36
Pilot Study.....	37
Research Study.....	39
Interviews.....	39
Offline Participant Observation	42
Online Participant Observation.....	44
Data Analysis	45
Ethical Aspects.....	47
A Note on Researcher Positionality	49
Chapter IV—FINDINGS	50
“Being an Agent of Change” —The Personal is Political: Personal Trajectories of Craftivists	50
From Civic Expression to Civic Participation	54
Craftivism in the Lives of the Participants: Anger, Self-Care, and Showing Love	56

“Your Feminism Must Include Everyone”: Issues of Intersectionality in the Craftivist Movement	63
“Beware: We Have Pointy Sticks and We Know How to Use Them!”: Older Women Leading the Resistance	72
“My Craftivist Practice has Grown Up Alongside New Media”: Sharing, Supporting, Communicating and Building Community	79
Creating a Global Community of Craftivists Through New Media	79
New Media, Craftivism, and Informal Learning	83
Craftivism as an Expression of Participatory Culture.....	87
“A Cautionary Note About Craftivism”: Are Likes Enough?	92
Chapter V—DISCUSSION	95
Introduction.....	95
The Civic Voices of Older Women	97
New Notions of Citizenship.....	100
Unraveling Intersectionality and Feminism in the Craftivist Movement	103
REFERENCES	108
APPENDICES	
Appendix A—Interview Protocol	120
Appendix B—Recruitment Post for Participants (Screenshot).....	122
Appendix C—Demographic Inventory	123

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Overview of Data Sources for Each of the Three Groups	39

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Crowds wearing Pussyhats at the Women’s March in January 2017	2
2	The Kudzu Project: Knitted vines covering statue of a Confederate soldier in front of Charlottesville, VA courthouse.....	3
3	The scope of the Aids Memorial Quilt laid out in Washington, D.C.	5
4	1500 Knitted pink squares cover a M.24 Chaffee Tank protesting the Iraq War	5
5	The logo from the Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society, circa 1974, which inspired the Women’s Needlecraft and Dissent Society.....	34
6	Age distribution of the three craftivist groups according to Facebook metrics	37
7	The three versions of the ANGRY WOMEN VOTE! hat by Whynotboth on CraftingforChange@Ravelry	57
8	She Persisted Hat pattern from Ravelry posted on TODC’s Facebook page	58
9	WNDS temporary Facebook group photo	58
10	Gina’s post about taking time for self-care on TODC Facebook	60
11	Believe Women hat in support of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and sexual survivors on Ravelry	61
12	LGBTQ + Equality shawl on CfC@Ravelry group.....	62
13	Variations on the resistance-themed hats from CfC@Ravelry group.....	70
14	Meme posted on The Original Defiant Crafters Facebook group with statistics of age of women in the resistance	73
15	Image from The Original Defiant Crafters of #grantifa protest at ICE detention camp in Portland, OR.....	76
16	Akosua (TODC) shared an image of her granddaughter on Facebook.....	79

17	CfC Facebook post for the craftivist project <i>Hearts for Charlottesville</i> (#Hearts4cville) in response to the Charlottesville riots in August 2017 ...	80
18	East London Knitters display knitted banner protesting Trump	81
19	TODC post to inform members how to volunteer with the New Sanctuary Coalition.....	84
20	“To do” list from TODC on how to contact the defense contractors building immigrant children’s detention centers	85
21	Facebook post of Impeach hat pattern with donation links	86
22	Welcome blankets made by CfC during the group’s offline meeting	86
23	Facebook invitation for CfC meeting, March 2018: ENOUGH hat to wear to marches to support common sense gun laws	87
24	Variations on the Protest is Patriotic Shawl on CfC@Ravelry.....	89
25	CfC@Ravelry’s Protest is Patriotic beaded scarf	93
26	The blue wave hat to raise funds for Ozark Indivisible, Moms Demand Action, and democratic Candidates in Arkansas on CfC Facebook.....	94

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

People knit for so many different reasons. Some of us knit to relax or meditate and calm our minds. Some of us knit to make beautiful things for ourselves, our friends, and our families. Some knit for charity, to give warmth and love to those in need. Some of us knit to learn new things or to keep our hands and brains active. Over the years, I have knit for all of these reasons. But now, I find that I also want to knit as a way to engage in politics. I believe that whatever we do for love, whatever we are passionate about, can be used not only for fun and relaxation, but also to share messages about our values and to start conversations about important issues facing our nation, states, and local cities and towns.

—Donna Druchunas, *Knitting as a political act*, 2017

The Pussyhat, a pink cat-eared knit hat, became a visual symbol of global dissent at the Women’s Marches on January 21, 2017, the day after Donald Trump’s presidential inauguration. Protesters wore these hats in Washington D.C. and other cities, nationally and globally, to create a human “sea of pink” (Compton, 2017, n.p.). The pink Pussyhats were designed by the project co-founders, Krista Suh and Jayna Zweiman, as a symbol of resistance in reaction to Trump’s misogynistic comments in the infamous *Access Hollywood* tape (Black, 2017; Compton, 2017) and aimed to make “a unique collective visual statement which will help activists be better heard” (Suh & Zweiman, 2016, n.p.). People who could not physically attend the marches were encouraged to knit hats for others in order to “represent themselves and support women’s rights” (Suh & Zweiman, 2016, n.p.). The project was promoted through online networks over a six-week period, from November 2016 to January 2017, and enjoyed tremendous success. Indeed, there

were so many hats being knitted that it caused a global shortage of pink yarn (Ravani, 2017).

Half a million people attended the Women’s March in Washington D.C. (Wortham, 2017) (Figure 1)—hundreds of thousands of them wearing Pussyhats—and an estimated 3.6 to 4.6 million people attended simultaneous large-scale sister marches held nationally and globally (Hartocollis & Alcindor, 2017). *Time* magazine argued that this represented

“perhaps the largest protest in U.S. history” (Vick, 2017, n.p.).

The New Yorker and *Time* featured the Pussyhat on their covers, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London acquired one of the Pussyhats knit by the project’s co-founder, Jayna Zweiman, further underscoring the cultural, social, and political significance of the Pussyhat (Morby, 2017).



Figure 1. Crowds wearing pussyhats at the Women’s March in January 2017. © *The New Yorker*.

The Pussyhat Project is a prominent example of craftivism. Coined by Betsy Greer in 2003, craftivism—a portmanteau referring to the merging of craft and activism—is the use of craft to challenge patriarchal hegemony, advocate for political and social rights, and promote the recognition of women’s traditional art forms (Jefferies, 2016). Craftivism can empower individuals to participate in grassroots democracy; as Greer (2014) explains, “the creation of things by hand leads to a better understanding of democracy, because it reminds us that we have power” (p. 8).

Recent protest movements have embraced craftivism as a way to create a physical symbol of resistance in line with feminist politics (Kahn, 2017; Walker, 2017). Indeed, there has been a grassroots revival of craftivism following the 2016 U.S. presidential election, as craftivist groups have been protesting the current presidential administration’s policies on reproductive rights, immigration, education, gun control and climate change. Beyond the Pussyhat Project, current examples also include the Welcome



Figure 2. The Kudzu Project: Knitted vines covering statue of a Confederate soldier in front of Charlottesville, VA courthouse. Image courtesy of: Tom Cogill.

Blanket Project (Dupere, 2017; Zweiman, 2017), which aims to subvert the proposed border wall by knitting 3,500,640 yards of blankets to welcome immigrants into the country, or The Kudzu Project (Smith, 2018; see Figure 2), where flash installations of knitted kudzu vines are draped on Confederate monuments to call attention to the role of these statues in “perpetuating false narratives about the Civil War and white supremacy” (Smith, 2018, n.p.). The success of these craftivist projects can be attributed in great part to their online promotion efforts (Humm, 2017). Each of the projects has a vibrant online presence, with an official website, Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram accounts, and in some instances, a dedicated group in the online knitting community Ravelry.

Background and Context

Needlework, which includes knitting, sewing, embroidery, and cross-stitch, has traditionally been relegated to the “domestic arts” and devalued as a feminine craft

(Groeneveld, 2010; Kelly, 2014; Minahan & Cox, 2007; Myzelev, 2009; Pentney, 2008). Historically, needlework was performed almost exclusively by women and was viewed as an expression of femininity and relegated to the domestic, interior sphere. Women's needlework skills were a reflection of their femininity, and hence their marriageability (Parker, 2010).

However, needlework was also used for subversive activities. Rozika Parker, in her seminal text, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, originally published in 1984, writes that the art of embroidery has functioned as “the means of educating women into the feminine ideal, and of proving that they have attained it, but it has also provided a weapon of resistance to the constraints of femininity” (Parker, 2010, p. ix). However, it was not until craft emerged from the domestic sphere and became part of the public sphere through the emerging work of feminist artists of the 1960s that it began to serve as a powerful public conduit for women to articulate their political messages (Jefferies, 2016). Over the past three decades, craftivism for social and political causes has become more public, as illustrated by the AIDS Memorial Quilt (1987; Figure 3), the Pink M.24 Chaffee tank wrapped in pink yarn by Marianne Jorgensen in 2006 (Figure 4), and the PM Please Quilt (2015), a collaborative artwork comprised of 121 squares with messages to the Australian Prime Minister that begin with “PM Please.”



Figure 3. The scope of the AIDS Memorial Quilt laid out in Washington, D.C. Photo: Ron Edmonds.



Figure 4. 1500 Knitted pink squares cover a M.24 Chaffee Tank protesting the Iraq War. Photo: Marianne Jorgenson.

In the contemporary sphere, the affordances of new media have fostered the growth of participatory culture, “which [is] characterized by commitment to access, expression, sharing, mentorship, the need to make a difference, and the desire for social connection” (Delwiche, 2013, p. 11)—and, respectively, the emergence of online do-it-yourself (DIY) subcultures (Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010) have afforded craftivists more visibility, connectivity, and publicity to share their political opinions through craft (Bratich & Brush, 2011). Online communities have facilitated the rise of global craftivism networks, DIY citizenship, and participatory cultures among feminists (Kelly, 2014; Minahan & Cox, 2007). Within this context, third wave feminists, who grew up with the internet (Chidgey, 2014; Garber, 2013), have re-defined and reclaimed domestic crafts—knitting, sewing, embroidery, and cross-stitch—as empowering and creative (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010; Groeneveld, 2010; Minahan & Cox, 2007), an expression of their feminism and their political beliefs (Chansky, 2010).

Craftivists’ participation via new media platforms is reframing concepts of community and activism, enabling them to work collaboratively on issues of relevance

without the necessity of meeting in a physical space (Jeffries, 2016). With the advent of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, we see these private communications moving into public spaces. These new digital modes of communication have challenged previously held notions of femininity, democracy, and civic engagement through craftivism (Mattern, 2016).

Given the renewed prominence of craftivism as social protest in the current political environment, there has been extensive reporting on craftivism in popular media outlets, particularly since the Women's March (Black, 2017; Compton, 2017). However, there have been few empirical studies that examine the rise of contemporary craftivism, and the ways in which craftivists are leveraging new media tools and platforms to advocate for political and social change. This dissertation aims to address this gap by examining these questions in relation to three craftivist groups: Crafting for Change, the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society, and The Original Defiant Crafters. By investigating the intersection of craftivism, feminism, and new media within an empirical context, my dissertation fills crucial gaps in the existing literature, while simultaneously addressing issues of real-world significance and facilitating a better understanding of the social, cultural, and political impact of this global movement.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore how members of three craftivist groups understand and actualize the relationship between craft, activism and feminism; how generational aspects might be salient within this context; and the role that new media technologies play in the contemporary sphere of craftivism. Significantly, this study also considers how engagement in an interest-driven craftivist groups, both in the offline and online spaces may provide a "gateway" to civic engagement and participatory politics (Kahne, Lee, & Feezell, 2011), defined here as "interactive, peer-based acts through

which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern.” (Cohen & Kahne, 2012, p. vi)

My dissertation is driven by the following research questions:

1. How do craftivists perceive and enact the relationship between craft, activism, and feminism?
2. How are the generational aspects of craftivism salient in offline and online contexts?
3. How is new media (re)shaping craftivism?

Of the three research questions above, questions 1 and 3 were drawn from the pilot study, where they were confirmed as highly significant. The second question, regarding the generational aspects of participation in craftivism, emerged organically from both in the pilot study (which will be described in Chapter III) and a recent study about evolving notions of activism and civic engagement in the Pussyhat project on Ravelry (Literat & Markus, 2019). In the pilot study, the founder of Crafting for Change described others’ perception of her as a harmless old lady, which has allowed her to “very quietly exert power while knitting”; similarly, looking at craftivists’ online participation, we found that, through engagement on crafting sites such as Ravelry, older women are not only making their voices heard, but are participating civically and politically through their craft practices in both offline and online spaces (Literat & Markus, 2019).

Methodologically, the dissertation is based on semi-structured interviews with the founders/administrators and general members (participants) of each of the three craftivist groups, as well as participant observation in both offline and online environments. I was a participant in the offline meetings of the craftivist groups and an online participant in the social media spaces where the groups are present. In order to understand the full scope of the feminist craftivists’ practices, multiple forms of data have been analyzed, including online posts and comments, as well as physical artifacts, such as knitted pieces and creative artwork.

Significance of the Study

Although this research focuses specifically on craftivism, it is situated within the larger theoretical framework of participatory culture, civic engagement, social activism, and emerging notions of citizenship. More specifically, the dissertation examines how the participatory practices of women who are engaged in interest-driven spaces can lead to civic engagement and political participation, embodying new forms of citizenship. Therefore, the concepts of participation and citizenship, especially in a new media context, are at the core of this inquiry and will be examined in the literature review.

Despite the social, cultural, and political significance of craftivism, there have been few empirical studies examining how craftivists perceive and enact the relationship between craft, activism, and feminism. The craftivist groups I studied in this dissertation are examples of creative participatory cultures (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013), where members engage in the creation and distribution of content to promote personal and political interests. Thus, the goal was that the research would contribute to, and extend, the scholarly research on creative participatory culture—locating these practices within crafting communities.

Scholars (e.g., Jenkins, Ito, & boyd, 2016a; Jenkins, Shresthova, Gamber-Thompson, Kligler-Vilenchik, & Zimmerman, 2016b; Kahne et al., 2011) have previously noted that involvement in interest-based groups can be a pathway to civic engagement and political participation; however, this scholarship has overwhelmingly focused on youth. Yet, in these craftivist groups, it is an older generation of women who are engaging in these activities. A primary goal of this research is thus to shed light on the interest-driven, political, and creative activities of older women online—an understudied demographic—and therefore make a valuable contribution to several bodies of research, including online participation, participatory politics, civic engagement, and craft studies. The literature exploring the participation of older women in activism is

scant (Chazan, Baldwin, & Whattam, 2018; Chazan & Kittmer, 2016; McHugh, 2012; Narushima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009), with much of it focusing on a particular group of Canadian women, *The Raging Grannies*. When examining the creative and civic activities of older women, the literature is almost non-existent. This dissertation thus seeks to expand our understandings of activism to include the creative craftivist activities of older women.

In doing so, this research will illustrate how craftivism can function as a creative form of activism and represent an effective tool for change. Sarah Corbett (2018), the founder of the Craftivist Collective, sees craftivism as “a slow activism,” noting that “many social injustices that are deeply ingrained in our culture demand a more complex, long-term and multi-faceted solution” (p. 42). Participating in craftivism can build community and open dialogue on issues facing our world, such as gender inequalities, gun control, reproductive rights, labor issues, and environmental issues. Furthermore, craftivism also challenges long-held patriarchal views of craft being “less-than” art (Auther, 2008). Textile art was often relegated to the realm of craft, traditionally made by women and occupying a lower rank than the fine arts (Kristeller, 1990). This hierarchical division between fine arts and crafts mirrored women’s subordinate social position and led to their further marginalization (Parker, 2010). It is my hope that this dissertation will help contribute to a greater respect for the field of craft, both from an academic and an artistic perspective, and a deeper consideration of its potential for being powerful, political, and provocative.

Personal Relevance

I bring to this research a lifetime of passion for the field of craft. Whether it was sewing, knitting, or embroidering—working with my hands, crafting has been an integral part of my identity.

As an undergraduate student in Canada in the 1970s, I was influenced by the second-wave feminist writers: Gloria Steinem, Germaine Greer, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millett, among others. I continued on to a graduate degree in design in the 1980s and worked as a designer in the apparel industry, and taught part-time, transitioning to full-time teaching in 2000. I taught design classes within a School of Art and Design in a state university system in the Northeast. Although many of my students were highly skilled technically, they never considered the political or social possibilities or consequences of their work. Design programs did not encourage students to explore how craft can be used for activist and political purposes—design was perceived as a business.

As I began to study digital culture and become an active member of numerous online crafting communities, I began to learn about the relationship between craft and activism. Design and online activism also became part of new curriculum I was developing, as I saw these new communication technologies as a way for my design students to connect, participate globally, and engage more broadly. Students began to engage with their craft with a greater awareness of social justice, environmental, and labor issues that impacted the design process, and began to understand how design could be used as a tool for change. My students were becoming craftivists, using their creative skills to effect change, building a global community of designers, committed to political and social change. As I reach an age where I begin to think about the possibilities for my post-work years, I see an opportunity to contribute to a global community of craftivists, where my experiences as a feminist and a maker are connected to broader social and political structures.

The political is personal.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

In that torn bit of brown leather brace worked through and through with yellow silk ... lies all the passion of some woman's soul finding voiceless expression. Has the pen or the pencil dipped so deep in the blood of the human race as the needle? (Schreiner, 1927, p. 323)

In this chapter, I will explore the current literature in two major areas relevant to this study. First, I will examine craftivism from a theoretical and historical perspective, looking at the gendered history of art and craft, then a historical view of how women began to stitch their voices through their textile art, and how third-wave feminists embraced craft as activism. A consideration of craftivism through the lens of power and patriarchy is essential here, as it is important to understand how the exclusion and marginalization of women in the arts have silenced women and led to the use of craftivism to speak out (Greer, 2011). Contemporary issues in craftivism will also be discussed—including the resurgence of craftivism in the aftermath of the 2016 U.S. election and the significance of intersectionality within this context. Then, in the second part of the literature review, I will explore new media as they relate to contemporary craftivism. The affordances of new media have (re)shaped craftivism, enabling participants to organize and promote their craftivist causes, and leading to the creation of online social spaces, where members can meet like-minded individuals to share their love of knitting and their political concerns. New media have facilitated participatory cultures and civic engagement in craftivist spaces, while shaping emerging notions of citizenship.

Craftivism in a Theoretical and Historical Context

The Gendered History of Art and Craft

Linda Nochlin, in her landmark article, (originally published in 1971), “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” argued that, throughout art history, the Western male perspective has been dominant and universally accepted as the only viewpoint worthy of plaudits and deserving of a place in the artistic canon. Nochlin argued that this problem was embedded within our social and cultural institutions, including the system of education. Historically, social institutions such as art academies and royal systems of patronage have contributed to the preponderance of male artists, as women were generally excluded from either attending these prestigious academies or securing royal patronage. It was, in Nochlin’s view, institutionally impossible for women to attain artistic excellence, no matter their innate abilities or genius. She argued:

Thus, the question of women’s equality—in art as in any other realm—devolves not upon the relative benevolence or ill-will of individual men, nor the self-confidence or abjectness of individual women, but rather on the very nature of our institutional structures themselves and the view of reality which they impose on the human beings who are part of them. (Nochlin, 1989, p. 152)

Thus, historically, women have been excluded from the canons of art history; as Pollock (2003) notes, art history is a “selective tradition which normalizes ... a particular and gendered set of practices” (p. 72). In the 1970s and ‘80s, feminist art historians re-examined the gendered history of craft and fine arts, arguing that “the sex of the artist matters. It conditions the way art is seen and discussed” (Parker & Pollock, 2013, p. 50). Parker and Pollock founded the Women’s Art History Collective in 1973, which sought to redress the omission of women from the canon of Western art history, and they published the groundbreaking book *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* in 1982. The book explored the stratification of art—fine arts and the applied or decorative arts—arguing that the division between art and craft stemmed from *where* the work was

created: “[F]ine arts are a public, professional activity. What women make, which is usually defined as ‘craft,’ could in fact be defined as ‘domestic art’” (2013, p. 70).

The Hierarchy of Art and Craft

Understanding the hierarchy that exists between art and craft through a lens of power and privilege helps us to better understand the historical, cultural, and social divisions between these two modes of creative expression. It also clarifies why craft has been historically underrepresented in the art world and the creators of handicraft—predominantly women—have been undercompensated for their craft, and their work itself undervalued. The systematic exclusion of women from the art field meant “consigning to perpetual second-class status all aspects of art associated with femininity; the crafts and the so-called minor arts” (Broude & Garrard, 1982, p. 2), which led to the hierarchical division between the fine arts and crafts.

Paul Kristeller (1990), an eminent scholar of Renaissance art, notes that the division between art and craft emerged during the Renaissance. In the Renaissance, when social constructs of femininity were emerging, the education of artists was being divided into academies for the fine arts and workshops for the crafts, introducing the gendered division of the fine arts and crafts. Even within the fine arts, certain genres were assigned to women: for instance, flower painting was a predominantly female genre and was therefore considered less intellectually demanding (Grant, 1952). As Bourdieu (1986) argued, power is maintained and transferred throughout the generations, with social and cultural capital related to one’s social position. Women, by virtue of their subordinate position in society, were excluded from power structures and did not have the same level of social or cultural capital as men. Furthermore, the hierarchy of art and craft was not only a gendered division, but a class division as well, where crafts such as embroidery were associated with the working class and the fine arts were the domain of the privileged class (Parker, 2010). Thus, the questions of who is an artist and what is

considered art are both socially and culturally constructed (Nochlin, 1989; Parker & Pollock, 2013).

By the beginning of the 19th century, the concept of femininity and a culturally accepted understanding of the societal role of women were firmly established. Within this context, as Rozika Parker (2010) noted in *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, needlework, performed almost exclusively by women, was not conceived of as art, but viewed as an expression of femininity; being relegated to the domestic sphere, its value was diminished as “women’s work.” A clearly segregated notion of art and craft had emerged and contributed to the marginalization of women and their craft (Parker, 2010).

Stitching Voice: A Feminist History of Textile Art

Historically, needlework and textiles were considered women’s work. From early societies, we see women’s labor as being intertwined with textiles, and women working communally in the production of the textiles (Barber, 1994). Judith Brown (1970), an American ethnographer, studied the gendered division of labor in multiple societies. What she found was that the level of contribution by women to the subsistence of a particular society was dependent on the compatibility of this labor with childcare. Child rearing was exclusively the domain of women, and, in pre-industrial societies, food preparation and textile production were two activities women could do simultaneously with child rearing.

Within this context, textile production was a communal activity for women. Writing on the Neolithic and Early Bronze ages, Elizabeth Barber (1994), in her seminal text, *Women’s Work: The First 20,000 Years*, speaks of a “courtyard and outrider society,” where women congregated in a central courtyard to work together, talk, and watch the children communally, while men foraged outside the community to provide for other resources. The women of prehistoric societies gathered together to spin, sew,

weave, and be part of a social community, just as pioneer women in America socialized with one another in sewing, quilting, and knitting bees.

Throughout history, women have also used needlework subversively to convey social and political messages. For instance, in the 17th century, biblical stories about women's power within marriage—such as the story of Esther, who successfully advocated for the Jews' survival before her husband, the King of Persia (see Zaeske, 2000)—were popular themes in needlework (Parker, 2010). Through these subversive practices, as Emery (2017) argues, women could, quite literally, “stitch themselves into visibility” (p. 67). We can also read about women using craft as a subversive medium in classical literature. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 AD/1922), Philomena, who was raped and had her tongue cut out in an effort to silence her, wove a tapestry in which she identified her brother-in-law Tereus as her rapist:

...the grief-distracted Philomela
wove in a warp with purple marks and white,
a story of the crime; and when 'twas done
she gave it to her one attendant there
and begged her by appropriate signs to take
it secretly to Procne. She took the web,
she carried it to Procne, with no thought
of words or messages by art conveyed.

