Crafting Gender/Crafting Boundaries:

Reimagining "Authentic" Gender Performance in Feminized Activities

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Introduction

I play in a band, I'm not a small guy - I mean I'm not like a big fat guy or anything like that, but you know I mean I'm 6'3", 225, I've got like quarterback size. Um, I play guitar in a rock and roll band. I'm reasonably athletic somewhat, but you know suddenly when I start doing cross-stitch people are like "excuse me, you're doing WHAT?!?" "I said I'm doing cross-stitch" and they're just like "OK, are you gay?" I'm like "no, I'm not gay, I'm just doing cross-stitch." And they're like "well, my grandma does cross stitch" and I'm like "well, you know what? You're grandma doesn't do cross stitch like I do cross stitch." And that's where I almost felt like I had to push the envelope a little bit with what I was doing, just because like I'm like "You know what, I need to cross-stitch a vagina, because grandma doesn't do that!" – Pete, 40

We do and undo gender, but we do so with existing cultural material, which restricts our capacity for innovation (West and Zimmerman 1987). The purpose of this paper is to examine how culture is utilized by men and women in the concurrent doing and undoing of gender within feminized leisure activities. Gender scholars West and Zimmerman (1987, 2009) challenged contemporary theoretical understandings of gender, placing it in the interactive and performative realm, dismantling the idea that gender is a relatively stable component of personal identity and thus proposing a truly sociological way of thinking about gender. Their work contends that gender is constantly being done through our behaviors and interactions. Scholars have pointedly disagreed with West and Zimmerman's (2009) contention that gender can never be dismantled or undone. Risman (2009) raised the possibility that the social structure of gender can potentially be undone through non-normative gender performances and interactions, and current research demonstrates that the doing and undoing of gender can occur simultaneously within the same context (Butler 2004; Connell 2010; Deutsch 2007; Messner 2000). This paper seeks to add to this gender literature by examining the key role of culture in the doing and undoing of gender, through examining a phenomenon that is gendered as highly feminine, but in which men and women both participate. "Subversive crafting" is a theoretically fruitful case in particular

because people have a heightened awareness of gender and recognize their activity in these terms (Stalp and Winge 2013). This case provides a window into understanding the limits and possibilities of gender transgression, by investigating how culture, both material and symbolic, is used to negotiate gender and how cultural elements are employed by men and women. This paper adds to our general theoretical knowledge of the utilization of culture in gendered leisure activities, addresses the potential for gender "transgression" at individual and interactional levels, and sheds light on the relationship between feminized activities and hybrid masculinities.

Much of the current research into undoing gender or gendered boundary crossing, where men enter feminized activities or women participate in masculinized activities, has two gaps that I address. First, much of the current work focuses too heavily on the institutional level, which often precludes the role of culture – those schema and their concomitant symbolic elements which social actors draw on to navigate social action - and how it is used by individuals and in interactions. Secondly, the majority of research on gender undoing or transgression looks narrowly at the fields of work or family. However in the realm of leisure and hobbies some men are making forays into feminine activities. Men and women involved in feminized craft hobbies are in a unique position to offer insights about gender on the personal and interactional levels (Risman 2009), how gender is being resisted or is stagnating, and how elements of culture are playing a role in gender performances.

Some crafters are negotiating gender by employing culture in novel ways within the subversive crafting movement, which is characterized by practitioners who take traditionally feminine forms of crafting, such as embroidery or cross stitch, and inject it with "subversive" content. Popular design elements include pop culture, wry humor, irony and expletives, and even sexual imagery. It is gaining popularity through sites such as SubversiveCrossStitch.com,

Etsy.com, and through independent craft shows; subversive crafts have been featured for sale in such popular retailers as Target and Urban Outfitters. A Google search of the phrase "subversive cross stitch," for example, results in over 111,000 hits. Through subversive crafting younger generations of women are *reappropriating* and updating forms of craft that have been associated with femininity and domesticity for centuries (Parker 2010; Winge and Stalp 2013). Men, too, are taking up subversive crafting, but because these activities have been outside of the realm of masculine activity, these men are *appropriating* feminine-coded cultural pursuits. If men's participation in feminine realms of housework and child-rearing can bring with them the promise of undoing gender and ushering in institutional-level social change, as Chesney (2011) argues, looking at voluntary participation in other realms bears investigation. *Can a crossing of gendered hobby borders potentially undo gender? Can men's forays into feminized crafting potentially act as a catalyst for a stalled gender revolution? Does the gender of the crafter matter in the ways that feminine elements are appropriated or resisted in subversive crafting?*