In this classical period, which spanned the time period between the 8th century BC and the 5th or 6th century AD, women were only allowed to speak publicly for two reasons; first, before their deaths—“either as victims or martyrs” or in defending their home, their family, or in the interests of other women (Beard, 2014, p. 13). Needlework gave women a “voice” to articulate their views in a world that did not often welcome or permit them to communicate their opinions. Ann Rippin (cited in Bateman, 2017), a scholar of aesthetics, gender, and history, explains:

Traditionally, women were taught embroidery as a way of learning "feminine" characteristics. It taught them to follow a pattern, to be neat and docile, to be inside the home rather than out in the world. You learned embroidery to advertise your marriageability ... yet, there was no way of

controlling what women were actually thinking about while they were stitching. (n.p.)

In antebellum America, anti-slavery groups formed sewing groups in order to provide clothing for slaves to wear when they escaped to Canada. In this context, “sewing circles were complementary, not competing, organisations that allowed [women] to act on their concern for creating a more just and moral society” (Lawes, 2000, p. 78). These sewing circles allowed women to discuss and act upon their political beliefs and “served as a forum for women’s political development and for discursive analysis” (p. 81). During the American Revolutionary War, women demonstrated their political beliefs through knitting, spinning, and sewing circles that produced cloth, which supported the colonies becoming less dependent on British goods (Hermanson, 2012).

At the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, the Suffragette movement, advocating for women’s emancipation, gained momentum both in England and the United States. The militant Suffragette movement developed in Manchester, the center of textile production in England. “Out of the little group of half a dozen women who used to meet in a room in Manchester has emerged the movement which has shaken the whole fabric of politics” (Gardiner, 1910, as cited in Fulford, 1957, p. 215). Protests to expand the vote began in the 1860s, but by the turn of the century, women in Britain began lobbying in mass numbers for social and political change (Tickner, 1988), often creating and brandishing embroidered and appliqued banners of silk and velvet—fabrics traditionally associated with the domestic sphere. Wheeler’s (2012) study of Suffrage textiles analyzes the embroidered artifacts that were sewn during the incarceration of Suffragettes in the British prison of Holloway in 1912. She discusses the “efficacy of textiles to construct ‘voice’ and augment a history that has too often discounted women’s experiences” (p. 1). The embroideries created during the mass incarcerations of Suffragettes, in particular an embroidered piece by Janie Terrero, record the hunger

strikes and provide a permanent legacy to bear witness to the events. As Wheeler (2012) states:

From a position of powerlessness these women dismissed as being of no political consequence, protested silently by adding their names to Terrero's textile document to expressly craft political resistance; this expression of agency served to cohere and sustain a collective identity. (p. 11)

By the 1960s, feminist art began to emerge amid the anti-war protests and civil rights demonstrations, although women artists were still experiencing overt sexism and prejudice regarding their work (Reilly, 2018). In the 1970s, women fiber artists began to rebel against the distinction between art and craft, and their lack of visibility as artists. For instance, Brenda Miller, an established post-minimalist artist and a feminist (Fowler, 2015), working with sisal, an inexpensive organic material, exhibited her piece *Subtrahend*, at the John Weber Gallery in New York City. In a review for *Artforum*, the critic Bruce Boice (1973) took a pointed jab at her work, calling it “crafts more than art” (p. 85). Miller responded in a letter to the editor in the April 1973 edition of *Artforum*:

Sirs: I am troubled by the introduction of the term “crafts” into the critical vocabulary, used pejoratively in the description of certain works of art. The term “craft” is being applied to works made from unorthodox materials which have been used, however, by many artists in recent years. I had thought that the materials war had been fought and won by this time, but.... (p. 9)

Early feminist textile art focused on social themes and womens' issues—pregnancy, rape, menstruation, and homemaking. Feminist textile artists—such as Faith Ringgold, Miriam Schapiro, Joyce Wieland, and Judy Chicago—used needle and thread to craft their own understanding and meaning of the world through the stitch. As Auther (2010) notes, it is not surprising that much of women's craftwork focused on the domestic sphere they inhabit: they used the tools and the materials they knew—the needle, thread, and fiber—to advocate for social change.

Judy Chicago, a feminist textile artist, conceived and collaborated on the creation of *The Dinner Party*, a large-scale installation of ceramic and embroidered place settings

that pays homage to 39 mythical and historical women, among them Sojourner Truth, Virginia Woolf, and Margaret Sanger. She elaborated on the second-class status of textile art by women:

Because we are denied knowledge of our history, we are deprived of standing upon each other's shoulders and building upon each other's hard-earned accomplishments. Instead we are condemned to repeat what others have done before us and thus we continually reinvent the wheel. The goal of *The Dinner Party* is to break this cycle. (as cited in Bernikow, 1979, p. 185)

Embracing Craftivism: Third-Wave Feminism

In the 1970s, craft, expressed through feminist artwork, emerged from the domestic or private sphere and became public, exposing the “politics of domesticity” (Bratich & Brush, 2007, p. 1). Unlike second-wave feminists, who rejected the domestic arts as oppressive labor (Chansky, 2010; Robertson, 2011), third-wave feminists embraced crafts as politically empowering (Baumgardner & Richards, 2010; Groeneveld, 2010; Minahan & Wolfram Cox, 2007). Writing in 2007 on her blog *knitchicks*, the craft activist Betsy Greer (2007) urged women to think about craft as more than women’s work, as “something that has cultural, historical and social value” (n.p.). Craft was framed as a form of power: the ability to act on current political possibilities and tap into a new mode of political activism (Bratich & Brush, 2011; Greer, 2007, 2014).

Bratich and Brush (2011) called this phenomenon the “new domesticity”: “Neither rejection nor reclamation, this is an affirmation of something that is no longer what we thought it was.... The new domesticity does not transform old into new, *it reweaves the old itself*” (Bratich & Brush, 2007, p. 8). Kirsty Robertson (2007) argues that second-wave feminists’ rejection of the domestic laid the foundation for the later acceptance of the domestic sphere by third-wave feminists. Third-wave feminists focused on intersectional issues of identity—sexuality, race, and class—while the second-wave movement focused on gender equality in the workplace and was primarily composed of White, educated middle-class women (Mazza, 2010). From the rise of the Riot Girrl DIY

(Do-It-Yourself) ethic of the 1980s, young feminists were embracing the idea that the *personal is political* (Orton-Johnson, 2014a), using DIY media to “articulate their own shared identities and collective struggles” (Fiske, 2010, p. xxxv).

An early example of the feminist DIY movement was the Stitch and Bitch knitting groups that began in the 1990s. Debbie Stoller, founder of *Bust* magazine and the author of the Stitch and Bitch books, made it her mission to “take back the knit” (Stoller, 2000, p. 9) and reclaim the domestic sphere as an empowered space for third-wave feminists. Stoller further elaborated:

All those people [second-wave feminists] who looked down on knitting—and housework, and housewives—were not being feminist at all. In fact, they were being anti-feminist, since they seemed to think that only those things that men did, or had done, were worthwhile. (p. 7)

As third-wave feminism began to emerge in the early 1990s, DIY emerged as an important mode of political discourse within the movement (Chidgey, 2014). At the core of this movement was the trend among women in their 20s and 30s to see craft and craftivism as an expression of their feminism and their political beliefs (Chansky, 2010). They also began to embrace their crafts publicly through events such as the annual World Wide Knit in Public Day. Launched in 2005 with 25 groups, the movement currently has 1,125 Knit in Public (KIP) groups in 54 countries that stage public knit-ins yearly on June 10th (Orton-Johnson, 2014a).

The Freudian concept of *Unheimlich*—the exteriorizing of the interior, especially the home as it becomes “unhomely”—can be connected to craftivism’s emergence in the public sphere, moving traditional women’s craft out of the domestic realm and into the “unhomely” sphere of the public (Bratich & Brush, 2011; Kokoli, 2016). Third-wave feminists have embraced this “transfer of the private into the public” (Bratich & Brush, 2011, p. 238). Minahan and Cox (2007) further elaborate on the idea that this reappropriation of spaces has led to a new conceptualization of activism—especially in the realm of gendered politics. As I will address later in this literature review, the

widespread adoption of digital technologies later served as a further way to extend and “publicize” craftivism, making the private and domestic sphere of knitting visible through shared posts, media, retweets, and likes (Orton-Johnson, 2014a).

Contemporary Issues in Craftivism

The current political climate in the United States has provided the momentum for massive social protest. A Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation survey, conducted in early 2018, found that one in five Americans has participated in a political rally or publicly protested since the 2016 election. Political activism, especially in digitally mediated spaces, is generally associated with youth (Cohen & Kahne, 2012), so what is particularly significant within the current protests is that the demographics point to an older (44% are over 50) and more affluent participant (36% earn over \$100,000).

This massive increase in public activism has given rise to numerous craftivist groups (Mascaro, 2017), which are committed to protesting the current presidential administration’s policies, especially around reproductive rights, immigration, education, and climate change.

Perhaps the most prominent example was the Pussyhat, worn by tens of thousands of women and men at the Women’s Marches in 2017 and 2018. Other post-election examples of craftivism include the Welcome blanket, the Kudzu Project, and the Tempestry Project, which are knitted visual embodiments of daily temperatures from two different time periods, highlighting the effects of climate change.

At the same time, alongside the political potential of craftivism, it is important to note the often problematic intersectional and identity-related dynamics that characterize this practice within the contemporary context. The issue of inclusion/exclusion has long troubled the feminist movement, and can be traced back to the Suffragettes, where Black women were excluded from the conversation about the right to vote (Wortham, 2017). In 1969, Betty Friedan, the founder of the National Organization for Women, sought to

distance the organization from the “lavender menace” (her term for lesbians), fearing that their inclusion would compromise the political efficacy of the group (Gilmore & Kaminski, 2007). Similarly, the Women’s March has been criticized for being exclusionary and primarily attended by cisgender White women (Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Pimentel, 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017; Wortham, 2017). Angela Peoples, an African American activist and founder of the LGBTQ organization GetEqual, noted:

It definitely felt very white. The other black women that I talked to there, and even women in other marches around the country, felt like they were alone, like more of the same was happening ... but there’s also this reality that when we talk about feminism in this country, the faces have been white. Without an effort by white women especially to make sure those spaces are reflecting the diversity of women and femme people, we’re not going to make the progress we need to. (as cited in Obie, 2017, n.p.)

Craftivism, and in particular the Pussyhat, has come to embody White, liberal feminism, which is inherently not intersectional (Gokariksel & Smith, 2017). Critics have even gone so far as calling the Pussyhat “the confederate flag for white feminists.” (Gordon, 2018, n.p.). Derr (2017) writes:

The infantilizing kitten imagery combined with a stereotypically feminine color feels too safe and too reductive to be an answer to the complex issues facing women today. For example, while the March claims intersectionality as central to its platform, and the Pussyhat Project claims to be speaking for both cis- and transgender individuals, the latter’s conception of what it means to be a woman is remarkably narrow. (n.p.)

Similarly, Close’s (2018) scholarship on graffiti knitting critiques craftivism’s approach as facilitating “blindness to the racial politics of a largely White feminist appropriation of graffiti. This works against craftivism’s political potential and mirrors larger concerns about participatory politics” (p. 1). She calls upon craftivists to embrace a more intersectional activist practice. As a researcher, I am sensitive to these problematic dynamics. The lack of intersectionality and issues of inclusion/exclusion within the craftivist movement must be noted, grappled with, and not dismissed as inconsequential.

New Media and Craftivism

Craft cultures have recently flourished in online spaces—as have DIY activities more generally (Gauntlett, 2018; Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010; Ratto & Boler, 2014)—prompting a wave of empirical research on the intersection between craft and new media (Gauntlett, 2018; Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010; Ratto & Boler, 2014). The social aspects of craft were identified as particularly salient in online spaces, where a practice like knitting is seen as a “profoundly collective phenomenon” (Minahan & Cox, 2007, p. 11). An example of this is Ravelry, an online community for knitters and crocheters, where users can connect with other crafters, find or sell patterns, and manage their yarn stashes and related products. Launched in May 2007, the site currently has a membership of 8 million knitters, crocheters, and crafters, and over 40,000 groups. Among them, there are many activist groups, such as “This is what a feminist looks like” and “The Pussyhat Project,” which are committed to supporting progressive agendas—gun reform, LGBTQIA rights, or reproductive health (Literat & Markus, 2019).

These online craftivist communities can be seen as “participatory cultures” (Jenkins, Ito, et al., 2016a)—informal sites of learning and participation, where participants can learn craft techniques through videos, as well as find out about craftivist events and how to voice their political views. Significantly, the emergence of online crafting communities has facilitated new forms of participation and community, but also new forms of DIY citizenship (Orton-Johnson, 2014b), which is not limited to explicit acts of political knitting, but also includes the leisure knitter’s “small acts of citizenship as cultural and political activists” (p. 152). The following sections will thus explore the participatory and civic aspects of craftivism in a new media context.

Craftivism as Participatory Culture

My research locates craftivism within the context of participatory culture, which Jenkins and colleagues (2006) define as a “culture with relatively low barriers to artistic

expression and civic engagement” (p. 3). In participatory cultures, members create and share with one another, and more experienced members share their knowledge with more novice participants. In doing so, participants develop a sense of community and establish communal norms. The values of participatory culture—having to do with sharing, learning together, and weaving this knowledge and a sense of purpose into their creative endeavors—“are embedded in the everyday practices” of DIY crafting communities (Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010, p. 9). In her recent research on graffiti knitting, Close (2018) links knitting, activism, participatory culture, and political participation, arguing that the practices of participatory culture map well onto craftivism’s “key practices of democratic process, wide-ranging media use, commitment to political action” (p. 5).

Creative participatory cultures (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013), where individuals engage in the creation and distribution of content to promote personal and political interests, have proliferated as digital technologies have enabled individuals to easily modify and share media content. Remix culture, where individuals modify, rework, and remix other members’ creations to produce new variations on the original design (Lessig, 2009), can be understood as an example of creative participatory culture. In the craftivism context, politically-inspired knitting projects, such as the “Fuck Trump Scarf,” can be seen as an example of remix, with over 69 variations of this scarf currently posted on Ravelry (Lerat & Markus, 2019). Although remix culture in certain art forms—e.g., music (Navas, Gallagher, & burrough, 2016) or fan fiction (Jenkins, 2012)—has been explored extensively in the academic literature, these cultural dynamics have not been studied in the context of online crafting communities or, more specifically, knitting.

In discussing early television fandom communities, Jenkins (2010) acknowledged that the affordances of new media encouraged the rapid growth of membership within the communities, supported the ability of members to communicate easily, and “creating greater cultural visibility for its productions and enabling more opportunities to participate” (p. 241). Similarly, new media has supported the rapid growth of craftivist

groups and enabled the rapid dissemination of their political and social message in the months after the 2016 election (Quito, 2017). Sarah Corbett, founder of Craftivist-Collective, an online global community committed to using needlecrafts for social justice, explains:

The use of new media is a central aspect of craftivists' ability to raise awareness and organize activities. From a central Website we organize projects and events that anyone is welcome to join in with. We encourage craftivists to send us photos and accounts of their projects for the Website, so that we can show the world the global effect of our efforts. (Corbett & Housley, 2011, p. 344)

Participatory Politics and Civic Engagement in Interest-Driven Networks

Multiple researchers have pointed out the relationship between participation in niche sites and civic engagement (Bennett, Wells & Freelon, 2011; Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Ito, Martin, Pfister, Rafalow, Salen & Wortman, 2019; Jenkins, Ito, et al., 2016a). As Cohen and Kahne (2012) note, participation in interest-driven networks—like the participatory cultures mentioned above—can “lay a foundation for engagement in participatory politics” (p. ix). They define participatory politics as “interactive, peer-based acts through which individuals and groups seek to exert both voice and influence on issues of public concern” (p. vi). Examples include forming a new political group online, mobilizing either online or face-to-face to support a cause, circulating, forwarding, or creating political information through online networks (Cohen & Kahne, 2012). They found that youth who were highly engaged in non-political, interest-driven activities were five times as likely to engage in participatory politics. Furthermore, in two large-scale studies (Kahne et al., 2011), findings showed that youth engagement in these non-political participatory cultures provided a “gateway to participation in important aspects of civic and political life, including volunteering, community problem-solving, protest activities, and political voice” (p. 2).

Jenkins, Shresthova, et al. (2016b) similarly argue that recreational involvement with digital media—such as gaming, fandom practices, or participation in online networks—can represent a bridge between sociocultural activity and political and civic engagement. Through this engagement, participants can “discover their personal voice” (p. 46) and potentially link this learning to civic engagement (Ito et al., 2015). One example is the Harry Potter Alliance (HPA), where fans are connecting their “cultural passions and engagement in social issues” (Kliger-Vilenchik, 2016, p. 111). As Kliger-Vilenchik argues, “popular culture, rather than leading to a disengagement from public life, is being used as a resource around which young people are making connections to civic and political worlds” (p. 107). Indeed, Duncombe (2012) points out that fandom requires building relationships and a common culture, and that “this ability to imagine alternatives and building community not coincidentally is a basic prerequisite for political activism” (n.p.).

In the more specific context of craft, research has also shown how, in some cases, participants’ love of knitting or crafting served as a pathway to more pronounced civic engagement. For instance, Pfister (2014) examined an online community of knitters on Ravelry, *Hogwarts@Ravelry*, that facilitates social and political engagement by means of the members’ shared interest in the Harry Potter storyworld. Pfister found that the community functioned as a connected learning environment that encouraged members to bridge their personal passion for knitting with opportunities for civic engagement and community involvement. Through these interest-driven activities such as knitting, craftivist groups are creating spaces for civic and political engagement.

Significantly, as illustrated by these practices, we are also seeing a profound change in traditional notions of citizenship. Dutiful citizenship—defined by participation “in civic life through organized groups, from civic clubs to political parties . . . and generally engaging in public life out of a sense of personal duty” (Bennett et al., 2011, p. 838)—is declining, particularly among youth, and is being replaced by a self-

actualizing citizen model. The latter is defined by “peer content sharing and social media” use (p. 835), where individuals organize “civic action using social technologies that maximize individual expression” (p. 839). This emerging model underscores the shift toward a more creative participatory culture (Jenkins et al., 2006).

Although civic engagement and participatory politics have been studied extensively in the context of the interest-driven activities of youth (e.g., Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Ito et al., 2015; Jenkins, Ito, et al., 2016a; Kahne et al., 2011), there has been scant scholarship examining these dynamics in the case of older generations, and especially older women (Chazan et al., 2018; Sawchuk, 2009). Yet, in craftivist groups, it is an older generation of women who are engaging in these activities.

The scholarship on older women and activism is particularly limited and is firmly based in Canada. As May Chazan (2018), Canada Research Chair in Gender and Feminist Studies at Trent University, acknowledges, very few researchers have “recorded or analyzed older women’s activist histories in any depth” (p. 7). Multiple scholars have pointed out that the dearth of scholarship derives from “our conception of activism as associated with young people, not with middle-aged or older people” (McHugh, 2012, p. 282). In supporting this argument, Naomi Richards (2012) wrote: “In the public imagination, activism is often associated with youth. This assumption is perhaps based on an idea that older people have dwindling energy and less passion than younger people, both of which qualities are required to organize collectively” (p. 8). In addition to not associating activism with older women, another reason that scholars have not studied the activist endeavors of older women, maybe the very definition of activism excludes this population. Activism—defined as “taking direct or militant action to achieve a political or social goal”—may fail to “consider older women as potential activists” (McHugh, 2012, p. 282). Baumgardner and Richards (2010) argue that it is not “only those with ‘access’ to people and power could successfully take on social change.... It’s really about accessing what you do have” and using those resources to create change (p. 268). We

need to situate craftivism within this broader understanding of what constitutes activism, and how older women are playing a key role in defying stereotypes of older women (Sawchuk, 2009).

Rather than viewing older women as passive, frail, and dependent on welfare services, studies have revealed that women in later life could be highly politically engaged. Chazan and colleagues' (2018) study on "how and why older women are organized, networking and working for social change" (p. 3) found that in later life, women were far from apolitical; rather, this was a life stage of new and renewed activism. These "granny activists" are an "integral part of Canadian (and North American) social justice and peace movements for the past quarter-century" (Chazan & Kittmer, 2016, p. 298). Indeed, these granny activists exploited their "little old lady" personas to permit them to participate in events where traditional activists were not invited (Sawchuk, 2009, p. 181).

In the current political environment, we are witnessing middle-aged and older women emerging as a political force in America and globally. It is within this demographic—"among these college-educated, middle-aged women in the suburbs that political practices have most changed under Trump" (Putnam & Skocpol, 2018, n.p.), mobilizing and forming grassroots political groups. Lara Putnam, along with Theda Skocpol of Harvard University, conducted on-the-ground research in eight counties in North Carolina, Wisconsin, Ohio and Pennsylvania, and found that tens of thousands of women across America, "mostly mothers and grandmothers ranging in age from their 30s to 70s, are fueling an American political transformation" (n.p.).

Summary and Conclusion

Acknowledging the societal forces that led to the gendered division between the fine arts and crafts can help understand how needlework ultimately came to be

understood as “women’s work” (Auther, 2010), as the hierarchical division between fine arts and crafts mirrored women’s subordinate social position. Craftivism challenges traditional notions of women’s work—which was historically linked to the domestic, the home, and the private sphere. Throughout history, women have used their craft to challenge the patriarchy in subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways, wielding their needles to voice their political opinions (Emery, 2017). Today, we see women continue to engage civically and politically through craftivism, their message further disseminated through the use of new media platforms and engagement in participatory cultures. In doing so, craftivist groups are engaging in self-actualizing citizenship (Bennett et al., 2011), where creativity and political and civic engagement are interwoven. Yet, this reclamation of knitting has not been without issues, as questions of inclusivity and exclusion have problematized the movement.

The literature that examines craftivism has primarily focused on the relationship among feminism, craft, and activism; it has failed to go beyond addressing craftivism as a gendered practice, and to research the social and political impact of this contemporary movement. As illustrated by the Women’s Marches in 2017 and 2018, we see the numbers of women getting involved politically in the country growing; according to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, there is an unprecedented surge of women candidates, primarily Democratic, running for political positions at all levels (Dittmar, 2017). However, this “emerging maternalist coalition” (Putnam & Skocpol, 2018, n.p.) has been minimally studied. My goal is to contribute to this emergent body of literature, which examines the creative political participation of women through craft.

Furthermore, the literature of participatory culture and civic engagement has been overwhelmingly focused on youth (e.g., Ito et al., 2015; Jenkins, Ito, et al., 2016a; Jenkins, Shresthova, et al., 2016b), while the scholarship on emerging notions of citizenship (Bennett et al., 2011; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) has been developed in the

context of youth activities. My research aims to fill a gap in this literature by examining the relationship between participation in interest-driven craftivist networks and engagement in participatory politics, and analyzing how this engagement might be different in the case of non-youth populations, such as older women. In doing so, my hope is that this research sheds light on the interest-driven, political, and creative activities of older women online—an understudied demographic—and therefore makes a valuable contribution to several bodies of research including online participatory politics, civic engagement, and craft studies and gender studies.

Chapter III

METHODS

Craftivism is re-emerging as a viable force within the political landscape. Fiber literally voices our discontent. In yarn, thread and fabric we find tools to engage politically through a hobby whose product (or end) becomes political commentary. Yet craftivism, as a method for engaging with political events, needs to be problematized. Is craftivism a complement to activism or a safe-haven from engaging directly with politically charged issues? Is it “activism lite” or a means to bring women into the activism tent who would not normally feel comfortable voicing their political beliefs? We must use critical research methods to measure, and understand, this most recent iteration of craft-based activism in the U.S. following the election of Donald J. Trump as president, as a means to probe how people, and in this case overwhelmingly women, respond to unsettling moments in political culture. Through craftivism in particular we have the opportunity to learn how craft creates community as women stitch together a tapestry of politically engaged voices. Yet whose voices does it capture? Whose voices does it shut out? We need to ask these questions of craftivism, even as it purports to push the needle toward social change —Hinda Mandell, 2018

Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods that were used to address the key questions driving this inquiry: specifically, how craftivists perceive and enact the relationship among craft, activism, and feminism, how the generational participation in craftivism is salient, and how new media is reshaping craftivism. I will explain my rationale for choosing a qualitative methodology with a grounded theory approach and then describe the sites and context of this research, the pilot study that informed this

research, the research design, the methods of data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, and the positionality of the researcher.

Methodological Rationale

My choice of a qualitative methodology was clear from the beginning of the research process, as it allowed me to explore the lived experiences of the participants and uncover their understanding of those experiences, emphasizing complexity (Creswell, 2013). This approach allowed for engagement with the “messy nature of qualitative research that eludes and resists the grasp of neat categories or consistent themes” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 6).

Vasudevan (2011) invites us, as researchers, to engage in “unknowing” as a stance “through which to engage more fully with and be responsive to a changing world” (p. 1154). This methodological approach encourages a “willingness to appear naive or foolish” (Bennett, 2010, p. xiii), to allow oneself as a researcher to remain open to new and unanticipated ways of knowing, and “not quite knowing what results the research will produce” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 8).

My aim as a researcher was to listen to the voices of the women I interviewed and develop a deep and nuanced understanding of the social phenomenon of craftivism. As previously discussed in Chapter II, women have been historically marginalized, both from a socio-cultural perspective and specifically within the field of art. Craftivism must be researched through the lens of power and patriarchy, acknowledging the gendered history of art and craft (Nochlin, 1989; Parker & Pollock, 2013; Pollock, 2003). Therefore, adopting a critical approach was necessary, since it allowed for an analysis of “issues of power that are visible and invisible and examine omissions” (Swaminathan & Mulvihill, 2017, p. 6). My goal as a researcher was to “de-emphasize a power relationship” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48) between researcher and participant by incorporating

the participants' suggestions into the initial development of the interview protocol, and reaching out to numerous participants in the data analysis process.

As previously noted, the research focusing on activism, and in particular the creative activism of older women is limited (Chazan et al., 2018; Sawchuk, 2009). As such, qualitative research can be used to “develop theories when partial or inadequate theories exist for certain populations ... or [when] existing theories do not adequately capture the complexity of the problem we are examining” (Creswell, 2013, p. 48).

Allowing for the voices of these women to be heard and honored, a grounded theory approach was adopted that consisted of “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1).

Sites and Context

For the dissertation, I studied three groups that are participating in the contemporary craftivist movement: The Original Defiant Crafters, the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society, and Crafting for Change. All three groups were founded in direct response to the 2016 election of Donald Trump. After contacting numerous groups by posting messages to the administrators/founder(s) of their Facebook groups, these three groups expressed interest in participating in my research and, due to their varying modes of online and offline engagement, facilitated an insightful comparative approach in relation to my research questions. While all three groups are engaged in craftivism, their offline and online presence varies. The Original Defiant Crafters have no physical presence, as they are exclusively an online group active on Facebook; the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society meets offline and has a Facebook group; finally, Crafting for Change meets offline and also has a more robust and distributed presence across multiple platforms.

The Original Defiant Crafters

Claire¹ launched The Defiant Crafters on February 28, 2017 as a public Facebook group, where anyone can find the group, see who is a member, and what they post, with the following mission: “Saying it like it is, from my heart. A journey in resisting the current administration and political atmosphere through knitting for protests.” However, in June 2017, Claire was removed as the administrator of the Facebook group and was replaced in that role by the moderators for accepting trolls into the group. The new administrators renamed the group “The Original Defiant Crafters” and, in response to the trolling incident, changed the visibility settings from a public group to a secret group, where only members can find the group, see who is a member, and what they post. Additionally, new members can only be admitted through an invitation by an existing member in good standing. All posts are vetted by the administrators before being posted to the group. An extensive list of rules is pinned to the top of the Facebook group. The rules, established by the five administrators on June 21, 2017, address user behavior, posting of comments, and the approval process, as well as outlining the consequences for non-compliance. The Original Defiant Crafters is one of the largest craftivist groups on Facebook with 2,228 members. This group does not meet offline, nor on any other platform other than Facebook.

Posts in the Facebook group are either political or craftivist in nature. Political examples include how to contact your senators to advocate for various issues, such as the continuing support of Roe v. Wade, and posting lists of Democratic and Republican senators who have voted to confirm Trump’s nominees for federal court judges. According to the Rules of Engagement, knitting projects must be resistance-related except on weekends, when members can share non-resistance-related projects and advertise resistance-related projects and products. The current expressed mission is:

¹All participant names and group names are pseudonyms. For further details on anonymization strategies, see p. 48.

The Original Defiant Crafters is a group for crafters who want to actively participate in the Resistance against conservative policies that harm our families, friends, the environment, and basic human rights. We peacefully protest, through political actions and our crafts. We speak out to raise awareness. We support candidates who are aligned with our beliefs. We are ready to fight to preserve our rights and the rights of those who cannot speak for themselves. Peacefully. Tirelessly.

The Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society

The Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society was founded by two Ferndale, Michigan residents, Shannon and Anne. After Trump won the election, during a march on November 20, 2016, Anne decided to invite 5-10 women over to her house once a month to knit and talk and contribute money to organizations like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), Planned Parenthood (PP), and the Samaritas, a Lutheran aid service that helps refugees. The first meeting was held on December 7, 2016 to raise money for the ACLU. The name of the group is an homage to the Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society (Figure 5), a radical Oregon feminist group from the 1970s.

The mission of the group is explicit, and so is their ideological position, as

described on their Facebook page:



Figure 5. The logo from the Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society, circa 1974, which inspired the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society

Remember a real but facetiously-named group in the 70s called the Ladies Sewing Circle and Terrorist Society? We've formed something similar in Ferndale, a knitting group that'll combine evenings of social knitting with us chipping in for an organization. This is a page of liberal/progressive values, it's for support and planning and like-mindedness, and we will enjoy that type of interaction with you. We will block trolls and remove posts that aren't in line with our purpose.

In-person meetings are held in the basement of Zion Lutheran Church in Ferndale, Michigan. Beginning in December 2016, the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society has met a total of

eight times. Generally, 12-15 members come to the face-to-face meetings, but they have filled the social hall when knitting and fund-raising for organizations such as Planned Parenthood. The group has hosted speakers from progressive organizations, including the Sierra Club, Emily's List, Time's Up Legal Fund, and Samaritas, as well as Emerge Michigan, which trains Democratic women to run for local and state office.

The only social media platform the group uses is Facebook. Their Facebook group, formed on November 29, 2016, has 424 members. The Facebook group recently updated their status from a closed group, where anyone can find the group, but only members can see who the other members are and what they post, to a public group in the hope of attracting more members. Posts on the Facebook group focus on both local and national political issues, for example, promoting open houses to meet local Michigan candidates, to supporting Beto O'Rourke, who was the Democratic challenger for Ted Cruz's Texas senatorial seat. Craftivist projects range from the Craftivist-Collective cross stitch banner, which reads "Everybody is a potential refugee," to the *SCOTUS Garland* protest pattern, protesting the GOP stealing the Supreme Court seat that should have gone to Merrick Garland.

Crafting for Change

The craftivist group was launched in March 2017, nine weeks after the inauguration of Donald Trump as President, and founded by Peggy, a middle-school teacher and long-time activist and knitter, who is the founder and administrator of their online presence. She is supported in this work by her daughter, Mary, who is a psychologist professionally, and is also an administrator of the site.

Crafting for Change is a community with both an offline and online presence. Their mission, as stated in their Facebook group, is:

Crafting for Change help groups of thoughtful, committed citizens resist while maintaining their wellness through the self-care of craft. Crafting for

Change will meet monthly in Defarge Action Groups to knit or craft and perform manageable political resistance.

In the offline environment, Crafting for Change has meetings once a month in a Mexican restaurant in a suburb of New York City. The meetings, referred to as the Defarge meeting groups, are named after the character Madame Defarge from Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*, who subversively knit the names of those condemned to die into her knitting. As of the writing of this dissertation, there have been 16 meetings, with the first one having been held on April 23, 2017.

Crafting for Change has a distributed presence across multiple online platforms. As of this writing, the group has a Facebook group with 842 members, an Instagram site with 628 followers, a Twitter site with 92 followers, a Ravelry site with 404 members and an official website. The Facebook group is a closed group, and all new members must be approved by the founder, Peggy. Once an individual is accepted as a member of the group, they can post articles, but the articles must be approved by Peggy or Mary before being posted.

Posts generally focus on disseminating information, either craftivist-related or political, relating to a progressive political agenda. For example, craftivist posts include a new knitting pattern for a hat advocating for getting out the vote in the primaries (and linked to the Ravelry site), to the Tempestry Project, a knitting project designed to visually illustrate climate change over a defined timespan through the use of color. Political information ranges from an article listing resources to increase gender representation in the sciences, to “lean oppose” a list of senators leaning toward the opposition of Kavanaugh for a seat on the Supreme Court, and how to contact them to voice one's political opinion.

Demographic Data

To obtain more specific demographic data about the membership of these groups, I asked the group administrators if they could share the “group insights” metrics from

Facebook, and they all agreed to do so. These data are collected by Facebook when members sign up on the platform, based on their profile information.

All three groups share similar age distribution, with over 50% of participants being over 45 (Figure 6). Men represent less than 4% of the membership in each of the groups. The case studies are similar in terms of age and gender demographics.

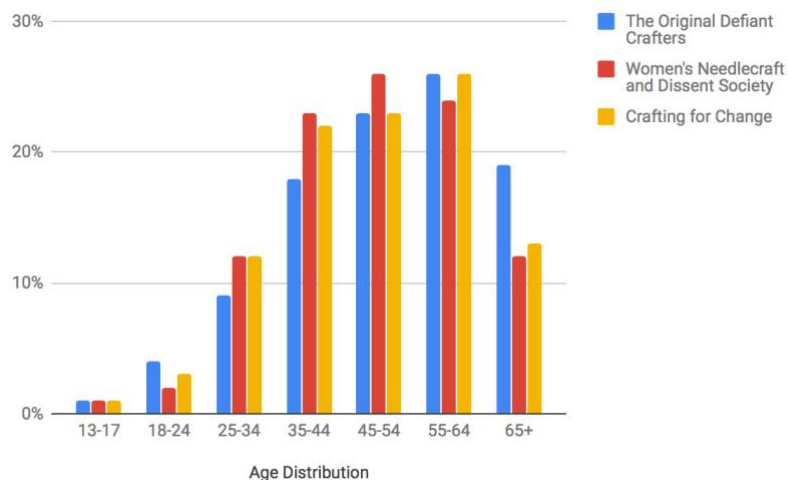


Figure 6. Age distribution of the three craftivist groups according to Facebook metrics

Pilot Study

My pilot study was an exploration of the group Crafting for Change. Beginning in the Spring of 2017 until Spring 2018, I attended their face-to-face meetings, participated in craftivist projects—knitting and assembling the Welcome Blanket—and participated in online discussions on Facebook. I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews and offline and online participant observations. By immersing myself in the group, I began to explore the community, which provided me with an initial set of insights into the culture, norms, and beliefs of the group. These insights served as the foundation for my dissertation and research questions. The pilot provided an understanding of what worked, what needed to be rethought, and highlighted new possibilities and directions for the dissertation study. After the interviews, I reviewed the protocol with the founder of

Crafting for Change for her perspective and input, and to encourage participant participation in the research process.

Several methodological changes based on the pilot were adopted into the dissertation study. During the pilot study, only one site was examined, and only the leadership of that group was interviewed. For the dissertation, I expanded the number of sites to three and interviewed both the leadership and regular members of each group. Additionally, for the pilot study, I had originally planned to conduct three interviews with each participant, but I found that two interviews were sufficient to address all the interview questions; therefore, for the dissertation, each of the participants was interviewed twice. In the pilot study, only Crafting for Change's Facebook group was explored. In the dissertation, all the social media platforms for each of the craftivist groups was part of the data collection.

In terms of areas of focus, what emerged organically from the research process in the pilot was the salience of generational aspects in the craftivist group. In response to these findings, I added an additional research question in order to further investigate this direction. The pilot study also highlighted a critical area that warranted further exploration: the issue of intersectionality in craftivism. In the post-Pussyhat era, numerous scholars (Black, 2017; Close, 2018; Humm, 2017) have problematized the issue of intersectionality in the Women's Marches, and also more specifically within the craftivist movement (Close, 2018). This lack of inclusivity in the craftivist movement was examined and addressed more fully in the dissertation. The interview protocol for the dissertation included questions regarding intersectionality in the craftivist movement, and probed issues of exclusion/inclusion from a socio-economic, gender, and age perspective.

Previous data collected during the pilot study, as well as findings emerging from that research, were included in the dissertation study and enhanced with new data collection and analysis, as explained below.

Research Design

The research methods employed in this study consisted of semi-structured interviews with general members and leadership of the three groups and participant observation in the offline environments and in the online spaces (see Table 1 for a summary of data sources). I describe each method of data collection below.

Table 1. Overview of Data Sources for Each of the Three Groups

Data source		The Original Defiant Crafters	Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society	Crafting for Change
Interviews	<i>With administrators/ founder(s)</i>	2 (Geneva, Gina)	2 (Anne, Shannon)	2 (Peggy, Mary)
	<i>With general members</i>	3 (Rebecca, Colleen, Selina)	4 (Amelia, Lily, Gwen, Yvonne)	4 (Ina, Liora, Marcela, Yael)
Offline participant observation (face-to-face group meetings)		N/A	✓	✓
Online participant observation	<i>Facebook</i>	✓	✓	✓
	<i>Twitter</i>	N/A	N/A	✓
	<i>Instagram</i>	N/A	N/A	✓
	<i>Ravelry</i>	N/A	N/A	✓

Interviews

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the founder(s) or administrators of each group and a minimum of 3 general members of each group, representing a total of 17 participants (see Table 1). In the pilot study, I focused solely on the founder of one group, which limited the diversity of opinions and perspectives. For the dissertation, from a methodological perspective, I increased the number of sites, and

expanded the participant group to include the administrators/founder(s) or moderators and general members to represent a diversity of voices, which was deemed important.

At the time of this study, The Original Defiant Crafters had four administrators who were responsible for managing the Facebook group and establishing the rules of conduct, although only two were actively participating in the group. The Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society had two administrators/founders, and Crafting for Change had one administrator/founder and one moderator. I was able to interview the two active administrators of The Original Defiant Crafters and the administrators/founder(s) or moderator of each of the other two groups.

To determine which general members would be interviewed, I used two different approaches—first, I posted an email (with prior consent from the founders or administrators) in each organization's Facebook group, explaining the research and asking for participants (see Appendix B). I shared my TC email address and asked anyone that was interested to email me. I received no expressions of interest by email, although a number of members "liked" the post. Since I had no volunteers, I adopted a purposeful sampling technique, snowballing, where the founders/administrators suggested members to interview. I followed up on each suggestion, contacting potential participants through Facebook Messenger. If they expressed interest, I asked for their email, further explaining the process, clarifying the time commitment involved, and informing them that there was no financial remuneration for their time. They were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. If they were interested in participating, I then sent them the consent form and scheduled two interviews either in person or by video-conferencing. Of the 11 interviews with general members, all but one was recruited through purposeful sampling. When I attended one of the meetings of the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society, one member approached me and volunteered to be interviewed, so she was included in the interview schedule.

Each of the participants was interviewed twice, adapted from Seidman's (2013) approach of three interviews. Returning to the participants for a second interview fostered time and space to "focus, reflect, write, reflect, and focus again while interviewing" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 108). By the second interview, the participants were familiar with me and the interview process, allowing the interview to proceed smoothly (Charmaz, 2014).

The first interview focused on the participants' involvement in craftivism and how their understanding and use of new media are (re)shaping craftivism. The second interview examined the participants' understanding of feminism as it relates to their craftivist practice, the generational aspects of the group, and their perception of the political and social impact of their craftivist practice (see Appendix A for interview protocol). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for consistency in the topics that were covered. When a participant mentioned an interesting point, I asked additional questions, either to clarify their statements or to probe further into the topic (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). My goal in the interview process was to understand the "lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Over the duration of my involvement with the three craftivist groups, and in particular Crafting for Change, I developed relationships with the administrators/founder(s) of the groups. Seidman cautions the interviewer that too little or too much rapport can distort what the participants share during the interview process, so I tried to be aware of these relationships and attempted to "err on the side of formality rather than familiarity" (p. 99).

The Original Defiant Crafters interviews were all conducted through Zoom, a video-conferencing tool. For the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society, I traveled to Michigan, attended a group meeting on June 20th, 2018, and conducted all the interviews face-to-face over a three-day period in June. With Crafting for Change, since it is geographically close, I was able to conduct the interviews with the administrator/founder

face-to-face. All the other members preferred being interviewed by Zoom, which allowed greater flexibility in scheduling interviews.

Before the interviews, I provided each participant with a copy of the interview protocol to familiarize themselves with the questions that would be asked. During the interviews, which were audio-recorded (through Zoom), I took handwritten notes, including salient comments, new questions that emerged during the conversation, and topics I wanted to explore more extensively. During the face-to-face interviews, I also had a laptop computer, so if the interviewee wanted to share any information from online sources, I could document the images by taking screenshots. For the interviews that were conducted online through video-conferencing, participants shared links and images with me through email.

The audio recordings of the interviews were then transcribed by a transcription service. A non-disclosure form was signed by the transcription service, which was submitted during the IRB process. Each transcript was reviewed and revised for accuracy.

The interviews were conducted over a three-month period, during which I was concurrently transcribing and analyzing the interviews. In the end, I interviewed 17 women two times, and had over 25 recorded hours of interviews. This included 3 hours of interviews with the founder of Crafting for Change that I conducted for my pilot study, since those data were deemed relevant to this dissertation research.

Offline Participant Observation

The degree to which I involved myself as a participant in the two groups that met face-to-face, the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society and Crafting for Change, varied. Initially I was a participant in Crafting for Change, as I had not yet determined that this group would be the site for my pilot study. After participating for six months, I asked the founder of the group if she would be willing to participate in my pilot study—I therefore transitioned from a participant to a participant observer. It was at this point that

the founder informed the group that I would be collecting data and requested the members to let her know if there were any issues. Initially, I took handwritten notes of the meetings and then began to audio-record the meetings in January 2018. Before the first meeting was audio-taped, an explanation of what I was doing was posted to the Facebook group by the administrator, so anyone attending the meeting was aware of my research and presence at the meeting beforehand. At the meeting, informed consent forms were reviewed, distributed, and signed for the pilot study. Two members of the Crafting for Change group who regularly attended the meetings requested after that meeting that, going forward, I not audio-record the conversations. In discussing this issue with the group, a decision was made that I would take handwritten notes of pertinent or interesting observations and conversations, but nothing would be audio-recorded, since two of the members were uncomfortable with their voices being recorded. As a researcher, not being able to capture the audio forced me to look at things differently. I didn't need the conversation verbatim, but was more interested in focusing on the group dynamics and practices.

For the pilot study, I was a participant observer in seven of the meetings. I have continued to attend Crafting for Change meetings, and to date I have attended 13 meetings over a period of 18 months during the dissertation study.

For the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society, due to their geographic location, I attended only one meeting for the purpose of observing the group. The administrators and I crafted an email explaining my research months ahead of my visit and asked the group for permission to observe the meeting for my research and request participants to be interviewed. Unlike Crafting for Change, where my role shifted from participant to participant observer, my role as researcher—and my motivations for attending the meeting in Ferndale in June 2018—were very explicit from the beginning.

With the aim of developing thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973), I carefully documented the process of participant observation, as the in-person meetings for both

groups represented an integral part of the group culture. I maintained a research journal for field notes during all group meetings that I attended. During the meetings, I took descriptive notes regarding the topics of discussion, who attended the meeting, the interaction of the members, and the informal discussions that took place. Immediately after the meetings, I wrote more analytical notes regarding what took place. Corbin and Strauss (2015) emphasize the value of the research journal in enabling the researcher “to become more self-aware not only of his or her biases and assumptions but also of the reason for making certain decisions and to obtain insight into his or her own behavior” (p. 37).

Since The Original Defiant Crafters is strictly an online group and the administrators and members live in geographically diverse areas of the United States, they do not hold face-to-face meetings. All the observations regarding this group were in the online space.

Online Participant Observation

To understand the culture and the social norms and practices that are distinct to these communities (Hine, 2015), I observed the three groups across all their social media platforms. In conducting this research, I immersed myself in the numerous spaces inhabited by these groups to understand how the group culture “may emerge in such a space, with its own sets of norms and values, with common understandings of humor, reciprocity, and a sense of its own identity as a social formation distinct from others” (p. 34). Since the beginning of the dissertation study, I maintained a research journal documenting interesting posts, images, and comments from the social media platforms of each group. For all three groups, I read posts and comments on the Facebook sites; for Crafting for Change, which had a presence on other social media platforms as well, I also analyzed the content and comments posted on Instagram, Ravelry, and Twitter. On Instagram, specific attention was paid to the aesthetic aspects of the images, and the role

of the visual appeal of craftivist projects, since Instagram is uniquely positioned in the online attention economy. For the pilot study, Ravelry was not included as one of my sites, but for the dissertation, given the significance of Ravelry in the craftivist community (Literat & Markus, 2019), it was included in this dissertation research. Although Crafting for Change's Twitter site is currently dormant and there have been no posts in over six months, I included data from prior tweets, replies, and mentions.

In examining the sites, it was important to pay attention not only to the text-based content but to visual imagery as well; therefore, I also took note of images posted by group members, media that was shared in posts, and other visual elements, such as profile pictures, use of emojis, and the general visual design of the pages. Saldana and Omasta (2018) encourage researchers to undertake a systematic analysis of visual data by first noting initial impressions, then assessing "the legitimacy of those first impression jottings" (p. 84), and then conducting a more reflective and critical analysis of the data.

Data Analysis

The aim of the research was to gather a deep and nuanced understanding of the craftivist groups' practices in relation to the research questions. The data were analyzed inductively, using a grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) to "construct theories from the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1), while remaining "open to the data ... [in order to] discover subtle meanings and have new insights" (p. 137).

The data collection was completed in August 2018, and the data analysis was completed in three phases. The informal phase began while the data were being collected, as "collection and analysis [of data] inform and shape each other in an iterative process" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 343). At the completion of each interview, and during the transcription process, a preliminary and informal analysis of the data began to emerge. Reflective notes were written on the transcripts, and sections of text were highlighted for

salient comments. This informal phase was an important connection between the collection of the data and the more formal analysis and enabled me “to stay on top of the research process” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 69). Before starting the formal analysis, I read through the interviews, field notes, journal entries, and screenshots of social media. This allowed me, on this first pass, to immerse myself in the lived experiences of the participants, “feel what they are experiencing, and listen to what they are saying through their words or actions” (p. 86).