Literature Review

Existing research into subversive crafting has focused exclusively on female participants (Abraham 2008; Chansky 2010; Fisk 2012; Porterwood-Stacer 2007; Stalp and Winge 2013). This sole focus on female crafters has overlooked a fruitful gender comparison. Additionally, cases of men voluntarily entering feminized hobby activities are comparatively rare. The cases of men and women participating in feminized hobbies deserve analytical attention because of the potential insight into how men *and* women utilize feminized cultural elements in gender performances. Finally, men's use of culture in resistance to gender norms is an important

contribution to knowledge about masculinity. Central to all of this is the question of how and at what levels gender is enacted and potentially resisted.

Un/Doing Gender Using Culture:

Individuals continuously construct gender through performances and interactions that are accepted by others as characteristically masculine or feminine, and we are held accountable to others for the success of these gender-based behaviors. In other words, through interaction we "do" gender. While West and Zimmerman's revolutionary 1987 article "Doing Gender" ushered in a flurry of empirical research utilizing their conceptual frame, the question of undoing gender remains a sight of theoretical wrangling. The central tenet of West and Zimmerman's approach is that gender is a social construct continually negotiated through interaction and achievement, which differs dramatically from previous theories of gender as a more ossified facet of identity. Gender is essentially a continual series of contextualized performances, with varying degrees of conscious action on the part of the performer (Butler 1990). In our performance of gender, we can adhere to accepted behaviors, reinforcing traditional linkages between sex and sex category, or we can act in ways that seek to resist those connections, as well as the binaries that provide their foundations (Risman 2009; Tibbals 2007). This perspective foregrounds the role of individual agency in the construction of gender (Messner 2000).

This emphasis on personal agency brought Risman (2009) to reflect on the potential for individual- and interactional-level actions to influence the institutional-level of gender structure. West and Zimmerman's (1987) approach depends on the individual- and interactional-level of society, where the individual is accountable through their interactions to a perceived sex category. Since gender is a structure based in a system that is both binary and hierarchical, some scholars contend gender can be "done" but also "undone" (Risman 2009). Kelan (2010) explains:

"undoing gender … means that the mismatch between sex category and gender is exploited to unsettle the association between belonging to the female sex category and enacting masculinity or belonging to the male sex category and enacting femininity" (190). Through interactions that do not reinforce hegemonic gender beliefs, but instead reinforce and present alternatives (Ridgeway 2009), this system can be subverted and deprived of its ability to differentiate along the lines of sex category (Connell 2010; Deutsch 2007; Butler 2004; Kelan 2010).

Much of the work employing West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of gender have, in fact, examined gender at the institutional level to the detriment of a deeper understanding of interaction. In particular, Deutsch's (2007) article "Undoing Gender" critiqued how West and Zimmerman's theory was popularly applied, arguing it was largely employed not as a theory of gender but of gender persistence in which inequality was inevitable. In her survey of 60 articles published in 2005 citing West and Zimmerman's original piece, Deutsch (2007) notes that researcher tends to focus on the persistence of gender inequality at the structural or institutional level, ignoring how focusing on the interactional level could highlight changes to the gender structure, essentially leading to an undoing of gender as an expression of the limitations of sex categories. This is true in the workforce, when people enter occupations coded to the opposite gender. They end up adhering to the gender norms of the work (Deutsch 2007), essentially working to undermine the binary gender code. Connell (2010) examines the experiences of transsexual, transgender, and gender queer people in the workforce and notes that they often perform gender in such a way as to actively undermine normative gender conventions. Chesney (2011) demonstrates that men who become stay-at-home fathers are more likely to soften previously rigid gender ideologies through taking on traditionally feminine practices and

behaviors, thereby undoing gender on the interactional and individual levels and potentially at the institutional level (Risman 2009).