In the second phase, the data were more carefully and systematically reviewed and labeled for subthemes. Charmaz (2014) advocates for a theoretical “playfulness,” allowing the researcher to “try out ideas and see where they may lead. Initial coding gives us direction and a preliminary set of ideas that we can explore and examine” (p. 137). I thus remained flexible, allowing myself to return to the data to revise and rethink the subthemes. As more of the interviews were transcribed, the initial process of noting subthemes developed into a more focused process, as ideas became more unified. The interviews were reviewed line by line, generating over 100 subthemes. In doing so, the words of the participants themselves were used to develop subthemes, which Corbin and Strauss (2015) refer to as “in vivo” codes. Examples of these include: *it’s a bundle of love. If it’s a scarf, it’s a hug*—a subtheme of knitting as caring/self-care; *we are doing this for our children or grandchildren*—the generational aspects of craftivism; *just how strong of a force they are reckoning with; ... as I knit, it creates space where I can think about what I can do politically; craftivism was my first step into being more politically active, and it was kind [craftivism] of I guess the gateway drug for me*—how women are becoming politically active through knitting. Using the participants’ own words made the codes more descriptive and meaningful. It also allowed me to compare their descriptions and uses of particular phrases across the interviews. After highlighting particular sections of the transcripts and noting the subtheme, these sections were exported with the subtheme notations to a spreadsheet for each participant. I was then able to sort by

subtheme to read all the comments that fell under a particular subtheme. Seeing the data sorted by subthemes was extremely helpful in understanding the prevalence of particular ones across participants and allowed for the “constant comparisons” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 87) of the data.

In the final phase of the data analysis, I returned to the data, read through the transcripts, and looked at social media posts, my journals, and the spreadsheets of subthemes. Through this analysis, patterns began to emerge, which allowed the subthemes to be refined and coalesced into themes, a process that Corbin and Strauss (2015) refer to as “axial coding”—linking of lesser concepts around higher-level concepts” (p. 157). The subthemes were coalesced into three larger themes: “Being an Agent of Change”—The Personal is Political: Personal Trajectories of Craftivists; “Beware We Have Pointy Sticks and We Know How to Use Them!”: Older Women Leading the Resistance; “My Craftivist Practice has Grown Up Alongside New Media”: Sharing, Supporting, Communication and Building Community.

Ethical Aspects

Before beginning the data collection for the pilot, I applied for and was granted IRB approval for the pilot study research. I applied again for IRB approval for the dissertation study after the successful defense of the proposal and obtained permission to begin the research.

Regarding permission to research in the online spaces of these craftivist groups, I went beyond a utilitarian approach and drew from a more rights-based approach. I believed I owed the participants a greater level of protection than a more utilitarian approach would require (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). This was particularly important in the online environment, where the presence of the researcher and the act of conducting the research are not always evident or visible compared to offline research (Markham &

Buchanan, 2012); my goal was thus to ensure that the members of the groups were aware of my intentions and my presence as a researcher. Furthermore, since The Original Defiant Knitters is a secret group, the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society was a closed group until June of 2018, and Crafting for Change is a closed group, these are not data that are publicly available, so ethically my stance was to obtain permission from the participants and the administrators (Markham & Buchanan, 2015). I asked for permission from the administrators/founder(s) of all three groups to include comments from group members in my research; this permission was granted in all three cases. The founders or administrators of the groups posted an explanation of my online research and asked if members had any questions or concerns. In response, group members posted comments supporting the research, and I received many "likes" on Facebook. Although there was not one objection raised in any of the groups, from an ethical perspective it cannot be assumed that consent was universal, or that all members, without exception, were in agreement with the research being conducted, since not all members may have seen the post or responded to it (Markham & Buchanan, 2015).

During the process of reviewing the informed consent form with each of the participants, the issue of anonymity was discussed, and each of the participants asked that their identities not be disclosed. So, to honor their requests and protect the privacy of the participants, their names were anonymized and replaced with pseudonyms that aim to preserve the essence and structure of the original name. After two participants expressed dislike for the pseudonym I had chosen, I invited all the participants to choose their own pseudonym if they preferred. I sent out a Google Form to all the participants (Appendix C), offering them the opportunity to choose their pseudonym. Of the 17 responses, which represented a 100% response rate, 4 participants chose their own pseudonyms, and 13 stated that they were comfortable with me choosing it. Additionally, on the Google Form, I asked the founders or administrators to choose a pseudonym for their group, which they did.

A Note on Researcher Positionality

As I engaged in this research, observing, interviewing, gathering, and analyzing data, I brought who I am into my work. As previously discussed in Chapter I, I am involved in the field of craft, both on a professional and personal level. As a participant in craftivist groups, and in particular Crafting for Change, I have developed relationships with the founders of the groups and participated in their online discussions and offline meetings. This insider knowledge has shaped my access to this community, the questions I asked, and how I explored and analyzed the data. My perspective as a researcher is influenced by my love and passion for this community and drives my interest in this field of study. In my role as a researcher, my aim was, and is, to think critically about craftivism beyond the act of making and situate the practice within a larger social, cultural, and political context. While understanding and accepting my insider status, I constantly strived to maintain a stance that is objective and is free from bias.

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

How do you fix the world a stitch at a time? What are you doing to make a difference? (Gwen, WNDS)

Drawing on interview data and field notes from offline and online participant observations, this chapter presents the key findings of the study. Three related themes were identified: (1) the diverse personal trajectories of women within the craftivism movement and their disparate understandings of feminism and activism; (2) the subversive role of older women within craftivism and the resistance, and the continuation of their activist legacy; and (3) how new media has facilitated community and support within the craftivist movement on a national and global stage, yet issues of incivility and conflict persist. Based on the data analysis, each theme is further broken down into relevant subcategories.

“Being an Agent of Change”—The Personal is Political: Personal Trajectories of Craftivists

The data illustrates different personal relationships to political activism and the role that craftivism played within these personal trajectories in the aftermath of the 2016 election. While some participants spoke of their long histories of activism and civic engagement, for others it was the election of Donald Trump that catalyzed their involvement in activism through craft. In interviews and online posts, members of the three craftivist groups revealed that the election and the subsequent Women’s March of

2017 were their first foray into activism, motivated by the misogyny and sexist comments that Trump had expressed during his candidacy. Empirical data illustrate that this new participation in activism reflects larger patterns of protest in the United States. According to a 2018 Washington-Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, 20% of all Americans have participated in a rally or protest since 2016, in reaction to Trump, and one in every five rally-goers had never attended such an event before (Muñana, DiJulio, & Brodie, 2018).

The Pussyhats provided an entry point to activism, as Naomi posted in TODC (The Original Defiant Crafters) Facebook group:

The pussyhats were (and are) a visible symbol of one aspect of resistance. They also were the portal project that got many people to take up their knitting needles or crochet hooks—many of them for the first time.

Members from CfC (Crafting for Change) articulated during the interviews how knitting the Pussyhat was the beginning of their journey into activism.

I think one reason the Women’s March was so huge is that so many of us ... made a hat or hats that wouldn’t have thought of going to march without the Pussyhat project. That was a big launching point for people. (Colleen, TODC)

The women’s march of 2017 was definitely my jumping point, it energized me. It’s what started me down the path of being proactive and not just waiting for something else to happen. I had never done any marches or protests or anything before I went to the Women’s March, and when pussyhat came along, it enhanced the experience of marching. (Marcela, CfC)

Geneva (TODC), a first-time protester, heard about the March and the Pussyhat from a high school friend who contacted her through Facebook.

She said: ‘Would you like to march?’ I said, “Sure.” So we made plans to march in DC and that led me to research about that event and I learned about the Pussyhat. That was how I first got involved with craftivism.

She traveled ten hours on a bus, from her home in rural North Carolina, to participate in the Women’s March in Washington, DC.

However, for many craftivists, particularly for older women, the activism was the continuation of a long legacy of protest, which often dated back over 50 years. When Monique (TODC) asked on Facebook whether the Women’s March in 2017 was the first time group members marched, 59 members gleefully shared their histories of protest—from the civil rights marches in the ‘60s, to the Vietnam War, and beyond.

I marched in the Anti-Gulf War March in 1991. I also met Civil Rights leaders such as John Lewis, Coretta Scott King, and Andrew Young when I was 16, so I learned from the best! (Queenie, TODC)

Hell no! I’ve been marching since the ‘70s! (Talia, TODC)

Members lamented the current political situation that had motivated them to protest again, yet they also expressed a commitment to protesting to protect the rights they had historically fought for.

I protested in my teens in NYC, [in the] early-mid 1970s, protesting against the Vietnam War and for women’s, and equal rights. I never imagined I’d be fighting to not lose the gains we’ve made since then, 45 years later. (Janice, TODC)

I marched on Washington for women’s rights as a teen, gay rights as an adult and now as an old lady, right back to where I started! But I will not be silenced no matter how old.... (Lynda, TODC)

Seeing so many aging hippies and so many people with gray hair and seeing so many women who are all saying I thought we did this already. Why are we having to do this again though? I thought we got this whole thing down and then I can’t believe I’m having to waste my day here because of that moron and all those morons who follow him. (Gwen, WNDS)

In contrast, Ina, a member of the CfC offline group, discussed the contraposition of being engaged, and “wearing the weight of the world on your shoulder” and experiencing burnout.

I’m seeing a lot of resistance fatigue in a lot of people, though it does seem that the administration keeps doing more things to fire people up. So even if people are getting resistance fatigue, they are still getting incensed about the latest thing. (Mary, CfC)

I started marching against the Vietnam War when I was in college. I've worked on campaigns since McGovern. I'm tired! (Caryn, TODC)

The confluence of Trump's election, which triggered mass protests and anger, and the affordances of new media provided the impetus for craftivism (which existed before the Pussyhat) to explode virally, through the media onto the national (and global) stage.

Participants discussed when they became aware of craftivism, and how craftivism related to their activism.

Some members who had a history of political activism were not aware of craftivism until the Pussyhat Project launched in November 2016. Amelia (WNDS) spoke about her previous political involvement and activism during the war in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the presidential election, she supported Hillary Clinton, but her awareness of craftivism only emerged when the Pussyhat project launched on Facebook:

So I volunteered with the Clinton campaign. I knocked on doors, I registered voters. The outcome of the election was very upsetting to me. So when I saw this Pussyhat project, the Women's March, I definitely wanted to stand up.... I become aware of craftivism as a thing, with the Pussyhat project.

As a novice knitter, she was not intimidated by the project: "When I saw [the Pussyhat] on Facebook and I saw the pattern, I thought 'I can actually do that.'"

Peggy, the founder of CfC, noted that although "craftivism existed before the Pussyhats," she was unaware of it until she heard about the project on Facebook. She was been politically and civically engaged in the 2016 election, phone banking for Hillary, before discovering craftivism.

Similarly, Ina (CfC) explained how joining the craftivist group led her to reconnect to her previous history of activism:

I started knitting maybe seven years ago. I learned about the craftivist group and it was a nice way for me to ease back into activism since things are looking kind of ugly now. It's been nice to get reconnected. That's what it's been for me—to get active again and to start feeling like I'm part of a bigger movement.

Some members had a history of both crafting (i.e., knitting, more generally) and activism, but not craftivism—using their craft for activist purposes. They expressed that the ability to merge the two strands of their lives was exhilarating:

My crafting had been intentionally separate from my work as an advocate & issue activist. That changed with this new wave. I knitted 118 pink protest hats. (Amanda, CfC)

I've always been involved in marches and boycotts, and I've always been a knitter and I just love the idea that I could merge the two of them. It was just a great thing for me. (Gina, TODC)

From Civic Expression to Civic Participation

For many women, engagement with craftivist projects—for example, knitting the Pussyhat—was the bridge from civic expression to further political engagement and participation. The online and offline groups provided an informal learning environment for members to learn about craftivism and politics within a supportive, nurturing community that facilitated civic expression and engagement. Colleen, an active member of both the CfC and TODC Facebook groups, posted a question in July 2018 on both groups: “Has your craftivism led you to become more involved in other forms of activism?” The question elicited dozens of comments; participants pointed out how their craftivism has led to civic participation in local politics. Dawn, on TODC Facebook group, proudly shared how, after knitting and crocheting 25 Pussyhats:

I co-started an Indivisible Group [nationwide movement that engages in progressive advocacy at the local, state, and federal level] in our little town of 15k people in Nevada!

Holly enthusiastically responded to this question on the CfC's Facebook group, describing how getting involved with craftivism led her to run for a local office, which she won:

I'm making things better in my community and getting opportunities to talk directly with state reps and my Congresswoman about issues here in NH and beyond.

A common sentiment expressed by many women during the interviews, and in the Facebook threads, was that being a part of a craftivist group was an important step in the process of transitioning from expressive forms of civic participation—knitting the Pussyhat, posting political articles on Facebook, or adding a frame to a profile picture that has a political slogan (such as “I support medicare for all”) to actual civic engagement—participating in marches, lobbying congressmen, etc.). This can be understood through Zuckerman’s (2014) model of the double axes of participatory civics, in terms of moving from voice-oriented acts of civic participation (e.g., knitting Pussyhats) to instrumental acts (e.g., starting an Indivisible [sic] Group, or running for political office), and from thin engagement (e.g., signing a petition, changing one’s Facebook profile picture) to thick engagement (e.g., organizing a campaign, recruiting volunteers). Selina (TODC) explained her transition from expression to engagement during an interview:

Craftivism was my first step into being more politically active ... before you’re ready to make that big jump into emailing and calling senators and representatives and it was kind of the gateway drug for me.

Knitting the Pussyhats was just the beginning of the process, as Colleen (TODC) shared on Facebook:

We’ll make these hats and then I’m going to suck you in because after you make that hat, you have to go to the march or you have to call your rep, because just making a hat doesn’t change anything. So it’s like a fish hook, craftivism. I think it gets people involved. Yeah, it draws them in.

For many of the participants, citizenship was fundamentally tied to the act of voting. Models of citizenship can be seen on a continuum from more traditional concepts of citizenship—the dutiful citizen, expressed through voting and participation in government activities—to an emerging notion of citizenship, the self-actualizing citizen (Bennett, Freelon & Wells, 2010), where networked activism supports engagement with issues of personal value. Members expressed a self-actualizing notion of citizenship,

externalizing their politics through craft and participating civically online; yet aspects of a more traditional notions of citizenship, such as voting, were also valued. During the interviews, members from all the groups, both in the offline and online environment, expressed the critical importance of voting as an expression of citizenship. During the December 10, 2017 meeting of Crafting for Change, one of the key topics was the importance of getting out the vote for the November midterms. In the interviews, members of all three groups spoke about voting as part of their core conception of citizenship:

Citizenship to me is being aware of your rights as an American and exercising your responsibilities as an American, which includes voting. (Peggy, CfC)

[As a citizen] first and foremost, you have to be informed and then express your views, contacting your representatives, local, state, federal. And voting. Vote, vote, vote. (Amelia, WNDS)

Citizenship, number one is voting. It should be an overall requirement that everybody votes and that everybody be educated about issues and, and candidates. (Geneva, TODC)

Craftivism in the Lives of the Participants: Anger, Self-Care, and Showing Love

The election triggered many emotional responses among craftivists, including anger, a need for self-care in a traumatizing political environment, and as a way to show love and compassion toward others. Liora (CfC) spoke of having “had a panic attack that night, and then kind of went into a daze.” But the overwhelming response to the election was anger. Rebecca, an outspoken member of TODC, asserted her anger in the aftermath of Trump’s election:

I think I’m more angry. I’ve actually canceled get togethers with white men who use their privilege to vote third party. At the same time I’m trying to channel that anger into activism and use it to have that an impact.

Mary, an administrator of CfC, expressed a similar state of anger after the election:

I found myself agitated constantly with the things that were coming out of the GOP, this continuing disregard for women, for people of color, for the LGBT population.

Craftivists perceived Trump’s policies regarding reproductive health, abortion rights, and his Supreme Court nomination of Kavanaugh as attacks on the fundamental rights of women. In response to these concerns, they designed and shared resistance patterns with other craftivists to express their anger—sometimes literally spelling it out (Figure 7)—and, in turn, channeling this anger to increase progressive, Democratic voter turnout in the midterms.



Figure 7. The three versions of the ANGRY WOMEN VOTE! hat by Whynotboth on CraftingforChange@Ravelry (CfC@Ravelry)

Similarly, Peggy, the administrator/founder of CfC, addressed her use of anger for creative purposes. She designed multiple resistance knitting patterns and distributed them for free through Ravelry, a social networking site for knitters, crocheters, and dyers. “I’m channeling my anger through my hands to create something in support of people who might be marginalized.” Gina, one of the administrators of TODC, shared craftivist patterns, such as the She Persisted hat (Figure 8), on Facebook and expressed:

I have done a lot of angry knitting, stressed knitting, and comfort knitting. It is what I now turn to when the activities of the current administration become too much to bear.

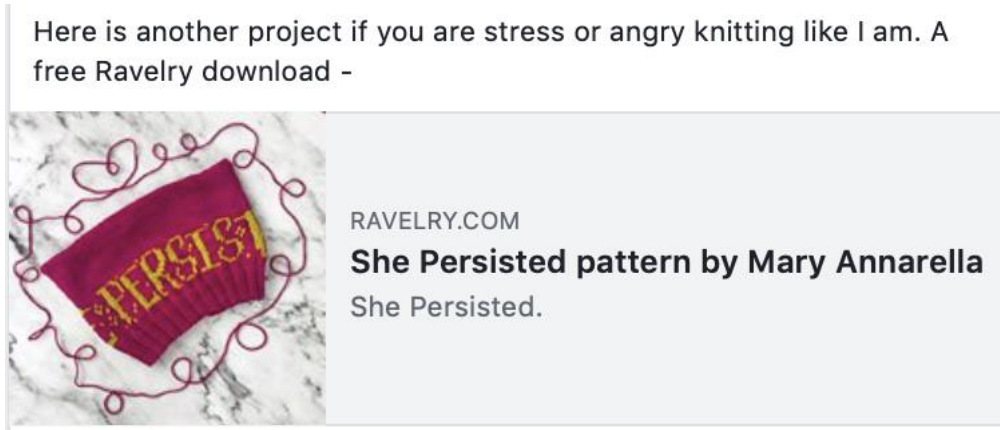


Figure 8. She Persisted Hat pattern from Ravelry posted on TODC's Facebook page

In fact, the craftivist group WNDS temporarily changed their Facebook profile photo (Figure 9) to visually express how they address their anger through knitting.



Figure 9. WNDS temporary Facebook group photo

Other than anger—and perhaps connected to it—another emotional response to the election and subsequent presidency of Donald Trump was the need for self-care. Many women expressed a need to knit as a way of relaxing, as Rebecca (TODC) revealed: “I could use knitting to counteract some of the stress that being under this Trump regime is causing me.” Self-care was seen as an integral aspect of maintaining well-being and

sanity while resisting. Crafting for Change included self-care into their mission statement on Facebook: “Crafting for Change helps groups of thoughtful, committed citizens resist while maintaining their wellness through the self-care of craft.” In interviews, participants disclosed that not only did knitting have health benefits, such as reducing their blood-pressure, it also provided a form of meditation.

We are in big trouble, every day there’s an outrage. So God knows we need the self-care of knitting or our blood pressure is going to go through the roof. (Mary, CfC)

I’ve done a lot of self-care knitting now because of things going on in the world are so upsetting. I guess it centers, just having the needles in my hands and the repetitive motion kind of calms me down. (Gina, TODC)

The repetition, it’s just a very peaceful, almost like meditation for me. To be able to just turn off everything and concentrate on that awhile, especially sitting outside if it’s nice day, that’s definitely self-care. (Geneva, TODC)

I’ve been knitting everyday for around 40 years. It’s my thing, it is what makes me happy.... This is my version of sucking my thumb or self-soothing. For me, knitting is self-care. (Peggy, CfC)

Echoing this need for self-care, in online posts members suggested how they were taking care of themselves, in order to recharge and continue the work of the resistance (Figure 10).

When I woke up today with my jaw still clenched in anger and frustration over the Republican antics last night, I knew it was time to take a step back. I'm taking time to relax and recharge this weekend. Tea, a scone, and knitting is on the schedule for today. And writing a few postcards. 📮
 What are you working on?



Figure 10. Gina's post about taking time for self-care on TODC Facebook

Some of the crafting, either in anger or for self-care purposes, was not craftivist per se, but seen as a necessary therapeutic tool. Shannon Downey, a community activist and craftivist whose Instagram site (@badasscrossstitch) has over 82,000 followers, sees crafting for self-care and craftivism intertwined, as crafting creates a “space to think about systemic problems, [which] is part of the therapy” (S. Downey, personal communication, November 28, 2018).

Other data reinforced this need for reflection. In an interview, Yvonne (WNDS) expressed this sentiment:

As I make these Pussyhats, I think about the people impacted from this election. So it gives me time to dedicate, to sit and think, and why it matters to me.

Members during the interviews discussed the necessity of taking a break as a coping mechanism, and to reinforce the fundamental need to relax and recharge, TODC

have written into their rules that are pinned to their Facebook page, that on weekends, members can share projects that are not resistance-related.

For some craftivists, knitting was the opposite of self-care; it was stress-inducing because of the deadlines to complete projects. For them, craftivism has taken away the joy of knitting. Marcela's Facebook post highlights the negative aspects of craftivism. In a post on the CfC's Facebook group, Marcela (CfC) discussed how craftivist knitting was stress-inducing:

Since becoming a Craftivist, my hobby is now a cause for stress instead of relaxation. I felt empowered when I made all those pussyhats, but now it seems like I can't keep up and make a difference.

In reaction to Trump's hostility toward women and marginalized groups, participants also mentioned how, through craftivism, they demonstrated love and compassion toward these groups. The Believe Women Hat (Figure 11) was designed during the Kavanaugh confirmation hearings. The sentiment "Believe Women" expressed support, love, and belief for Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and for all women who have experienced sexual assault. Throughout the 142 comments on the Ravelry pattern, women revealed their personal experiences of sexual assault on the thread:



Figure 11. Believe Women hat in support of Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and sexual survivors on Ravelry

As a rape survivor who was not believed, I want to humbly thank you for this [pattern]. I am so encouraged by all of the women and crafters/designers/artists that are determined to change the culture. It's truly about time. Thanks for being a positive force for these necessary changes. (Proteobacteria, CfC@Ravelry)

I'm a sexual assault survivor and I'm finding it so healing to see this stitch chart. Thank you, dear one for your thoughtfulness. (Lesbos, CfC@Ravelry)

Another prominent example of a craftivist project aimed at supporting marginalized communities, the LGBTQ + Equality shawl (Figure 12) was designed in

response to Trump's denial of trans people by narrowly defining gender as biological—determined by genitalia at birth. Mary, an administrator of CfC, described the experience of knitting the shawl as “knitting [her] support,” and discussed how when she wore the shawl, she was visually showing love for the LGBTQ community through craftivism. As a member of the LGBTQ community, she wrote on Facebook, “You can never be sure



how overt pride will be received in public. It is a relief to have a positive experience when you

Figure 12. LGBTQ + Equality shawl on CfC@Ravelry group

are visibility a part of the community, and to be a catalyst for other folks to support their loved ones.” When she wore the LGBTQ + Equality shawl to a knitting festival, she received positive reactions to the shawl:

I encountered people that said, “Oh my gosh! I love that, I want to make it, I am going to make that for my transgender child. I should make that for my friend who just came out.” It can be a good way to support and affirm somebody's right to exist in this political climate where the president tells them otherwise.

The pattern for the shawl, posted by Peggy under the discussion topic, resistance patterns, on CfC@Ravelry elicited 43 comments—which, notably, were all overwhelmingly positive, in contrast to the polarized commentary on other patterns. Members exuberantly voiced their support, both of the design and the sentiment expressed:

Love it and especially the meaning behind it. Thank you!
(Sillypurchasing, CfC@Ravelry)

I love this! Definitely going to make one! I love that it incorporates the trans flag. (PattySue, CfC@Ravelry)

Thank you so much for this! I'm transgender and this pattern brought me to happy tears. I will definitely be making this as soon as I can!
(CrochetingCowardlylion, CfC@Ravelry)

Beautiful!! Equality for all is a beautiful thing - and the way it should be!! Thanks! (Springshoweralert, CfC@Ravelry)

Thank you! I am going to make it for a dear friend's son who had top surgery in July (he got handmade socks for the hospital) and will get this for the holiday (or his b'day)! Any chance I get I let him know he has my support and love. So, a big thank you! (Shoedashing, CfC@Ravelry)

“Your Feminism Must Include Everyone”: Issues of Intersectionality in the Craftivist Movement

In the interviews and online participant observations, a generational difference emerged in how the participants defined and understood feminism. Marcela (CfC), who is in her late 40s, reminisced about her high school days, when the predominant feminist issues were “choice, and equal pay, and shattering the glass ceiling. Whereas now there’s a lot more talk of inclusive feminism, intersectional feminism, which is something that wasn’t present before.”

Indeed, members who grew up in the 1950s and ‘60s spoke of feminism as a fight for equality, reproductive rights, and pay parity in the workplace—issues that were central to the second wave feminists (Kelly, 2015). These participants shared a common perception of the fragility of the rights they had fought for, and won, and how easily those rights could disappear, particularly under the Trump administration. They spoke of

the younger generation taking these rights for granted and not understanding how easily they could be revoked:

Their worldview is different than ours, what they've lived through is different. Just the fact that they've never lived in a time when they couldn't get an abortion, and did have control over their bodies. They may find that out again. (Peggy, CfC)

I have girls 30, 29, 22, and 17. I see them taking for granted the things that I participated in, in that are now law or privileges.... They don't realize these privileges were fought for. I don't think they know how quickly these things that we enjoy could be taken away from us with changes in legislation and cultural norms. (Yvonne, WNDS)

They have no idea what it's like not to be able to get property in your name, not be able to open up a checking account, not be able to purchase a car, not be able to make decisions at the doctor, unless your husband signs. They have no idea what's like not to be able to get birth control, to be forced into a lifestyle that maybe you don't want, because there are no options for you. They never had to fight those battles. (Gwen, WNDS)

The term *sexual harassment* was not coined until the 1970s (Farley, 1978), when many of the older participants in this study were entering the workforce. Their personal experiences with harassment, and gender inequities on the job shaped their understanding of feminism. Gina (TODC), now 68, discussed: "I have personal experience about not getting paid the same as a man for the same job. I had three checks of back pay for settlements of court cases for women in nontraditional jobs." Peggy (CfC), now 60, spoke of her experience of inequality relating to gender, working in the news business in the '80s: "I remember that culture was such that when a man was getting married, he would get a promotion and a raise."

In contrast, younger members of the three groups, born as the third wave of feminism began in the 1980s, defined feminism in terms of intersectionality and inclusion. They were critical of older members' understanding of the current discourse around contemporary issues of feminism. Mary (CfC), 30, discussed during an interview: "I think that there's this knee jerk reaction when you talk to women of a different

generation about feminism. I do think that there's a different discourse now." These younger members grew up with gay rights, intersectionality, and diversity, as Ina (CfC), 38, expressed: "It's about queer women and trans women and native women and immigrant women. It's not letting just one voice be heard." For some of the older members, many of these issues and terms were new, as Geneva (TODC) revealed: "I had never heard the word intersectionality before being a part of this group." Many older women spoke of being inspired by the inclusiveness exhibited by younger members, a common thread throughout the discussions.

On the other side is an aspect that I find so very encouraging, which is intersectionality comes totally naturally for the younger generation ... and much more willingness to also look at intersectionality than the older generation. (Rebecca, TODC)

I mean I think they have become a lot more inclusive and they're shaping a lot of what feminism is now and a lot of those of us that are older are embracing what they're bringing. (Marcela, CfC)

A lot of women that have been around since the sixties and seventies activism aren't always as engaged in lifting up minorities and people of color or disabled people, where the younger generation seems to be much more inclusive and making sure that this isn't just white feminism. (Selina, TODC)

Although there were generational differences in understanding and defining feminism, members of all ages spoke about feminism and craftivism as intertwined, both in the online spaces and in interviews. Craftivism was seen as a vehicle for promoting feminist and political issues. Core feminist values, such as the right to choose, could literally be knitted into the craftivist project—merging feminism with craftivism. For instance, with the appointment of the new conservative member of the Supreme Court, Brett Kavanaugh, the landmark decision of *Roe v. Wade* may soon be overturned; Peggy's (CfC) response to this fundamental challenge to a women's right to choose was to create a hat that says, "KEEP ABORTION SAFE AND LEGAL." Yael (CfC)

explained her view of the relationship between feminism and craftivism during an interview:

In my craftivist practice, my crocheted or embroidered pieces become an extension of my voice. What I'm doing is subversive, I'm using craftivism to express an opinion that is outspoken, and traditionally that's not the intended purpose of craft, so therefore it becomes subversive. By being a woman who is taking the time to create this piece of craftivism, that inherently is feminist.

These findings correlated with data from the online participant observation.

Monique, a member of both the CfC and the WNDS Facebook groups, posted a question on both groups, asking: "Are craftivism and feminism connected?" The question generated a lively discussion in both spaces. Within the CfC group, the overwhelming opinion was that craftivism was connected to feminism, since the message of craftivism was generally feminist in nature:

IMHO [In my humble opinion], since 2003 and historically, craft has been used to get your voice heard by people who were/felt unheard, so it aligns very well with feminism. And the subversive nature of using "women's work" for activism, aligns with feminism as well. (Bonnie, CfC)

Those of us using craft as an extension and visual manifestation of our political action tend to be progressive and feminists. So they are connected in terms of being an overlapping group—in a Venn diagram sort of way. And many of us practicing craftivists include feminist messages in our work. One of the issues we are fighting for through craftivism is equality for women. (Peggy, CfC)

Socially conscious craft seems driven by left-leaning women, who are more likely to embrace the feminist label. But if we look at the dozens of projects started in the last two years, that's the core group. I think it also stems from craft activism as a place of resistance, which politically - and hierarchically - is in opposition to the dominant forces in power. And feminists are typically comfortable with, and often embrace out of necessity, political acts of "resistance." (Yael, CfC)

Similarly, the responses on the WNDS Facebook group echoed this view that feminism and craftivism are linked:

Maybe craftivism is about [making a] public statement, when feminists realized that everything can be part of a bigger picture, that the personal really is political.... The two ideas really ARE connected. (Anne, WNDS)

Perhaps our movement HAS landed on a symbol—a hat—that shows that craftivism can be a concrete representation of our unity in sisterhood. The opportunity for craftivism is obvious. (Gwen, WNDS)

Marcela (CfC) discussed during an interview how the Pussyhat was, for many women, “one of the very visible ways that we expressed our feminism, and the political issues that we face.”

In interviews and online posts, participants across the three groups celebrated the sense of empowerment they experienced from being part of a larger collective, and connecting with like-minded individuals.

It’s good for me to be involved, to keep up the energy and to feel a little less despair and a little more like there are like-minded people around me, I know we can do this. (Ina, CfC)

It was a way to be with like-minded people, but, we’re not all the same. We have different opinions, but we agree on the number one, the overall overarching issue, Trump. (Yvonne, WNDS)

It’s a unifying feeling to know that you can connect with so many other people, like-minded people, in a visual way. The visuals of the march in January of 2017 were just astounding. It was a sea of hats. (Geneva, TODC)

The Pussyhat created not just a visual symbol of protest, but an emblem that signified, for craftivists, a collective identity: progressive values, an anti-Trump stance, and sisterhood. Knitting craftivist garments provided a way for craftivists to wear their politics. This speaks to Reger’s (2014) notion of “embodied politics, which are creative acts of cultural resistance centered on the body as a way to disrupt power” (p. 111), often through dress and appearance. For many women, wearing the Pussyhat hat became a symbol of everyday resistance:

You know, the Pussyhat project became a very powerful symbol to some, it became something that couldn’t be ignored. It became something that people could see everyday on the street.... A pussyhat you could just

wear it out on your or go grocery shopping and you would be sharing that message. (Marcela, CfC)

It opens a dialogue and a conversation if you see me wearing a trans flag and the rainbow flag, you know what my politics are, you know who I support. You see me walking down the street and you're going to make eye contact and you're going to connect and you're gonna feel perhaps a little less isolated. It's a way to where literally wear your heart on your sleeve. (Mary, CfC)

Thus, wearing these garments, and in particular the Pussyhat, was, for some, a way to feel connected and included, but in creating in-groups, it also created out-groups, making some feel excluded. Indeed, in the wake of the 2017 Women's Marches, the Pussyhat became a symbol of divisiveness between women within the resistance, as questions of intersectionality and inclusion were raised in the offline and online groups. During an interview, Rebecca (TODC) spoke about the issue of White fragility—i.e., the inability of White women to engage in meaningful dialogue around issues of race (DiAngelo & Dyson, 2018)—in relation to the Pussyhat:

The Pussyhats came to symbolize the unwillingness to look at intersectionality and to even question our own activism and allow people to critique it, and the idea that white women have a monopoly on feminism, and everybody else should be listening to them.

During the interviews, and across the social media platforms, participants spoke of perceiving the Pussyhat as offensive to trans women and women of color, by virtue of its pink color and the reference to the vagina, which only cis women possess. The Pussyhat was perceived as a symbol of White privilege, the antithesis of intersectionality and inclusion.

In TODC Facebook group, a controversy surrounding issues of diversity, particularly race and gender, erupted on June 4, 2017, in a provocative post that questioned the integrity of the group's commitment to social justice:

I thought that this page was meant to be about resistance and working towards positive social justice. but most of what I see here are white people posting pussy hat pictures and then getting all worked up when they're told

that they're appropriating. thoughts? do people agree or should I just pack up and find a more progressive page to share with? (Tanya, TODC)

The post garnered 69 comments and ignited a heated controversy. Some members felt marginalized and asserted that their voices were not being heard. As Sarah-Rose (TODC) angrily stated:

I gave genuine feedback and a dozen white women swoop in and say "there's no problem with the hat!"

Well I'm not talking to you, so stop talking over me. Let me say it again:

THERES A PROBLEM WITH THE HAT.

Black women will never trust you in that hat. Trans women will never trust you in that hat. Wearing the hat means you value your white feelings more than you value inclusion.

Maggie (TODC), in solidarity with Sarah-Rose's position, argued:

POC [Person of color], WOC [Women of color] should be able to call this a safe space too. If someone makes a strong statement against racism, we should be able to HEAR it without negative judgement.

However, in disagreement, numerous members questioned whether the members raising the controversial issues were "plants" in the group:

I sometimes wonder if the people complaining about this are planted here to cause division. (Susan, TODC)

I wondered the same thing. After all the trash talk about how horrible and hateful Pussyhats are, I didn't expect to see any in my very liberal city. But there were tons! (Linda Sue, TODC)

The discussion continued over a three-day period, and exchanges were often uncivil, verging on hateful. Gina (TODC), one of the administrators, jumped in and temporarily disabled comments (which have remained disabled): "It's time to put this discussion to bed for the night. Comments will be turned back on in the morning."

In response to this emerging understanding of the Pussyhat as offensive, members of the groups replaced their Pussyhats with more inclusive versions. Multiple versions of resistance hats were posted in Facebook and on Ravelry that were more inclusive. Hats

had slogans knitted into them supporting DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) and BLM (Black Lives Matter).



Figure 13. Variations on the resistance-themed hats from CfC@Ravelry group

The controversy erupted again 14 months later, in October 2018, in an extensive thread on TODC's Facebook group, which highlighted how polarized this issue remained. Laurie (TODC) ignited the argument by posting:

Some people feel othered by the pink pussy hat. How have you chosen to respond to this? I've thought of knitting all sorts of "pussy" colors, but that still leaves out lots of trans women.

On one side, Betty (TODC) and Tina (TODC) were explicit about their position:

Here's the thing, as a cis woman it doesn't really matter how I feel about it, trans women feel othered and excluded and I care about them and consider them women, full stop. So, no more pussy hats for me.

I got rid of mine! For many, many, many POCs and transgender people the hats represent TERFS [trans exclusionary radical feminists] and non-inclusiveness, and I think they're right.

Supporting another viewpoint, Michelle (TODC) replied:

I made 17 of these pink pussyhats! And I am going to wear mine Nov. 6 to the polls. Anyone has a problem with that, they can kiss off! I'll wear what I want, this is still America!

The conversation then devolved into an argument about what the hats actually represented, cats or vaginas:

Honestly, I don't get this. Because it's not a vagina hat, it's a pussy hat, like a cat. It's making a pun on the president's offensive words. It's not a goddamn vagina hat. (Lily-Ann, TODC)

It literally isn't your job to tell people what they may or may not be offended by. (Emma)

The hats are not supposed to be genitalia. They're cats. Realistic colors are unnecessary. (Hannah, TODC)

I'm pretty sure Trump didn't mean to say that he grabs women by their cats. (Laurie, TODC)

After a reminder from Gina (TODC), one of the group's administrators, to keep the conversation respectful, the thread ended.

Issues of exclusion were not solely related to race and gender, but extended to socio-economic differences as well. For some, knitting was perceived as a middle class (or affluent) White women's leisure activity, that excluded poor women. Anne (WNDS), one of the group's co-founders, clarified during an interview:

Not everybody can afford being a craftivist. You know, it takes time and resources to even knit a Pussyhat. It might not seem like a lot, but it does take at least two or three hours to make it, plus the yarn and needles. In a lot of ways, we're in a privileged position if we can participate in craftivism.

During the June 2018 meeting of the group, participants affirmed Anne's perspective on the cost of craftivism. Members discussed the prohibitive price of yarn and disclosed that they often knit with yarn that they recycled from old knitted garments purchased from the Salvation Army.

The commentary on the lack of socio-economic diversity within the craftivist movement (reflective of a similar lack of diversity within the feminist movement) was also brought up in the online Facebook groups, CfC and TODC.

My group is very white, very female.... [We live] in our own little bubble, I feel like it's a pretty privileged group of people in terms of race and socioeconomic status. (Ina, CfC)

Rebecca (TODC), 57, a researcher at a university, posited that a higher socio-economic status was a possible reason to have more time to contribute to activism: "I have the job stability to be able to say, okay, I can take time for this, and make time [for craftivism]." The lack of socio-economic diversity was confirmed through other data, as well, during participant observations in the two groups that met face-to-face. Members were overwhelming White and appeared to be from the middle to upper middle-class socioeconomic bracket, given their locality and professions.

**“Beware: We Have Pointy Sticks and We Know How to Use Them!”:
Older Women Leading the Resistance**

As tens of millions of Americans have joined protests since the 2016 election in the United States, a significant change has been the age of the demonstrators. In the Vietnam era, protesters were primarily college-aged students, while currently, over 44% are 50 or older (Muñana et al., 2018). The resistance is being led by middle-aged and older women (Putnam & Skocpol, 2018).

Membership across the three craftivist Facebook groups reflects these data, as half of the members are over 45 years old. Furthermore, since Ravelry members are considerably older than the general internet population (Alexa, 2018), it is likely that the age of members in Crafting for Change's Ravelry group mirrors the older age demographics found in the Facebook groups. This inference is also based on other Ravelry data, such as profile pictures of members. Alexa, the Amazon web analytics service, compared the average age of Ravelry users to the general internet population and found that the 45-54 age bracket is over-represented, the 55-64 bracket is greatly over-represented, and the 65+ population is over-represented, indicating that Ravelry participants are considerably older than the general internet population (Alexa, 2018).

Ruth (TODC) posted a meme on TODC Facebook group of a bald eagle wearing a Pussyhat (Figure 14) with the statistics drawn from a 2017 survey conducted by Lake Research Polling. The statistics were based on participation in the progressive advocacy group Daily Action, which found that middle-aged women (66% were over 45 years old) were doing almost all the activism these days. The post had 226 likes and 22 comments, with participants playfully attesting to their advancing age, and activism!

Yes, we rock, oldies but goodies!!!! Well not that old, not yet. I think I'll just be thinking that till my 80's. I'm perpetually young inside. ☺ (Claire, TODC)

I'm young. Except for the knees and spine. But at least I get carded when I ask for my senior discount. (Vicky, TODC)

I got my AARP card last year just to hopefully hear people say, "You don't look old enough for that." ☺ (Ruth, TODC)

I look old, I am old, I feel old, but I am still resisting! (and knitting and crocheting). (Carrie, TODC)

But TAKE THAT Millenials! We're kicking your asses in Activism! :) (Judith, TODC)



Figure 14. Meme posted on The Original Defiant Crafters Facebook group with statistics of age of women in the resistance.

Amelia (WNDS), a participant in both the online and face-to-face group, acknowledged that members tended to be older:

I would say at least 50 percent of the women are older than me. They are in their fifties or sixties or older. They have children and grandchildren. I'm 41. I am technically middle aged now, but I think I'm one of the younger women in the group.

Based on participant observation, members who attended the face-to-face meetings of the Women's Needlecraft and Dissent Society tended to be older than in the Facebook group. Shannon (WNDS), who is in her early 30s, the co-founder of the group, and one of the youngest members, discussed anecdotally that perhaps the older women appreciated the personal interaction with one another.

A lot of the older women that have been involved in this before, I think to them the value of getting together, and being together, is more important. They value that more than we do of my generation. Mostly older, 50s, 60s, 70s....

In a discussion that began in July 2018, age was a highly addressed topic in TODC and CfC Facebook groups. Colleen (TODC) posted the following question in both groups:

Craftivism question: How old are you? What I'm getting at, is trying to discover if craftivism is more prevalent with Boomers, Gen X, Millennials or today's kids. I'm thinking about this because I'm 56 and as I move forward with the rest of my life, I want to decide where and how I can have the most positive impact.

The inquiry prompted 129 comments in the CfC group and 115 in TODC. Members exuberantly shared their ages and proudly affirmed their lifelong commitment to protesting. In the thread on the CfC group, members posted:

Sophie (CfC): 64 and a proud, protesting baby boomer!

Grace (CfC): 53 years old and still fighting!

Elizabeth (CfC): 61, still protesting!

Betsey (CfC): 58 and ever vigilant!

In TODC, the thread was equally lively, with members responding similarly:

Janice (TODC): 62. So NOT quitting now!

Catherine (TODC): I'll turn 70 in a couple of weeks. Hope springs eternal!

Older women discussed that they were often perceived as “little old ladies” who knit. As McHugh (2012) points out, older women are not considered to be potential activists by others because of the granny stereotype. Indeed, this identity as a harmless grandmother “serves a protective function and enhances movement efficacy” (Sawchuk, 2009, p. 171), allowing older women to be perceived as harmless, while engaging in subversive activism.

Peggy (CfC) discussed the subversive power of older women during an interview:

People look down upon [craftivism]. “Oh that’s cute, that’s sweet. You knit, you’re old.” I think you can use that preconception to very quietly exert power when you need to. “Oh yeah I’m a little old lady and I’m knitting. You should underestimate me and I’m quietly kind of being Madame Defarge¹ into the kill list and my scarf.” It’s almost a prop in some ways, to give you a perception of being non-threatening.

Knitting is so stereotypically a women’s thing to do and the idea of grandmas who knit for their grandkids. The stereotype of who a knitter is, is the opposite of what this is, we do this crafty thing but we’re also feminists and activists and making some noise. (Ina)

This granny activism has emerged as a powerful tool of current protests, given the dramatic optics of harmless older women being confronted by police (Figure 15). The protesting grannies earned their own hashtag (#grantifa) during the recent protests in Portland, Oregon in June 2018.

Betty (TODC) shared the term #grantifa—a portmanteau of granny and antifa—on Facebook. She posted: “Learned a new term ... #grantifa, for the senior ladies in the Resistance. Here’s to us little oldies with yarn and pointy sticks!”

¹Madame Defarge refers to a character in Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, who subversively knit the names of those condemned to die in her knitting.



Figure 15. Image from The Original Defiant Crafters of #grantifa protest at ICE detention camp in Portland, OR

Members posted pictures of #grantifa—older women sitting on the front lines at the #OccupyICE protest in Portland, while knitting. Joan (TODC) gleefully posted in the thread:

I’ve been frustrated about not being able to march and stand out in the heat. Next time, my yarn and I will sit in line along Southern Boulevard!

Monique (TODC) in the same thread, commented:

The power of senior women (especially ones with knitting needles) is not to be reckoned with. We must work together to change what is going on in United States NOW! #grantifa

Older women, both in the online groups and during the interviews, discussed that now that they were retired, or “not knee-deep in babies and the mind-suck of that” (Peggy, CfC), they were able to devote more free time to their activism. Pat (TODC), an older member, posted a vivid description of herself on Facebook:

As an older, retired, very overweight, middle class, happily married, white woman with really bad knees, some days I’m privileged to sit and knit and think (and read too much political stuff on FB that makes my BP [blood pressure] soar and call senators and reps). At any rate, you get the picture.

Gina (TODC), one of the group's administrators, discussed the implications of being retired and having more free time:

I've always been pretty much involved. I had nowhere near the level of understanding of politics when I was in my teens and early twenties that I have now. But it is because I'm retired. I'm not running around like a crazy person working like 60-hour weeks like I used to be.... When you're younger, you're more involved with your job, you just have different priorities. Your family or your work.

Geneva (TODC) discussed her perception that there were "not a whole lot of really young folk" who participated online, because many were working and "may have more than one job." Older women were less concerned about what other people thought of them, and the potential risks involved in speaking up, and so were more willing to do so. Yvonne (WNDS), 60, explained that now, as an older woman, she felt she had little to lose from speaking out:

I'm less fearful of my public image. I'm less fearful of showing up on the front page of a paper, there would be a very small impact to me, there is just very little they can do to me now. I think we're more willing to risk. We understand the risk of not doing it.

Similarly, Anne (WNDS) spoke of the power of older women in being able to assert their opinions:

There's a certain point when women are aging where you feel invisible, you feel like you get ignored, you feel like you get interrupted a lot.... I feel like you reach a point where you get tired of that.... And I find myself a lot less polite nowadays.... And I think that's one of the potential powers of older women, when enough is enough and you're going to say what you think.

Peggy (CfC) echoed this view, arguing that aging was crucial in understanding the importance of activism:

The wisdom that comes with age, that makes you fight a little harder and maybe your backbone gets a little stronger. I'm not sure it was always that way.

Older members also expressed concern about their legacy in the world. Peggy (CfC), who recently celebrated her 60th birthday, discussed this sentiment during an interview:

There is a sense, I'm going to die, if I'm lucky, in 25, 30 years, so what are we going to do on this earth? Your priority shifts. You do start to think more about legacy.

Yvonne (WNDS) spoke of the legacy of the early feminists, and how they used their needlework to effect change:

Now it's our turn. It's our generation's time to grab our knitting needles, and pick up where they left off ... to continue ... to make the changes and send a message as to what we want to have heard.

Activism and craftivism were perceived as something to be passed down through the generations. Members expressed concern and hope for the future of the world, for their children and grandchildren, as Lily (WNDS), who is a grandmother, expressed her fears for the upcoming generations, during an interview: "After the election ... it wasn't because I worried for myself. I worry for my kids. I worry for other people's kids." On a similar note, Grace-Ann (TODC) voiced her concern and the sentiment that this apprehension has led her to resist: "I am scared too. I have a beautiful granddaughter and a brand-new grandson. What kind of world is in their future? They are why I resist." This concern for the future generation motivated older women to participate politically.

Lauren (CfC) posted in Facebook:

My grandchildren and children will NOT need to give up the hard won steps towards equality. We will NOT let a loud, ugly minority of bigots take their bright future. We will work to keep every centimeter of gained ground ... we get shit done. It's time for the grandchildren.

Conversely, rather than expressing fear and trepidation about the future, members posted pictures of their grandchildren, often wearing Pussyhats that they had knit for them, expressing their hope for the future, embodied in their grandchildren.

Akosua (TODC) posted an image on TODC Facebook group of her newborn granddaughter wearing a Pussyhat she had knitted for her. In response to the post, other grandmothers shared their images of grandchildren wearing Pussyhats they had knitted for them, and 19 members commented on the joy of a new grandchild, and potential future resistor being born.



Figure 16. Akosua (TODC) shared an image of her granddaughter on Facebook

Nicole (TODC):
Congratulations! And hooray for a new little member of the resistance!