Actions which support or subvert the gender structure must be examined at the individual and interactional levels and evaluated for their potential influence at higher tiers. In addition, how gender gets done through individuals and interactions is 1) embedded in cultural schemas (Butler 1988, 2004; Messner 2000) and 2) depends upon the utilization of culture as the elements of any gendered performance. Gender norms and expectations are schemas that we utilize in the doing of gender; they serve as the tools with which we construct action and performance (Swidler 2003). West and Zimmerman's discussion of culture is more limited to the effects of culture writ large on the expectations about gender performances. Culture provides the symbolic resources through which distinctions between masculine and feminine are reified and resisted (Messner 2000). Through the use of cultural elements gender can be done and undone, sometimes simultaneously (Butler 2004, Deutsch 2007, Messner 2000, Risman 2009, Tibbals 2007).

Subversive Crafting: Women's Work, Work on Women

The story of subversive craft is largely one of gender, specifically reappropriation and resistance. The idea of craft, especially textile arts, and crafting has a long history of association with women; it is a highly gendered form of production (Bratich and Brush 2011, Buszek 2011, Chansky 2010). There is a persistent narrative associating textile crafts with women, but especially a particularly genteel and passive type of femininity (Pollock 2010). It is precisely this pervasive, limited narrative of femininity that many female modern crafters are positioning themselves to resist. Chansky (2010) discusses the motivation for women, especially feminist-identified women, to take up the symbolic trappings of traditional femininity. She explains the

reappropriation of the so-called "domestic arts" by feminists as a way to give value to the devalued and by doing so make a statement about valuing not only what is feminine, but valuing women's work, stories, and history. But this is not your grandmother's knitting. This is craftwork frequently designed to give the viewer pause, to explore the dichotomy between feminine oppression and resistance (Bratich and Brush 2011, Buszek 2011, Chansky 2010).

Women are re-embracing a new domesticity by revisiting and revamping traditional arts such as knitting, cross-stitch, embroidery, and quilting and reinterpreting them as signifiers of female strength, creativity, resistance, and community making (Chansky 2010). As Chansky (2010) points out, "many women see this current textile revolution as the actualization of personal choice that the Second-Wave feminists fought so hard for" (681). Juxtaposing pre- and post-feminist sentiments and imagery, textile crafts are leisure activities that allow women to express anger towards oppression and also gendered pride (Chansky 2010).

While this research helps us understand how women are employing feminized cultural forms and injecting them with updated content to express new meanings, we need comparison to understand what it means when men take up the same forms and utilize many of the same content. Masculinity and femininity are constructed and reconstructed in relation to each other and their variations (Connell 1995, Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). When men and women engage in the same activities the implications are very different, especially for resisting the dominant gender order. Even if they "do" the same activity, the doing of gender as a performance hinges on very different collections of meanings. Women may be reappropriating gender, but men may be redoing gender altogether (Messner 2011).

Ladies and Leisure: Playing with Gender

Leisure exists as a realm where people are freer to express themselves than in work or family spheres, allowing for fulfilling and self-enhancing activities that they enjoy (Fontenelle and Zinkhan 1993). As such, it is an underexplored area for gender performance and its resulting mix of resistance and reification. Like other areas of social life, leisure is embedded in power relations. It is not "innocent," but is a politicized arena that carries the potential, at least, for resistance and social change (Shaw 2001). Scholars have found that women have less time for leisure activities (Hochschild and Machung 2003, Cairn et al 2010), are more hesitant to take time for leisure activities than men (Kahn 2011, Cairn et al 2010), but also find resistance and empowerment through leisure activities. Motivating factors such as family, feminist schemas, and social inclusion are dominant themes in women's leisure participation (Henderson and Gibson 2013).

In some female-coded leisure activities the feminine is being renegotiated, simultaneously celebrated and parodied, with a nod to both the changes wrought by the feminist movement (Carlson 2010; Ferreday 2008; Findley 2010; Regehr 2012) and the pleasure taken in performing femininity (Dawkins 2011, Regehr 2012). Female-gendered leisure activities, such as roller derby teams, subversive crafting, and the "New Burlesque" have the potential for fostering gender resistance, for undoing gender in largely homosocial contexts. In these activities dedicated to simultaneously mocking, reinterpreting, rejecting, and lauding traditional ideas of femininity, the potential for political action and progress towards feminist ends is there, but so is the potential for reifying gender stereotypes (Abraham 2008; Beaver 2012; Buszek 2006; Carpenter 2010; Dawkins 2011; Ferreday 2008; Finley 2010; Regehr 2012; Williams 2011). Derby, Burlesque and subversive needlework are all reappropriations of traditional feminine forms of gender performance. They are sites of gender resistance and renegotiation for modern

women. Participants share 1) a willingness to push back against traditional ideas of femininity without completely rejecting feminine elements, 2) a self-referential fondness for popular culture, and 3) a dedication to parody, especially in the juxtaposition of traditional and non-traditional elements that hint at the constructed nature of gender.

The unifying thread of these activities is a focus on playing with femininity, simultaneously recognizing, resisting and reifying, doing and undoing. While all authors found active gender play and conscious subversion in these feminine-coded activities, they recognized that resistance in these frameworks was limited by the concomitant reification of essentialized gender views (Carlson 2010, Ferreday 2008, Findley 2010, Regehr 2012). In all of these case studies women have consciously played with the meanings of femininity, indicating that they as women value femininity themselves but also know that audiences expect elements of femininity from the performers. The performance cannot go too far. West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that in our performance of gender we are accountable to those we interact with to behave in ways that do not disrupt the linkages between our perceived sex and our gender performance.

Bringing the Men Back In: Flexible Masculinity and its Hybrid Potential

The lines between masculine gender performance and masculine coded cultural elements and their feminine counterparts are not impermeable. In their re-examination of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) remind readers that masculinities are not static, and that masculine power and hegemonic constructs are both socially and historically situated. Thus, they say, we must focus on this idea of elasticity and changing masculine codes; what is most powerfully, hegemonically, masculine is subject to local and historical contexts.

As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out, masculinities should be treated as relational modes of gender, so masculinities and femininities are inter- and intra-related. Masculinities are constructed through discourse but also used in discourse (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), especially in discourses which compare some masculinities to others and to femininities.

Men can and do enter feminized social spaces when the social costs are not prohibitively high (Bridges 2010). One area where social costs may be lower combined with a voluntary aspect is leisure and other voluntary activities. Men interpret necessary activities, such as cooking for the family, as leisure, and actively work to make it enjoyable. This depends on their understanding of this being a voluntary activity for them (but an expected activity for their female partners) (Szabo 2012). The existing literature does little to recognize the way that culture is employed by both men and women within feminized realms outside the home or workplace, but Maines (2009) indicates that the gendered landscape of hobbies is changing, but slowly – hence the dearth of information on men in feminized hobbies. Maines (2009) notes that those who witness hobby performances that cross gender boundaries, such as spouses or family members, are often tolerant of them only because of extenuating circumstances, such as a male invalid taking up knitting while confined to bed. However larger trends in masculinity show a growing willingness to borrow from the feminine.

Current masculinity research has begun to examine the ways masculine performances can incorporate or utilize elements of femininity or masculine traits linked with subordinated male groups. This phenomenon is termed "hybrid masculinity" (Bridges 2014, Bridges and Pascoe 2014, Arxer 2011). Bridges and Pascoe (2014) define hybrid masculinity as "men's selective incorporation of performances and identity elements associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities and femininities" (246). Hybrid masculinities frequently place

discursive (though not necessarily meaningful) distance between certain groups of men and traditional, rigid, hegemonic masculinity. The assimilation of bits and pieces, from behaviors and elements coded as gay, or feminine, or taken from other subordinated masculinities, are deployed to symbolically distance the masculine social actor from old-fashioned versions of robust, stoic, and distant masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Arxer 2011; Messner 2011; Messerschmidt 2010; Barber 2008).