Lulu (TODC): Welcome to the resistance!! ❤️❤️❤️

Gina (TODC): Oh my gosh! So sweet! We have a new little Resistor here, too. ❤️

“My Craftivist Practice Has Grown Up Alongside New Media”: Sharing, Supporting, Communicating, and Building Community

Creating a Global Community of Craftivists Through New Media

Social media has provided a way to build a global community of craftivists, enabling the sharing and promoting of political and craftivist information. Anne (WNDS) explained during an interview that “this group wouldn’t exist without Facebook. I mean, it would not have been possible to get it organized without social media.” Peggy (CfC) discussed how the speed of new media to disseminate and spread information has enabled the groups to react almost instantaneously to current events, and “transpose those reactions into craft” to support numerous causes. She discussed that being able to reach a lot of people through online promotion was very effective, but ephemeral: the ever-

changing, fast-moving focus on different causes could be seen as “the flavor of the month.” Marcela (CfC) explained in an interview how social media has allowed her to react through craftivism to political news:

When the shooting happened in Las Vegas, there was a Facebook group created for Hearts for Vegas. There was one for Hearts for Charlottesville. I can share and promote the message and support the people dealing with those dilemmas by sending off a craft that helps them in their mission.

In response to violence, and in particular gun violence—the White Supremacist rally in Charlottesville in August 2017, or the mass shooting in Las Vegas in October 2017—numerous craftivist projects were developed to send knitted hearts to the affected cities (Figure 17). Hearts for Cville (#heartsforcville) and Hearts for LAS (#hearts4LAS) were two of the prominent projects that emerged online and were promoted by CfC and the TODC.

But see if you can fit in a little time to make a few hearts for Charlottesville first? I only had time to make these two, but I figure every little heart helps. Doesn't it seem like we are just lurching from disaster to disaster? Details in this Facebook group.
<https://www.facebook.com/Hearts4Cville/>



Figure 17. CfC Facebook post for the craftivist project *Hearts for Charlottesville* (#Hearts4cville) in response to the Charlottesville riots in August 2017.

Yael (CfC) launched a craftivist project in response to the Pittsburgh synagogue shooting in November 2018. She set up a Facebook page within 24 hours of the shooting, and over 1,000 people have joined the group as of this writing. Members are knitting, crocheting, and crafting Jewish stars, which will be distributed in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood. The ability to reach people through social media and galvanize support for a cause was instrumental. Yael described how new media has supported her craftivism:

Well, I think new media has been incredible for craftivism because I mean, so much of craftivism is a participatory and community based ... you want like-minded people to be involved ... spreading the word through social media is a requisite part of the process and it's also a great way to meet people who want to be involved. So I see social media for craftivism as being only positive.

Global craftivist groups have come together on social media to express solidarity with other craftivist groups based in the United States. During the protests that occurred during Trump's visit to England in July 2018, East London Knitters proudly marched with a knitted banner that spelt out "East London Knitters Say Balls to Trump!" (Figure 18) and shared the following message on the CfC Facebook page:

UK used their unique gifts, talents and voices to stand up around the world for our shared values - from our hearts to yours thank you.



Figure 18. East London Knitters display knitted banner protesting Trump. Image posted by Hannah on CfC's Facebook group

We came for all the knitters from around the country and the WORLD, who couldn't be there but managed to put their message into stitches in the way that only knitters know how ... in the diversity of political movements and opinions we all have, there is a common thread amongst so many of us, which rejects the prejudice of the 45th President of the USA.

Mary (CfC) explained the importance of new media in helping craftivists connect with one another and find out about ongoing projects.

I would say it's exposed me to people I wouldn't be able to connect with outside of social media. Um, so there are people who are working on projects internationally and in different parts of the United States. I don't even know how you would do this without new media.

For many women who may be isolated or marginalized both from a geographic and ideological perspective, the online community provides a safe space, where they are comfortable voicing their opinions, which may conflict with those of their families or local community. For some members, it may be their only outlet to vent their frustrations, as Colleen shared on the CfC's Facebook group:

I have to write this here because I don't know where else to share it and I have to get it down and out. We had a big discussion (may people might call it an argument or family fight) last night because my dad uses racial slurs and the n-word a lot.

During the interviews, members from all three groups expressed the importance of finding an online community where they could express themselves freely, and which gave them a sense that there were others who held the same political views as they did.

We're from all over the country, but we all have this thing in common, that we want things to be better for other people, for society ... and it's just very comforting to me because in my real life, that's not how it is. I can't discuss a lot of these things with the people around me because we don't agree on a lot of the things politically. (Gina, TODC)

A lot of times if I am stressed out or depressed about something political, I feel better after going on facebook because there are people there that are kindred spirits and I know that I'm not going through it alone and I feel like that's one of the most positive things that it offers. (Anne, WNDS)

We live in a very remote area and unfortunately, it has turned into a very red area too. Well there's really nothing nearby to join other people face to face. (Selina, TODC)

New Media, Craftivism, and Informal Learning

Participants from the craftivist communities on Facebook and Ravelry produce and share creative work. They engage in informal learning—where more experienced participants share their expertise from knitting techniques to political advocacy with less experienced members.

Online participation in the craftivist groups is thus interwoven with a strong sense of social engagement and commitment to learning about civics, politics, activism, and craftivism. Members turn to the Facebook groups to keep abreast of breaking news. Selina (WNDS) discussed, in an interview, the value of social media in terms of being able to share news in real time:

With a few clicks you can share breaking information.... Here's links and information as to what you can do, who you can call, who you can email, and it lets us reach hundreds to maybe a couple thousand people all at the same time.... Before social media it was something that we never would've been able to do.

On all of the Facebook groups, members post information on how to get involved politically. Examples include how to support Democratic candidates by phone or text-banking, or by volunteering with organizations that have progressive politics, such as Moms Demand Action or the New Sanctuary Coalition, a New York group where individuals can be trained to accompany individuals facing deportation to their immigration hearings and ICE check-ins (Figure 19).

More politically-savvy members across the three Facebook groups can inform and teach less politically experienced members. A prominent example of this mentoring is the political “to do” lists, which can offer less politically active members a road map for political engagement. Members often re-post these to-do lists from progressive social media activist organizations, such as, Indivisible, Rogan’s List, Daily Action, Americans of Conscience Checklist, and Sleeping Giants. Members from the three Facebook groups often expressed appreciation for this type of support:

Many of us are troubled by the family separation policy for immigrants. Here is a way to take action. For those in the New York area, there us a program where you can receive training and accompany ICE detainees to their trials. It provides moral support and holds our government accountable. Friends who have been trained are able to bear witness to what is actually happening with minors, etc.



Figure 19. TODC post to inform members how to volunteer with the New Sanctuary Coalition

We have one member in particular [who posts] “this is what you’re doing today, this is your activism for the day. You will call these people. You are concerned about this thing,” and it’s really easy to click on your phone and call during your lunch break and leave John McCain a voicemail. (Mary, CfC)

I appreciate again that somebody has done the research for me and somebody has provided me with the number and I can call or text or sign a petition. (Ina, CfC)

Thank you for sharing this [list]. I just faxed my reps via Resistbot. I’m also working my way through a list tweeting at reps. (Colleen, TODC)

I want to do something but don’t know where to start. The posts have been VERY helpful for me. I’m not a fast enough knitter to always make something, but I can write my congressman and sign petitions etc! (Serena, WNDS)

For example, Gina, one of the administrators of The Original Defiant Crafters, posted the Sleeping Giants (a social media activist group) to-do list for June 16, 2018. The request was for members to email the public relations team of General Dynamics, one of the defense contractors responsible for building the detention center for immigrant children. The list included email addresses and a template to follow (Figure 20). Members from the

group thanked her for posting and shared the post. The original post (from Sleeping Giants) had 296 comments and 1,628 shares, with one person posting:

I may be only one shareholder, but I will be directing my broker to sell every share AND every mutual fund that holds GD immediately upon market open on Monday.

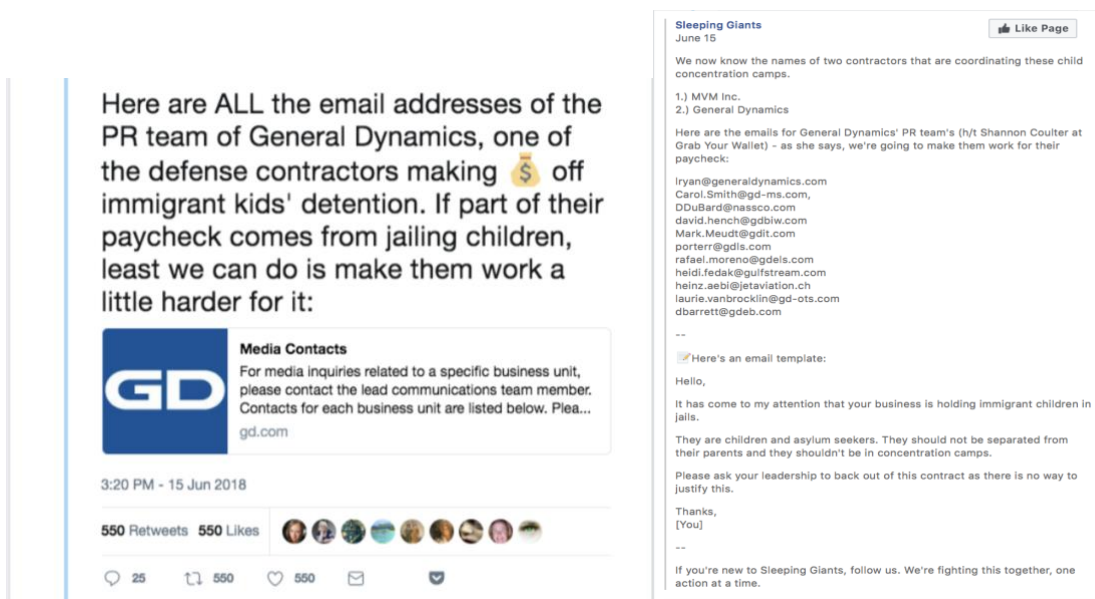


Figure 20. “To do” list from TODC on how to contact the defense contractors building immigrant children’s detention centers

As illustrated by these examples, the Facebook groups are inclusive of differing levels of expertise in terms of both crafting and political knowledge. Members share resistance-related patterns and links to Ravelry. Members post their craftivist patterns on Ravelry, which provides detailed knitting information and commentary on the patterns. Often, the designers of the knitting patterns ask for donations to progressive causes or Democratic candidates in exchange for the pattern. The pattern for the imPEACH hat (Figure 21) links to WeDNA (We Do Not Agree with the Trump Administration), an Etsy-like website that supports progressive groups such as the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union), PP (Planned Parenthood), NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council),

and SPLC (Southern Poverty Law Center) by selling handmade donated goods and services.

My "im🍊" knit hat pattern is now available on [weDoNotAgree.org](https://wedna.org). It can be yours in exchange for a \$4 charitable donation to one of 5 great causes.

WeDNA is the Etsy of the resistance where crafters can donate products and patterns and buyers get them in exchange for a donation. If you've been making more products than you know what to do with, consider becoming a vendor on weDNA. 😊

<https://wedna.org/product/impeach-knit-hat-pattern/>



Figure 21. Facebook post of Impeach hat pattern with donation links

In the CfC group, members often work on a communal craftivist project during the meetings: for instance, in August 2017, members each knitted squares and assembled them into a blanket for the Welcome Blanket project (Figure 22). The 40" x 40" blankets were displayed at the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, and then distributed to refugees and other immigrants through resettlement organizations in December 2018.



Figure 22. Welcome blankets made by CfC during the group's offline meeting

The ethos of the offline and online spaces of the three craftivist groups is one of sharing, learning together, and weaving this knowledge and sense of purpose into their creative endeavors. The Facebook group is also used to publicize events at offline meetings for CfC and the WDNS, for example, at the March 10, 2018 meeting for CfC representatives from Moms Demand Action, a group that is working for stricter gun laws educating members about advocacy regarding gun laws. Additionally, more experienced knitters mentored novice knitters on how to do color work to knit “Enough” into their hats to wear at the marches for common sense gun laws in March 2018 (Figure 23).

Hope you will join us Sunday for our meeting! Moms Demand Action will be teaching us how to work towards common sense gun laws and experienced knitters will help you with color work to wear to the marches.



Figure 23. Facebook invitation for CfC meeting, March 2018: ENOUGH hat to wear to marches to support common sense gun laws

Craftivism as an Expression of Participatory Culture

Craftivism can be understood as situated within the context of participatory culture—communities where individuals can create, learn from one another, and participate in an environment where their contributions are valued (Jenkins et al., 2006).

These spaces encourage civic engagement and social and political activism based on the collective shared values of the members (Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Ito et al., 2019; Jenkins, Ito, et al., 2016a). The Facebook and Ravelry groups are examples of creative participatory cultures as well (Delwiche & Henderson, 2013), where members design, create, and distribute products (such as the Welcome Blanket, Pussyhat, and Hearts4Cville) to promote their collective political, civic, and creative ethos.

These values are exemplified within the CfC@Ravelry community. The Ravelry group is used to share and disseminate craftivist patterns, promote progressive causes, and engage in dialogue about knitting and political issues, similar to the groups' other social media channels. On the discussion board, under the topic resistance patterns, members can upload original designs and post modified versions of craftivist patterns. For example, on the Protest is Patriotic shawl pattern page, there are 269 project uploads, representing hundreds of adaptations of the original design. This remixing of the original knitted garment can be understood as participatory remix culture, as it consists of reworking, combining, and editing materials to create a new creative work (Lessig, 2009). Remix has had a long history within artistic and creative forms, including music and visual art, but knitting provides an interesting new venue for this cultural practice. The original design is a triangular-shaped shawl with red and white stripes, with one end of the triangle that is navy blue with white stars, resembling the American flag. The remixed versions include the addition of the gay pride colors to the flag stripes and adding a peace sign in beading along the edge of the shawl. Participants also renamed their remixed versions to reflect the new designs—Rainbow American Pride; Patriotic Pride & Protest Scarf; Peace is Patriotic. These artifacts represent the civic expression of members of the Ravelry group and the social and collective dynamics of the group, where they remix, rework, and revise each other's creative works.



Figure 24. Variations on the Protest is Patriotic Shawl on CfC@Ravelry (The original is on the left).

Of particular significance, since membership to the CfC@Ravelry group is open to any Ravelry member with a valid email account, comments on the resistance patterns topic on the discussion board were often highly polarized, representing a diversity of opinions rather than “echoes of one’s own voice” (Mutz, 2006, p. 41), as in the more homogeneous sites, such as Facebook, where membership and posts are moderated by the administrator(s). This was the only site where conservative viewpoints were in evidence. For example, the Protest is Patriotic shawl (which can be found under the resistance patterns topic on the discussion board) has garnered 113 comments, representing both ends of the political spectrum. Comments ranged from technical knitting questions, such as how to increase the pattern to achieve the appropriate shape, to the political—arguments that ranged from voter suppression (see below) to the lamenting of divisive exchanges between members. On the discussion board, supporters of Trump wrote:

Great pattern, silly name. But I am going to make it and wear to Make America Great Again rallies!! I am sure it will be appreciated there! (Woman and Cats, CfC@Ravelry)

Finally, a great pattern for embracing love of country and support of our POTUS! Thank you! (Mokacrochet, CfC@Ravelry)

HAPPY 4TH of July ya’ll !! Can’t wait to buy yarn for this tomorrow in support of our awesome President !!!!! !! It’s gonna be my #MAGA scarf !! love love love. (Snugden, CfC@Ravelry)

On the other side of the political spectrum, resistance knitters shared:

I love this pattern! Thank you! I am going to make it AND wear it to protest rallies and make sure to stand up for the people that need it the most!
(SummerinMaine, CfC@Ravelry)

THANK YOU for the lovely pattern.....AND for the message and for speaking up and protesting for our country and our world. Thank you!
(Oceanknit, CfC@Ravelry)

Delightful pattern, thank you for providing it free of charge!
Conservatives have hijacked the flag for long enough, it's time for liberals and progressives to take it back. I will happily wear it to a protest ... it'll look great with my resist mitts! (Brunette, CfC@Ravelry)

What is of particular interest is that the discussions on CfC@Ravelry ranged from commentary on the actual pattern, which may have had political overtones, to outright political exchanges, which had nothing to do with the pattern or with knitting, and were, in some cases, extremely contentious. An example of this type of interchange—here, regarding voter suppression—was posted in the comment section of the Protest is Patriot Shawl pattern page:

A micro percentage of powerful people are fundamentally changing the landscape of our country by redistricting, creating more and more voter suppression laws, and more. Have all the “pro American” thoughts and beliefs you want, just don't try to make them laws or hurt people because of your unsubstantiated fears (Camille CfC@Ravelry).

exactly what “voter suppression laws” do you speak of? Showing an ID to prove citizenship? Your efforts at protesting that minuscule law are ridiculous.

“Micro percentage of powerful people” = representatives of the 50+% of people that voted for the POTUS. MAGA (crochetbabe, CfC@Ravelry)

The argument continued over a number of posts, with crochetbabe (CfC@Ravelry) eventually accusing Camille (CfC@Ravelry) of using “half-facts from a heavily liberal source.” This exchange was representative of many on the discussion thread, with the Trump supporters and anti-Trump progressives deeply entrenched in their polarized political allegiances.

In contrast to the uncivil and hateful tone of CfC@Ravelry (potentially as a result of the less homogenous political makeup of this group), the online Facebook communities of the three craftivist groups were generally characterized by a supportive environment where members exhibited concern and caring for one another. However, even in the more homogeneous space of Facebook, the tone of the online discussions has not always been civil, as exemplified by the barbed exchange from TODC's Facebook group regarding white fragility, which began on June 6, 2017:

I got told to shut my face about intersectionality the other day. I would say white women feminism is a problem here and I have no problems calling it out. (Pattie)

This page is so saturated with White Feminists patting themselves on the back. Lmfao. (Maria)

I just don't see it. Don't be a downer. Quit the group if you don't like it. It's a free country. (Kathryn)

If you don't like it, leave = I don't want to hear about your problems or face my own issues. (Nancy)

I take offense. You don't know me. (Kathryn)

We can have a discussion about white fragility...But not if you're going to go full asshole and attack people. (Lisa Bell)

It's very sad. I don't want to be part of a group that's so unwilling to do any reflection on their own issues. As a white woman, I'll just show myself out. (Kristen)

In the aftermath of the above argument over White fragility, which generated hundreds of comments; the administrators removed some posts and eventually turned off comments. Many members were blocked or left the group, and ultimately the founder of the group was removed.

During the interviews, members discussed the negative aspects of the online discussions, and in the participant observations of the online spaces, notably in Ravelry, examples of toxicity and incivility were noticeable. The current polarized political

environment was dividing families and friends, and those disagreements, particularly regarding the Pussyhat, inclusion, and intersectionality, were seen as particularly divisive online.

“A Cautionary Note About Craftivism”: Are Likes Enough?

Slacktivism (Christensen, 2011) and clicktivism (Halupka, 2017) are both concepts that have emerged in reference to the ease of supporting social or political causes online without any meaningful political participation, for example, by signing online petitions or supporting a political or social cause by clicking the like button on Facebook. During the interviews, some participants were concerned about craftivism being equated to slacktivism and/or clicktivism. They revealed their hesitancy about the efficacy of craftivism in terms of actual social and political change.

I worry about, well, we put a few yarn doilies on a tree that convey a message. Is that really enacting change? Why am I doing this? Is this frivolous? Is this silly? (Yael, CfC)

I don't want to use craftivism as a replacement to activism. I think it's easy to think that if I'm at home knitting something really cool, that it's going to change the world and I don't think it's going to have that impact...So I want to kind of keep that in mind as maybe a cautionary note about craftivism. (Rebecca, TODC)

Making the welcome blankets and the pussy hats and all of the [craftivist] things, is a great way to do something, but it hasn't really stopped [the problems] from continuing. The mess is still happening at the border. The welcome blanket is comforting, but it's not making the change that needs to be done. (Marcela, CfC)

If all you're doing is sharing articles or posting funny memes then you're not really contributing to a cause. That's the big difference in craftivism and online activism, because if you're just posting your frustrations online, and not doing something tangible, then it's not beneficial. It's not going to make the change that you or anybody wants to see. (Yvonne, WNDS)

In contrast to the concerns that craftivism has had little real-world impact, members raised funds and awareness for progressive causes through craftivist projects. On

CfC@Ravelry, under the resistance patterns topic on the discussion board, Peggy (CfC@Ravelry) designed a beaded tube scarf variation of the original Protest is Patriotic shawl, the Protest is Patriotic beaded scarf (Figure 25). Women expressed appreciation of



Figure 25. CfC@Ravelry's Protest is Patriotic beaded scarf

the pattern, which was shared for free in exchange for a suggested donation to Planned Parenthood. Fibrecat73 (CfC@Ravelry) expressed her gratitude for the pattern: "Thank you so much for offering such a beautiful and creative design for free!" Bs4b (CfC@Ravelry) added: "Thank you for the excellent design and offering it for free. I am glad you and I have the same values, as I proudly support PP [Planned Parenthood]."

Similarly, Amanda (CfC) a member from Arkansas, posted on CfC's Facebook group, a blue wave that she was knitting in exchange for contributions to support democratic candidates or

organizations that have progressive politics, such as Moms Demand Action or Ozark Indivisible (Figure 26).

Examples such as CfC@Ravelry's Protest is Patriotic Beaded Scarf, which solicited donations to PP, and the Blue Wave Hat, knit in exchange for financial contributions to Democratic candidates in the midterm elections, argued against craftivism being a form of online clicktivism or slacktivism and spoke to the real-world impact of these projects.

A couple weeks ago my friend, the leader of Ozark Indivisible asked if I could make her a blue wave hat. Then a bunch more friends asked for them. Then I worked on them during our last Democratic Party meeting and more people got interested. THEN I delivered one to a friend at a campaign kick off event yesterday and MORE people wanted one. The blue wave AND the hats are taking off in Northwest Arkansas! I decided to take pre-orders, offer 3 color choices, and sell them to cover my costs and donate any proceeds to local democratic candidates, Ozark Indivisible, and Moms Demand Action. So far we've raised nearly \$500! 🌊🌊🌊🌊



Figure 26. The blue wave hat to raise funds for Ozark Indivisible, Moms Demand Action, and democratic Candidates in Arkansas on CfC Facebook

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Sometimes revolution is quiet. It takes the form of a human circle, friends, some new, some old, all laying down stitches together. Sometimes we talk about the change we want to see in the world. Sometimes we become the change we want to see in the world. —Kay Gardiner, 2018

Introduction

Just before Thanksgiving 2016, in the aftermath of the election of Donald Trump on November 8th, a flyer was posted on the door of my LYS (Local Yarn Shop), Knitty City in New York City. The notice invited local knitters to gather at the shop and knit Pussyhats on Tuesday afternoons leading up to the Women's March in January 2017. As a knitter and a feminist committed to progressive issues, I attended these knitting circles for the next six weeks.

As I sat at the communal table, women around the table knitted and shared their history of activism. They discussed the first time they had marched in Washington. For some, their first foray into activism had been one of the many marches against the Vietnam War. For others, it was the March for the Equal Rights Amendment in 1978, or the March for Women's Lives in 1986 for reproductive rights, or the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation in 1993. But for others, the Women's March in 2017 was the first time they marched or participated in any form of activism. Who were these older women who spoke so passionately about

their personal relationships to feminism, activism, and craft? They spoke about the viral nature of the Pussyhat and how, in a such a short timeframe, it had become a global phenomenon. In 2016, what was the role of social media in bringing these women together and creating a craftivist community? I was excited to be part of this group of women. More importantly, I was energized by the idea of researching this topic. I knew I had discovered the essence of my dissertation topic.

I began this dissertation with the intention of exploring the personal trajectories of craftivists and their varied understandings of feminism, activism, and craft; the generational aspects of craftivism within their offline and online spaces; and the role of new media in reshaping contemporary craftivism.

The analysis highlighted how, for some participants, the 2016 election of Donald Trump reignited their activism; for others, it was a newly-found involvement that was kindled by the sexism and misogyny of the President-elect. The Pussyhat provided the catalyst for the surge in craftivism. Issues of intersectionality arose, as marginalized women (WOC, trans-identified women) argued that the Pussyhat was a symbol of racism, and exclusionary.

The findings emphasized the salience of older women within the craftivist movement, and their historical legacy of activism. These senior women, often retired, with more time on their hands to contribute to activist causes, reveled in the subversive nature of their “granny” activism. From a historical and generational perspective, they understood the fragility of the rights they had fought for in the 1960s and 1970s.

The study also shed light on how these craftivist communities (offline and online) provided both logistical support (dissemination of information from knitting techniques to political advocacy) and affective, socio-emotional support (social engagement and community). Craftivism was understood within the larger context of participatory culture, where members engaged in informal learning through mentorship from more experienced participants. In terms of civic aspects, for some members, participation remained at the

level of political expression, while, for others, expression turned into civic engagement; in these latter cases, the supportive and nurturing community helped participants transition toward a deeper, more impactful level of engagement. However, despite the overall supportive ethos of these online spaces, instances of incivility and flaming also occurred in the online groups—on Facebook and particularly on Ravelry. Contentious discussions regarding racism and the lack of intersectionality in the Women’s March (2017 and 2018), and the Pussyhat emerged in both Facebook and Ravelry. Polarized political commentary on politically-themed knitted garments were prevalent in Ravelry.

The Civic Voices of Older Women

This research facilitated a deeper understanding of older women’s civic expression and engagement in offline and online craftivist communities. The scholarly literature on civic engagement and participatory politics, particularly in a digital context, has primarily focused on the interest-driven activities of youth (e.g., Bennett et al., 2010; Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Ito et al., 2015, 2019; Jenkins, Shresthova, et al., 2016b; Kahne et al., 2011). Researchers have examined how, through engagement with digital media or participation in online networks, youth can discover their “personal voice” (Jenkins, 2016, p. 46). Participation in non-political participatory cultures—for example, gaming or fandom—was seen as providing a gateway to engagement in participatory politics (Kahne et al., 2011).

This study echoed the findings of youth-centric studies referenced above, but with a focus on an older demographic of women who engaged civically through interest-based activities. These women found their “personal voice” through participation in online craftivism networks. Their engagement, as in the case of youth, provided an on-ramp to civic and political engagement. Thus, this empirical study expands the boundaries of the youth-centric literature on civic and political engagement (particularly in digitally

mediated spaces) to include a focus on the political, creative, and civic participatory activities of older women.

This is a very valuable contribution, as the literature that addresses senior women's participation in political and civic activism (Chazan & Baldwin, 2016; Chazan, Baldwin, & Madokoro, 2015; Chazan et al., 2018; McHugh, 2012; Sawchuk, 2009) has been sparse, and primarily focused on activism in Canada (e.g., Chazan & Baldwin, 2016; Chazan & Kittmer, 2016; Naruskima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009), not the United States. Previous scholarship (e.g., McHugh, 2012; Richards, 2012; Sawchuk, 2009) has observed that older women are not perceived by others as activists because of the ageist "granny" stereotype. This research pointed out that perhaps it is the very concept of activism that is associated with youth, since societal expectations are that "older people have dwindling energy and less passion than younger people, both of which qualities are required to organise collectively" (Richards, 2012, p. 8); therefore scholarship had not focused on older women and activism. The perceived identity of older graying women, particularly ones who are knitting, as sweet and harmless is a pervasive cultural stereotype that allows older women's activism to go undetected (Sawchuk, 2009).

The findings of this dissertation were in line with the conclusions of the limited literature on older women's activism. Specifically, this study, which found that older women were proudly engaged in activism at age 60 and beyond, echoed Chazan et al.'s (2015) conclusions that these women were "actively staking out their relevance as contemporary social change actors, challenging dominant discourses about older women's passivity, and insisting on being remembered for their engagement and activism" (p. 59). However, this dissertation also builds on previous scholarship by exploring some of the potential reasons for this renewed sense of activism among older women. The participants attributed this revitalization to multiple causes, such as being retired, having more time to devote to these activities, having fewer familial responsibilities, or not being mired in the "mind-suck" (Peggy, CfC) of childrearing.

They were less concerned about the possible repercussions (e.g., loss of employment, social stigma) of speaking up, and therefore were more willing to do so. They saw their actions as subversive—they were able to transverse spaces that protestors traditionally were not able to enter. Their age protected them, shrouded them in invisibility, so their activism was surprising when it emerged—they defied ageist stereotypes.

There are broad socio-cultural implications for this emerging “granny activism.” The notion of who is an activist, who can voice their opinion, and ultimately who has political and civic power is shifting to include older women (McHugh, 2012; Naruskima, 2004; Sawchuk, 2009). One avenue for future theoretical and empirical research is to examine the social and cultural factors that are contributing to this emerging trend in activism by older women. How have recent movements, such as #grantifa, #MeToo, and Time’s Up, which have shifted cultural perceptions around sexism, harassment, and workplace equality, impacted the empowerment of older women?

One of the limitations of my research was that it was grounded in the United States and specific to this context. Members from the three sites were involved in craftivist projects designed in reaction to contemporary American issues—the Pussyhat, worn to protest the inauguration of Donald Trump; the Welcome Blanket, a response to the proposed border wall; and the Kudzu Project, which brought awareness to the enduring legacy of racism manifested by Confederate statues in the South. Future scholarship should further expand the boundaries of scholarship on activism and older women to include other examples of global craftivism. How have the cultural and social contexts of countries outside of the United States shaped the civic and political engagement of women involved in the projects? KNAG (Knitting Nannas Against Gas, formed in 2012 in Australia to protest gas companies’ threatened exploration of their land), or Omas Gegen Rechts (Grandmothers Against the Right, launched on Facebook in November 2017 in reaction to the victory of the far-right party in the Austrian elections) are two of the many examples worth further research.

New Notions of Citizenship

The analysis of the three craftivist groups facilitated a deeper understanding of emerging notions of citizenship. A new citizenship model—a “self-actualizing” paradigm (Bennett et al., 2010), where individuals are “motivated by the potential of personally expressive politics animated by social networks” (p. 128)—is emerging. This self-actualizing model is characterized by engagement in participatory media, social networking, and civic engagement. Although Bennett and colleagues’ model of citizenship focuses on youth, participants in this study (mostly older White women) were found to similarly adopt these emerging practices to engage in civic participation, often by means of social media engagement. However, the findings from this study diverge from youth-centric studies (e.g., Bennett et al., 2010; Cohen & Kahne, 2012; Jenkins, Shresthova, et al., 2016b) in that, unlike younger demographics, participants also subscribed to more traditional understandings of citizenship—primarily voting and participating in local political issues. Citizenship was defined as linked to voting and perceived by this demographic as a critical form of engagement. In contrast, in the youth-centric studies mentioned above, young Americans were not involved in election-related activities, as they were found to be “bypassing the ballot box” (Gamber-Thompson, 2016, p. 219).

Zuckerman’s (2014) model of participatory civics assessed engagement along a continuum—from voice (identifying with a movement) to instrumental engagement (specific, targeted action that is needed to effect change). Zuckerman posits that:

voice is an important path to civic engagement even when we are not directly advocating a policy or norms change. Voice may be the first step toward engagement in instrumental civics. We use voice to identify with a movement before taking more instrumental steps. (p. 162)

The findings from my dissertation mirrored Zuckerman’s model of participatory civics. In my research, the concept of voice, as an act of self-expression, was a critical first step toward engagement. For some participants, involvement in craftivism remained at the

expressive level—for example, posting articles to the group’s Facebook page, adding a Pussyhat frame to their Facebook photo, or, in the offline space, knitting squares for the Welcome Blanket. For others, these expressive acts transitioned into civic engagement, such as running for a local office or text-banking for a progressive candidate. Numerous participants discussed how engaging in craftivism (where, for many, the genesis was knitting the Pussyhat) was their “gateway” into being civically engaged. The Pussyhat was a strong symbol within this context and was widely adopted, creating a visual rallying point for the movement, similar to Zuckerman’s (2014) example of the Human Rights Campaign’s Equal Marriage symbol.

Future research should explore and develop a model that conceptualizes the transition from expression to engagement for older women, and perhaps more specifically for the craftivist movement. Given the unique demographics, and the scant literature examining women’s civic participation in creative spaces, a model that can explain and understand this phenomenon is warranted. How do women move from expression to engagement in the craftivist movement? What motivates some women to engage further and others to remain at an expressive level?

The findings also highlighted the importance of the online craftivism community in the lives of the members. Participants, particularly if they were isolated, either geographically or politically, expressed how finding a like-minded community that shared their values and interests was of critical importance to their well-being. The online communities provided a nurturing, supportive environment in which members learned from one another and collaborated in community-based craftivist projects, such as the Welcome Blanket, or Hearts for Cville, based on their shared interests in crafting and political expression. These findings mirror the literature around the social power of creativity (Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010), specifically within the context of crafting and knitting, where “acts of creativity involve a social dimension and connect us with other people” (Gauntlett, 2018, p. 10). My research extends this literature (Gauntlett, 2018;

Kuznetsov & Paulos, 2010) by examining not just the activities of the participants within the online community, but how participation within this community motivated some participants to move beyond knitting for activists' purposes. By the end of the study, some participants were no longer crafting, but engaged in direct activism, voting, and lobbying senators and congressmen.

Notwithstanding the social and supportive aspects of these online communities, incivility and conflict still occurred, particularly on Ravelry, given that participation in any of the 40,000 subgroups within Ravelry is open to all members, regardless of political affiliation—unlike the Facebook groups examined in this study, which reinforced political homogeneity through the vetting of applicants.

The literature that examines political discourse in nonpolitical online spaces—e.g., online leisure groups revolving around sports, movies, television shows, or hobbies, where individuals share something other than political views—found that “participants are more likely to be exposed to political disagreement than in any other type of chat room or message board” (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009, p. 51). In fact, these findings show that almost half of the participants in nonpolitical online spaces are involved in “discussion of political topics and controversial public issues” (p. 45). Mutz’s (2002) findings support the concept that exposure to dissimilar views is “a central element—if not the sine qua non—of the kind of political dialogue that is need to maintain a democratic citizenry” (p. 122), and may contribute to political tolerance.

Similar to the aforementioned literature, the findings of this dissertation point out that, indeed, participants on Ravelry, a nonpolitical site, were engaged in cross-cutting political discourse. Yet, in contrast to this literature, given the tone of the discussions in Ravelry, which was highly polarized and vitriolic, it would be difficult to conclude that this type of dialogue contributes to political tolerance or deliberation in any measure. Previous research (Liberat & Markus, 2019) pointed out the general tone of civility and sociality of the Pussyhat Group in Ravelry. Yet, within CraftingforChange@Ravelry,

incivility and flaming were commonplace. Perhaps this divergence can be attributed to the overt political nature of the Pussyhat Project group, which led to political homogeneity due to the self-selection of members along ideological lines (Mutz, 2002, 2006; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). In contrast, CraftingforChange@Ravelry may appeal to a broader audience with diverse political views and thus invokes more cross-cutting political discourse. From an internet research perspective, exploring the affordances of various platforms that Craftivists use, such as Facebook, Ravelry, and Instagram, in terms of facilitating or constraining cross-cutting political talk (Mutz, 2002) warrants further exploration given its significance in the current political backdrop of the United States.

In response to bullying and incivility in the discussions, members posted directions under the resistance patterns topic on how to disable the “Disagree” button, a platform affordance that potentially limits aggressive behaviors. Additionally, toxic discussions were archived by the site’s owner, and therefore no longer visible to members. This scrubbing of contentious discussions suggests an interesting area for future research, regarding issues of free speech, trolling, anonymity, and the potential repercussions—positive or negative—such actions may have on the social norms on the site. The reaction of participants—who might condone or disapprove of cross-cutting political conversations on Ravelry—provides another interesting venue for research.

Unraveling Intersectionality and Feminism in the Craftivist Movement

After the launch of the Pussyhat project and the first Women’s March in 2017, scholarly literature began to examine issues of intersectionality, race and feminism vis-à-vis the Pussyhat and, more broadly, the craftivist movement (Gokariksel & Smith, 2017; Humm, 2017; Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017; Watters, 2017). These studies cite the long history of racial divide between White women and WOC, beginning with the Suffragettes. The Suffragette movement, and their examples of

craftivism (e.g., the embroideries, banners, and sashes they stitched to advocate for emancipation), excluded women of color, fearing that by including their more marginalized sisters, their goals of emancipation would be compromised (Staples, 2018).

In the context of developments in contemporary craftivism, these same issues of exclusion, racism, and White privilege remain. The Pussyhat Project and the Women's March were criticized for their lack of diversity, issues of intersectionality and exclusion (Gokariksel & Smith, 2017; Humm, 2017; Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2017), and for placing the concerns of White women above the concerns of WOC (Watters, 2017). Close's (2018) scholarship on graffiti knitting extended the research on intersectionality and craftivism beyond the Pussyhat and called for a more intersectional activist practice that "builds from diverse participation" (p. 870).

In the literature on intersectionality, racism, and exclusion in the Women's March in 2017 (Gokariksel & Smith, 2017; Humm, 2017; Moss & Maddrell, 2017; Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood), the researchers attributed the lack of understanding of intersectional issues to the entire demographic of White women and did not explore the possibility of generational differences in conceptualizing how issues of race or sexual orientation were historically intertwined with the women's movement. The findings of this dissertation expanded upon this literature and revealed that, among the demographic of White participants, there was a lack of consensus and different levels of understanding regarding intersectionality and inclusion. More specifically, there was a generational divide among White women, in their conception of both intersectionality and feminism—issues that the Pussyhat and the two Women's Marches had brought to light. Older White women, part of the second wave of feminism, defined the goals of feminism as achieving parity with their White male counterparts, while younger members, often referred to as the third wave, characterized feminism in intersectional terms and spoke of the necessity to be inclusive in every sense of the word. In fact, for some of the older participants, *intersectionality* was an unknown term.

Indeed, from a diversity perspective, one of the limitations of this study was the lack of voices from underrepresented groups in the interviews. Of the 17 women interviewed for the dissertation, only 1 identified racially as other than Caucasian in the demographic information collected. As a researcher, I acknowledge this as a limitation. My hope was to center the voices of everybody that is in the community, yet within the craftivist community, participation remains primarily White. Particularly, in discussing issues of intersectionality, and exclusion/inclusion in the broader fiber community, this lack of diversity among the interviewees presented a limitation to the study. I emailed numerous women of color to be interviewed, but none agreed to participate. In the offline meetings I attended, there were no women of color. However, in the online spaces where I conducted participant observation, numerous women identified as minorities, and their voices were included in the findings.

In the final stretch of writing this dissertation, the craftivist movement and the broader crafting community has imploded over issues of intersectionality, bias, and White fragility. As mentioned in the literature review and the findings, the craftivist and crafting community has historically been plagued with issues of racism and exclusion (Forbes, 2019), but these were rarely, if ever, discussed. This recent controversy was triggered by a problematic blog post written by a prominent member of the knitting community. It began as a light-hearted New Year's resolution-themed blog post, describing what she would like to accomplish in the New Year and all the foreign places where she would like to travel. She labeled 2019 as her "year of color"—meaning that she was committed to being less afraid and would wear bolder and brighter colors. She also described her plans to travel to India as akin to going to Mars, citing a National Public Radio report about colonizing Mars. There was an immediate response in the comments on her blog, criticizing her for describing her upcoming trip to India as "exotic" and thus "othering" a culture that is dissimilar to Western culture. Her year of

“color” was denounced as racist, and it was concluded that any year of color should have been in support of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) in the craft community.

The backlash spread through the broader community, garnering an intense response on multiple BIPOC crafter’s Instagram pages, who critiqued her for making a connection between Indians and aliens, thereby exposing her “imperial feminism” (Amos & Parmar, 2005), or her cluelessness about a country marred by colonialism. The controversy spread to Crafting for Change’s Facebook group and Ravelry. In fact, on Ravelry’s home page, a statement, written by the two owners of Ravelry, Casey and Jessica Forbes, and titled “Racism and Inclusion on Ravelry and in the Yarn Community as a Whole,” was posted on January 15, 2019. The statement included a link to a Ravelry discussion thread on racism and inclusion in the community, moderated by the site’s owner, Casey Forbes. Within two days, the Ravelry thread had 657 posts and 28,177 readers. Members on Ravelry cited the numerous ways White crafters could better support BIPOC crafters, either by listening to their podcasts, sharing their posts, liking their comments, or supporting their yarn or dyeing businesses. Ravelry has committed to being more proactive in the search and promotion of makers, knitters, and craftivists from underrepresented groups.

From both a theoretical and praxis perspective, the lack of intersectionality within the craftivist movement and the broader craft and fiber community underscores the need to work toward including diverse members and promoting the work of BIPOC crafters. To become a more intersectional movement, there must be spaces for open dialogue about how racism and other forms of oppression affect the craftivist and crafting communities. Further research is needed to understand the lack of intersectionality in the craftivist movement, centering the voices that have traditionally been marginalized in spaces dominated by White women.

This is an important, very overdue conversation that is finally taking place in my community.

REFERENCES

- Alexa.com. (2018). Traffic statistics. Available at <http://www.alexacom.com>
- Amos, V., & Parmar, P. (2005). Challenging imperial feminism. *Feminist Review*, 80, 44–63.
- Auther, E. (2008). Fiber art and the hierarchy of art and craft, 1960-80. *Journal of Modern Craft*, 1(1), 13–34.
- Auther, E. (2010). *String, felt, thread: The hierarchy of art and craft in American art*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Barber, E. W. (1994). *Women's work: The first 20,000 years: Women, cloth, and society in early times*. New York, NY: Norton.
- Bateman, J. (2017, March 27). *Craft's long history in radical protest movements*. Retrieved January 2, 2018, from <https://theestablishment.co/crafts-long-history-in-radical-protest-movements-8300f59a3e54>
- Baumgardner, J., & Richards, A. (2010). *Manifesta: Young women, feminism and the future*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux. (Original work published 2000)
- Beard, M. (2014, March 20). The public voice of women. *London Review of Books*, pp. 11–14.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: A political ecology of things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Bennett, W. L., Freelon, D., & Wells, C. (2010). Changing citizen identity and the rise of a participatory media culture. In L. R. Sherrod, J. Torney-Purta, & C. A. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of research on civic engagement in youth* (pp. 393-423). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9780470767603.ch15>
- Bennett, W. L., Wells, C., & Freelon, D. (2011). Communicating civic engagement: Contrasting models of citizenship in the youth web sphere. *Journal of Communication*, 61(2011), 835–856.
- Bernikow, L. (1997). *The American women's almanac: An inspiring and irreverent women's history*. New York, NY: Berkley.
- Black, S. (2017). KNIT + RESIST: Placing the Pussyhat Project in the context of craft activism. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 0(0), 1-15. DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2017.1335292
- Boice, B. (1973, January). Group show: John Weber gallery. *Artforum*, 11(5), 85.

- Bourdieu, P. (1986). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bratich, J. Z., & Brush, H. M. (2007). *Craftivity narratives: Fabriculture, affective labor, and the new domesticity*. San Francisco, CA. Retrieved from http://citation.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/7/0/9/8/pages170989/p170989-1.php
- Bratich, J. Z., & Brush, H. M. (2011). Fabricating activism: Craft-work, popular culture, gender. *Utopian Studies*, 22(2), 233–258.
- Broude, N., & Garrard, M. D. (1982). Introduction: Feminism and art history. In N. Broude, & M. D. Garrard (Eds.), *Feminism and art history: Questioning the litany* (pp. 1–18). New York, NY: Westview Press.
- Brown, J. K. (1970). A note on the division of labor by sex. *American Anthropologist*, 72(5), 1073–1078.
- Bryan-Wilson, J., Collins, L., Gschwandtner, S., Mazza, C., & Smith, S. (2010). The politics of craft: A roundtable. In G. Adamson (Ed.), *The craft reader* (pp. 620-628). New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Chansky, R. A. (2010). A stitch in time: Third-wave feminist reclamation of needed imagery. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 43(4), 681–700. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2010.00765.x>
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Chazan, M., & Baldwin, M. (2016). Understanding the complexities of contemporary feminist activism: How the lives of older women activists contest the waves narrative. *Feminist Formations*, 28(3), 70–94. <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2016.0044>
- Chazan, M., Baldwin, M., & Madokoro, L. (2015). Aging, activism, and the archive: Feminist perspectives for the 21st century. *Archivaria*, 80(0), 59–87.
- Chazan, M., Baldwin, M., & Whattam, J. (2018). *Activism across women's lives: Rethinking the politics of (grand) mothering*. Peterborough, ON: Trent University. Retrieved from <http://www.agingactivisms.org/resources>
- Chazan, M., & Kittmer, S. (2016). Defying, producing, and overlooking stereotypes? The complexities of mobilizing “grandmotherhood” as political strategy. *Journal of Women & Aging*, 28(4), 297-308.
- Chidgey, R. (2014). Developing communities of resistance? Maker pedagogies, do-it-yourself feminism, and DIY citizenship. In M. Ratto & M. Boler (Eds.), *DIY citizenship: Critical making and social media* (pp. 101–113). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Christensen, H. S. (2011). Political activities on the Internet: Slacktivism or political participation by other means? *First Monday*, 16(2). Retrieved from <http://firstmonday.org/article/view/3336/2767>
- Close, S. (2018). Knitting activism, knitting gender, knitting race. *International Journal of Communication*, 12(0), 23.
- Cohen, C. J., & Kahne, J. (2012). *Participatory politics: New media and youth political action*. MacArthur Foundation Youth and Participatory Politics Research Network. Retrieved from http://ypp.dmlcentral.net/sites/default/files/publications/Participatory_Politics_New_Media_and_Youth_Political_Action.2012.pdf
- Compton, J. (2017, February 7). Pink “pussyhat” creator addresses criticism over name. *NBC News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/pink-pussyhat-creator-addresses-criticism-over-name-n717886>
- Corbett, S. (2018). *How to be a craftivist: The art of gentle protest*. London, England: Unbound.
- Corbett, S., & Housley, S. (2011). The craftivist collective guide to craftivism. *Utopian Studies*, 22(2), 344–351.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creative Majority PAC. (2017). *Lake Research Partners/Daily Action 2017 Poll*. Retrieved from <https://dailyaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/poll.pdf>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Delwiche, A. (2013). The new left and the computer underground: Recovering political antecedents of participatory culture. In A. Delwiche & J. J. Henderson (Eds.), *The participatory cultures handbook* (pp. 10–21). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Delwiche, A., & Henderson, J. J. (2013). Introduction: What is participatory culture? In A. Delwiche & J. J. Henderson (Eds.), *The participatory cultures handbook* (pp. 3–9). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Derr, H. (2017, January 17). *Pink flag: What message do “Pussy hats” really send?* Retrieved from <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/pink-flag-what-message-do-pussy-hats-really-send>
- DiAngelo, R., & Dyson, M. E. (2018). *White fragility: Why it’s so hard for White people to talk about racism*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

- Dittmar, K. (2017). *Women candidates in election 2018: One year from election day* (Research brief). Center for American Women and Politics. Retrieved from http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/sites/default/files/resources/a_closer_look_2018_outlook_final.pdf
- Downey, S. (personal communication, November 28, 2018).
- Druchunas, D. (2017). *Knitting as a political act*. [ebook]. Retrieved from <https://www.ravelry.com/patterns/sources/knitting-as-a-political-act>
- Duncombe, S. (2012). Imaging no-place. *Transformative Works and Culture*, 10 (2012).
- Dupere, K. (2017, June 5). *Pussyhat Project cofounder launches the next big craftivism effort of the resistance*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from: <http://mashable.com/2017/06/05/welcome-blanket-refugees-pussyhat-project/>
- Emery, E. (2017). From stitching by candlelight to crafting online: Textiles, self-representation and continuing histories of subversive stitches. In S. Ford (Ed.), *Cut Cloth: Contemporary textiles and feminism* (pp. 66–76). Manchester, England: PO Publisher.
- Farley, L. (1978). *Sexual shakedown: The sexual harassment of women on the job*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Fiske, J. (2010). *Understanding popular culture* (2nd ed.). London, England: Routledge.
- Forbes, C. (2019, January 14). *Racism and inclusion in the yarn community*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2RXbg3o>
- Fowler, C. (2015). Brenda Miller and post-minimalist art. *Woman's Art Journal*, 36(2), 12–19.
- Fulford, R. (1957). *Votes for women: The story of a struggle*. London, England: Faber and Faber.
- Gamber-Thompson, L. (2016). Bypassing the ballot box. In H. Jenkins, S. Shresthova, L. Gamber-Thompson, N. Kligler-Vilenchik, & A. M. Zimmerman (Eds.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 219-252). New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Garber, E. (2013). Craft as activism. *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, 33(1), 53–66.
- Gardiner, K., & Shayne, A. (2018). *Mason-Dixon Knitting Field Guide No. 9: Revolution*. New York, NY: Mason-Dixon Knitting Publishing.
- Gauntlett, D. (2018). *Making is connecting: The social power of creativity, from craft and knitting to digital everything* (2nd ed.). Medford, MA: Polity.

- Geertz, C. (1973). *Interpretation of cultures* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Gilmore, S., & Kaminski, E. (2007). A part and apart: Lesbian and straight feminist activists negotiate identity in a second-wave organization. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 16(1), 95–113.
- Gökarıksel, B., & Smith, S. (2017). Intersectional feminism beyond U.S. flag hijab and pussy hats in Trump’s America. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(5), 628–644. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1343284>
- Gordon, T. J. (2018, January 7). Pussy hats: The confederate flag for White feminists. Retrieved May 15, 2018, from <https://medium.com/@shewritestolive/pussy-hats-the-confederate-flag-for-white-feminists-7a21352b2f5e>
- Grant, M. H. (1952). *Flower paintings through four centuries*. Leigh-on-Sea, UK: F. Lewis, The Tithe House.
- Greer, B. (Ed.). (2014). Knitting craftivism: From my sofa to yours. In *Craftivism: The art of craft and activism* (pp. 7–8). Vancouver, BC: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Greer, B. (2007, February 15). *Craftivism in three parts*. Retrieved from http://acechick.typepad.com/knitchicks_features/
- Greer, B. (2011, December 13). *Craftivism for all, 100%*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <http://craftivism.com/blog/craftivism-for-all-100-silence-is-our-weapon/>
- Greer, B. (2014). Knitting craftivism: From my sofa to yours. In B. Greer (Ed.), *Craftivism: The art of craft and activism* (pp. 7–8). Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.
- Groeneveld, E. (2010). “Join the knitting revolution”: Third-wave feminist magazines and the politics of domesticity. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 40(2), 259–277.
- Halupka, M. (2018). The legitimisation of clicktivism. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 53(1), 130-141. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2017.1416586>
- Hartocollis, A., & Alcindor, Y. (2017, January 21). Women’s March highlights as huge crowds protest Trump: ‘We’re not going away.’ *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/21/us/womens-march.html>
- Hermanson, T. (2012). *Knitting as dissent: Female resistance in America since the revolutionary war*. Presented at the Textile Society of America, Washington, DC.
- Hine, C. (2015). *Ethnography for the Internet: Embedded, embodied and everyday*. London, England: Bloomsbury Academic.

- Humm, M. (2017). The Women's March on London: Virginia Woolf, John Berger, Judith Butler and intersectionality. *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Equality and Diversity*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Ito, M., Martin, C., Pfister, R. C., Rafalow, M. H., Salen, K., & Wortman, A. (2019). *Affinity online: How connection and shared interest fuel learning*. New York: New York University Press.
- Ito, M., Soep, E., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., & Zimmerman, A. (2015). Learning connected civics: Narratives, practices, infrastructures. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 45(1), 10–29. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2014.995063>
- Jefferies, J. (2016). Crocheted strategies: Women crafting their own communities. *TEXTILE*, 14(1), 14–35.
- Jenkins, H. (2010). Afterword. In M. Knobel & C. Lankshear (Eds.), *DIY media: Creating, sharing and learning with new technologies* (pp. 231–254). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Jenkins, H. (2012). *Textual poachers: Television fans and participatory culture*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Jenkins, H. (2016). Youth voice, media, and political engagement: Introducing the core concepts. In H. Jenkins, S. Shresthova, L. Gamber-thompson, N. Kligler-Vilenchik, & A. M. Zimmerman (Eds.), *By any media necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 1–60). New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, A. J., & Weigel, M. (2006). *Confronting the challenges of participatory culture: Media education for the 21st century*. Chicago, IL: John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.
- Jenkins, H., Ito, M., & boyd, d. (2016a). *Participatory culture in a networked era: A conversation on youth, learning, commerce, and politics*. Malden, MA: Polity.
- Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N., & Zimmerman, A. (2016b). *By any media necessary: The new youth activism*. New York: NYU Press.
- Kahn, M. (2017, January 17). The Pussyhat is an imperfect, powerful feminist symbol that thousands will be wearing this weekend. *ELLE*. Retrieved from <http://www.elle.com/culture/career-politics/news/a42152/pussyhat-project-knit-protest/>
- Kahne, J., Lee, N-J., Feezell, J. T. (2011, February 5). *The civic and political significance of online participatory cultures among youth transitioning to adulthood* (DML Central Working Paper). Retrieved from <http://demlcentral.net/wp-content/uploads/files/OnlineParticipatoryCultures.WORKINGPAPERS.pdf>

- Kelly, M. (2014). Knitting as a feminist project? *Women's Studies International Forum*, 44(2014), 133–144.
- Kelly, M. (2015). Feminist identity, collective action, and individual resistance among contemporary U.S. feminists. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 48(2015), 81-92. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.10.025>
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2016). “Decreasing world suck”: Harnessing popular culture for fan activism. In H. Jenkins, S. Shresthova, L. Gamber-Thompson, N. Kligler-Vilenchik, & A. M. Zimmerman (Eds.), *By any means necessary: The new youth activism* (pp. 102–148). New York, NY: NYU Press.
- Kokoli, A. (2016). *The feminist uncanny in theory and art practice*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Kristeller, P. O. (1990). *Renaissance thought and the arts: Collected essays*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kuznetsov, S., & Paulos, E. (2010). Rise of the expert amateur: DIY projects, communities, and cultures. In *Proceedings of the 6th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction: Extending Boundaries* (pp. 295–304). New York, NY: ACM. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1145/1868914.1868950>
- Lawes, C. J. (2000). *Women and reform in a New England community, 1815-1860*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky.
- Lessig, L. (2009). *Remix: Making art and commerce thrive in the hybrid economy*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Literat, I., & Markus, S. (2019). Crafting a way forward: Online participation, craftivism and civic engagement in Ravelry's Pussyhat Project Group. *Information, Communication & Society*. DOI: 10.1080/1369118X.2019.1573910
- Mandell, H. (personal communication, October 31, 2018).
- Markham A. N., & Buchanan, E. (2012). *Ethical decision-making and internet research: Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee*. Retrieved from <http://aoir.org/reports/ethics2.pdf>
- Markham, A. N., & Buchanan, E. (2015). Internet research: Ethical concerns. In J. D. Wright (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 606–613). Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Elsevier.
- Mascaro, L. (2017, April 23). Trump's election has mobilized a resistance like no other, but will Democrats' answer to the Tea Party divide the ranks? *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-tea-party-democrats-20170423-story.html>

- Mattern, M. (2016). *Anarchism and art: Democracy in the cracks and on the margins*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- McHugh, M. C. (2012). Aging, agency, and activism: Older women as social change agents. *Women & Therapy*, 35(3-4), 279-295. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2012.684544>
- Miller, B. (1973, April). Letter to the editor. *Artforum*. Retrieved from <https://www.artforum.com/print/archive/11/31859>
- Minahan, S., & Wolfram Cox, J. (2007). Stitch'nBitch: Cyberfeminism, a third place and the new materiality. *Journal of Material Culture*, 12(1), 5–21. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/1359183507074559>
- Morby, A. (2017, March 8). V&A museum acquires Pussyhat from Washington Women's March. *De Zeen*. Retrieved from <https://www.dezeen.com/2017/03/08/va-museum-pussyhat-washington-womens-march-design-news/>
- More, B. (1922). *Ovid's metamorphoses*. Boston, MA: Cornhill Publishing Company. Retrieved from <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0028%3Abook%3D6%3Acard%3D504>. (Originally published in 8 AD).
- Moss, P., & Maddrell, A. (2017). Emergent and divergent spaces in the Women's March: The challenges of intersectionality and inclusion. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(5), 613–620. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1351509>
- Muñana, C., DiJulio, B., & Brodie, M. (2018). *The Kaiser Family Foundation/Washington Post survey on political rallygoing and activism*. Retrieved from https://www.kff.org/other/report/the-kaiser-family-foundation_washington-post-survey-on-political-rallygoing-and-activism/
- Mutz, D. C. (2002). Cross-cutting social networks: Testing democratic theory in practice. *American Political Science Review*, 96(01), 111–126. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055402004264>
- Mutz, D. C. (2006). *Hearing the other side: Deliberative versus participatory democracy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Myzelev, A. (2009). Whip your hobby into shape: Knitting, feminism and construction of gender. *TEXTILE*, 7(2), 148–163. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.2752/175183509X460065>
- Narushima, M. (2004). A gaggle of raging grannies: The empowerment of older Canadian women through social activism. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 23(1), 23-42.

- Navas, E., Gallagher, O., & burrough, x. (2015). Introduction. In E. Navas, O. Gallagher, & x. burrough (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to remix studies* (pp. 1–12). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nochlin, B. L. (1989). Why have there been no great women artists? In *Women, art and power and other essays* (pp. 145–178). New York, NY: Routledge. (Originally published 1971).
- Obie, B. (2017, January 23). *Woman in viral photo, From Women's March to White female allies: 'Listen to a Black woman.'* Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <https://www.theroot.com/woman-in-viral-photo-from-women-s-march-to-white-female-1791524613>
- Orton-Johnson, K. (2014a). DIY Citizenship, critical making and community. In M. Ratto & M. Boler (Eds.), *DIY citizenship: Critical making and social media* (pp. 141–155). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Orton-Johnson, K. (2014b). Knit, purl and upload: New technologies, digital mediations and the experience of leisure. *Leisure Studies*, 33(3), 305–321. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2012.723730>
- Parker, R. (2010). *The subversive stitch: Embroidery and the making of the feminine* (new ed.). London, England: I.B. Tauris. (Original work published 1984)
- Parker, R., & Pollock, G. (2013). *Old mistresses: Women, art and ideology*. New York, NY: I.B. Tauris. (Originally published in 1982)
- Pentney, B. A. (2008). Feminism, activism, and knitting: Are the fibre arts a viable mode for feminist political action? *Thirdspace: A Journal of Feminist Theory & Culture*, 8(1). Retrieved from <http://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/article/view/pentney>
- Pfister, R. C. (2014). *Hats for house elves: Connected learning and civic engagement in Hogwarts at Ravelry* (Digital Media and Learning Research Hub Report). MacArthur Foundation.
- Pimentel, D. (2017, March 29). *If your feminism ain't intersectional, I don't wanna talk.* Retrieved May 21, 2018, from <https://medium.com/applied-intersectionality/if-your-feminism-aint-intersectional-i-don-t-wanna-talk-c39ba285fa5f>
- Pollock, G. (2003). *Vision and difference: Feminism, femininity and histories of art*. London, England: Routledge.
- Putnam, L., & Skocpol, T. (2018). Middle America reboots democracy. *Democracy Journal: A Journal of Ideas*. Retrieved from <https://democracyjournal.org/arguments/middle-america-reboots-democracy/>

- Quito, A. (2017, July 5). *Trump has awakened an American “craftivism” movement that’s been dormant since the 1980s*. Retrieved from <https://qz.com/1016914/trump-has-awakened-an-american-craftivism-movement-thats-been-dormant-since-the-1980s-aids-quilt/>
- Ratto, M., & Boler, M. (2014). Introduction. In M. Ratto & M. Boler (Eds.), *DIY citizenship: Critical making and social media* (pp. 1–22). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ravani, S. (2017, January 17). Pussyhat Project for Women’s March causes run on pink yarn. *SF Gate*. Retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Shortage-on-pink-yarn-doesn-t-stop-people-from-10863764.php>
- Reger, J. (2012). *Everywhere and nowhere: Contemporary feminism in the United States*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Reilly, M. (2018). *Curatorial activism: Towards an ethics of curating*. New York, NY: Thames & Hudson.
- Richards, N. (2012). The fight-to-die: Older people and death activism. *International Journal of Ageing & Later Life*, 7(1), 7–32.
- Robertson, K. (2007). Needling the system: Knitting and the global justice protest. In *Hybrid identities*. Toronto, Canada. Retrieved from <http://www.yorku.ca/cocugsa/conference3.html#kirstyl>
- Robertson, K. (2011). Rebellious doilies and subversive stitches. In M. E. Buszek (Ed.), *Extra/ordinary: Craft and contemporary art* (pp. 184–203). Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books.
- Rose-Redwood, C., & Rose-Redwood, R. (2017). ‘It definitely felt very White’: Race, gender, and the performative politics of assembly at the Women’s March in Victoria, British Columbia. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 24(5), 645–654. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2017.1335290>
- Saldana, J., & Omasta, M. (2018). *Qualitative research: Analyzing life*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sawchuk, D. (2009). The raging grannies: Defying stereotypes and embracing aging through activism. *Journal of Women and Aging*, 21(3), 171–185. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/08952840903054898>
- Schreiner, O. (1927). *From man to man*. New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap.
- Seidman, I. (2013). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

- Smith, M. (2018, January 1). *Welcoming 2018 with the Kudzu Project*. Retrieved from <https://www.thekudzuproject.org>
- Staples, B. (2018, July 28). How the Suffrage movement betrayed Black women. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/28/opinion/sunday/suffrage-movement-racism-black-women.html>
- Stoller, D. (2000). *Stitch 'n bitch: The knitter's handbook*. New York, NY: Workman Publishing.
- Suh, K., & Zweiman, J. (2016). Pussyhat Project. Retrieved from <https://www.pussyhatproject.com>
- Swaminathan, R., & Mulvihill, T. M. (2017). *Critical approaches to questions in qualitative research*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Tickner, L. (1988). *The spectacle of women: Imagery of the suffrage campaign 1907-14*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Vasudevan, L. (2011). An invitation to unknowing. *Teachers College Record*, 113(6), 1154–1174.
- Vick, K. (2017, January 26). Perhaps the largest protest in U.S. history was brought to you by Trump. *Time*. Retrieved from <http://time.com/4649891/protest-donald-trump/>
- Walker, R. (2017, January 25). The D.I.Y. revolutionaries of the Pussyhat Project. *The New Yorker*. Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-d-i-y-revolutionaries-of-the-pussyhat-project>
- Watters, J. (2017). Pink hats and Black fists: The role of women in the Black Lives Matter movement. *William & Mary Journal of Race, Gender, and Social Justice*, 24(1), 198–207.
- Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? Politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 237–269.
- Wheeler, E. (2012). The political stitch: Voicing resistance in a suffrage textile. *Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings*. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/tsaconf/758>
- Wojcieszak, M. E., & Mutz, D. C. (2009). Online groups and political discourse: Do online discussion spaces facilitate exposure to political disagreement? *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 40–56. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2008.01403.x>

- Wortham, J. (2017, January 24). Who didn't go to the Women's March matters more than who did. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/24/magazine/who-didnt-go-to-the-womens-march-matters-more-than-who-did.html>
- Zaeske, S. (2000). Unveiling Esther as a pragmatic radical rhetoric. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 33(3), 193–220.
- Zuckerman, E. (2014). New media, new civics? *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), 151-168. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/1944-2866.POI360>
- Zweiman, J. (2017, August 23). *Welcome blanket* [blog post]. Smart Museum of Art. Retrieved from <https://smartmuseum.uchicago.edu/blog/welcome-blanket/>

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

I would like to start, by asking you to define, in your own understanding some terms, and share any personal anecdotes relating to your understand of the following terms:

Craftivism/Media

1. Craftivism
2. Could you describe “how” you became involved in craftivism? How long have you been involved?
3. Could you discuss “why” you became involved craftivism?
4. Could you describe the craftivist group you are involved with, i.e. the mission, goals, ethos, etc? Is this described somewhere—online perhaps? Could you show me?
5. Could you discuss your understanding of how knitting connects with activism?
6. Could you talk about the sense of “community” in being part of this group(s)
8. In what capacity are you involved in craftivism? What role do you play in the group?
9. Could you describe your craftivist practice in the offline environment?
(Could you share an example of a project perhaps, that you have worked on?)
10. Could you describe your craftivist practice in the online environment?
(Could you share an example—maybe show me on the computer, something you are working on?) (Could you show me examples of sites that you participate in?)
11. How does your practice differ in the online environment versus offline spaces?
12. Could you describe how you use the different platforms? Do they have different purposes? Which do you prefer? Why?
13. Do you have multiple Facebook pages or groups? Why?
14. Are these pages/groups public or private?
15. Are there particular platforms that are more effective, in your opinion? Could you show me or give me an example?
16. What are some of the opportunities you have experienced in using social media?
(Could you share an anecdote about this?)
17. What are some of the problems you have encountered? (Could you share—either verbally or visually an anecdote about this?)
18. Who is your audience?
19. How has new media shaped or promoted the mission of the craftivist group?
Can you show me / can you give me an example?
20. Are there any ways in which you see new media hindering your mission? Can you show me / can you give me an example?
21. How has your use of new media changed your craftivist practice? (Could you share an anecdote?)
22. Is there anything else you would like to share?

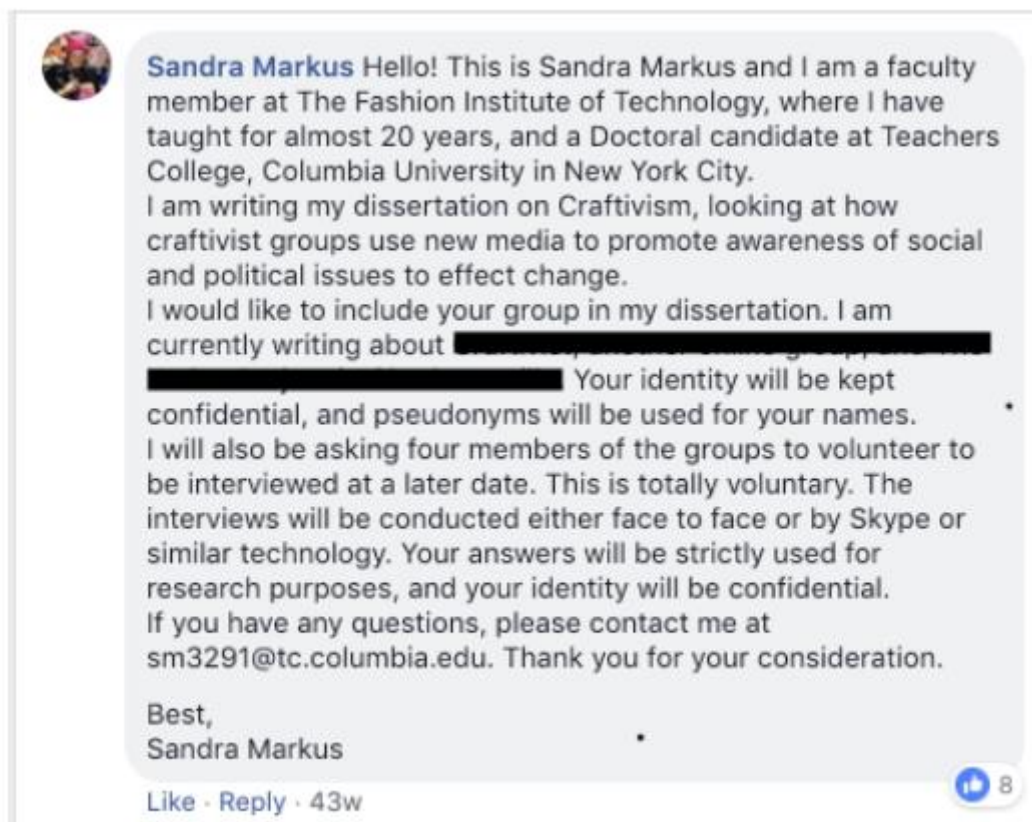
Activism/Feminism


I would like to start, by asking you to define, in your own understanding some terms, and share any personal anecdotes relating to your understand of the term. Has your understanding of the term changed over time?

1. Activism
2. Feminism
3. Civic Engagement and Participation
4. Political Participation
5. Have you been involved in activism historically? Could you share an example?
6. Could you talk about your involvement with feminism? Both historically and currently?
7. How, if at all, do you enact your feminist beliefs in your craftivist practice?
8. How do you understand the relationship of feminism to craftivism? Do you see the two related?
9. Could you talk a little bit about the gender breakdown and the generational aspects in the group(s) you are involved with?
10. Do you see the current generation (under 30) understanding of feminism differ from yours?
11. Do you see your age/generation as a salient factor in your participation?
12. Could you discuss the issue of inclusivity in the craftivist movement? (Possible follow up--aspects that they did not address; socioeconomic status, race etc.)
13. Could you discuss your history of civic engagement? Could you share an example?
14. Could you discuss your history of political participation? Could you share an example?
15. Do you see the activism of the group as contributing to emerging notions of citizenship?
16. Do you see your creative practice (i.e. crafting/knitting etc.) connecting to political participation?
17. Have you seen craftivism change/evolve since you have been involved with it? If so, how?
18. How do you see/understand the political and social impact of your work?
19. Have you felt a change since the 2016 election?
20. How do you see the future of craftivism?
21. Is there anything else you would like to share?


Appendix B

Recruitment Post for Participants (Screenshot)



 **Sandra Markus** Hello! This is Sandra Markus and I am a faculty member at The Fashion Institute of Technology, where I have taught for almost 20 years, and a Doctoral candidate at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. I am writing my dissertation on Craftivism, looking at how craftivist groups use new media to promote awareness of social and political issues to effect change. I would like to include your group in my dissertation. I am currently writing about [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Your identity will be kept confidential, and pseudonyms will be used for your names. I will also be asking four members of the groups to volunteer to be interviewed at a later date. This is totally voluntary. The interviews will be conducted either face to face or by Skype or similar technology. Your answers will be strictly used for research purposes, and your identity will be confidential. If you have any questions, please contact me at sm3291@tc.columbia.edu. Thank you for your consideration.

Best,
Sandra Markus

Like · Reply · 43w  8

Appendix C

Demographic Inventory

QUESTIONS RESPONSES 17

Demographic Data

Through the Eye of a Needle: Craftivism as an Emerging Mode of Civic Engagement and Cultural Participation

The information collected from this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

Demographic Data

The information collected from this questionnaire is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study.

What is your name? *

Short answer text

Is there a particular name you would like to use for your pseudonym? (First and Last). If you would like me to choose the name instead, I am happy to! *

Short answer text

If you are the administrator(s) of the group, is there a particular pseudonym you would like to use for the study? (If there is more than one administrator, please discuss).

Short answer text

What is your gender? *

- Female
- Male
- Another gender identity

What is your age range? *

- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75 or older

What is your racial or ethnic identification? Check all that apply *

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black or African-American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Some other race or ethnicity

Question

Option 1