While hybrid masculinity scholars have found masculine codes to be somewhat flexible, the effect this flexibility is not the breakdown of gender, racial, or sexual boundaries as some might have hoped – gender is not necessarily being undone. Instead, hybrid masculinities frequently fortify boundaries. Bridges and Pascoe (2014) note that hybrid masculine performances "fortify social and symbolic boundaries that often work to conceal systems of power and inequality in historically new ways" (246). What has changes is more the "style" of masculinity rather than any challenges to male privilege (especially White), or institutional power (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). As Barber (2008) observes in her analysis of "professional" middle-class men in a female salon setting, the body and its uses is important in analysis of hybrid masculinities. Of her subjects she says "these men use beauty work to 'do difference' (West and Fenstermaker 1995) in a way that distinguished themselves from White working-class men, while at the same time distancing themselves from the feminizing character of the 'woman's' hair salon" (456). Hybrid masculinities may represent significant changes in the expression of power and inequalities of gender, class, sexuality, and race, but they fall short of transforming them (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Arxer 2011; Messerschmidt 2010; Messner 2007; Demetriou 2001).

Men can transgress gender boundaries and enter into feminine gendered space when they have sufficient motivation such as employment in pink-collar jobs, or when the social sanctions are not prohibitive, such as performances of drag at "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" marches (Bridges 2010). However men who are pushed into feminine gendered activities such as home-making and child rearing succeed in undoing gender on the individual and interactional levels, which carries the possibility for greater change on the institutional levels (Chesney 2011). This loosening of gender rigidity in family and potentially institutional spheres begs the question of what the effect might be of voluntary participation by men in women's leisure activity. Men and women who participate in the feminized world of crafting bring with them a heightened awareness of gender (Stalp and Winge 2013). Through interviews with male and female subversive crafters I examine the use of culture in the performance of gender at the individual- and interactional-levels with an eye to understanding how voluntary leisure activity might contribute to the un/doing of gender.

Field, Data and Methods

> Like many creative endeavors, Subversive Cross Stitch was launched in the face of staggering mediocrity. I was working in a conservative office for an idiot boss, and it was getting increasingly difficult to disguise my contempt. In a desperate search for art therapy, I found myself wandering through a local craft store. I had tried my hand and knitting, but I was too impatient to follow the rules and too much of a novice to freestyle. Also, I'm sure my friends weren't looking forward to receiving yet another misshapen hat as a gift. Anyway, once I hit the cross stitch aisle, I knew what I had to do. There they were, all those cheerful little bears and happy smiling babies. Precious frilly bookmarks and Lucite coasters and angels…it was just too much sweetness in one place. It needed to be messed with.
> --Julie Jackson, *Subversive Cross Stitch*, 2006:6

Julie Jackson, founder of www.SubversiveCrossStitch.com, tells us her motivations for approaching craft in a subversive way to help her cope with the mundanities of her daily life. Her quote speaks to the alienation of the modern work environment, the idea that craft work is potentially therapeutic, the fact that traditional crafts require skill to do well, and that many modern women may lack the skills or time to develop them. She derides traditional crafting content that tends towards the safe and sanitized, if not the saccharine. She stresses gifting crafts as an important motivating factor in their production, and her desire to approach a creative endeavor with humor and irony. Just as her "idiot boss" and stifling office environment fostered the need for a creative outlet, she tells us that the available options did not ring true; she felt there should a bit of attitude in the spirit of a modern needlecraft.

Julie Jackson is not alone in her belief that crafting lacks a modern bite. The phenomenon of subversive crafting is a site where crafters draw upon connections to traditional feminine forms of craft, such as cross stitch, crochet, and knitting but employing non-traditional themes such as profanity, violence, and popular culture. The subversive craft movement as having an aesthetic that is fluid and playful, "peculiar but hard-to-pin-down…often characterized by a sense of irony and irreverence that self-consciously subverts 'traditional' craft styles and forms" (Dawkins 2011:269).

Several concepts go into my operationalization of subversive crafting. The first category is the *form* the crafting activity takes. Form is important to this project on two levels. Firstly, because needlework and fabric crafts have a long history as a gendered activity, often culturally devalued through association with feminine practice (Bratich and Brush 2011; Buszek 2011; Carpenter 2010; Chansky 2010; Parker 2010; Porterwood-Stacer 2007). Secondly, because the form of crafting is also the activity; this action is a key part of the gendered performance. Judith

Butler (1988) reminds us that gender is done with and through our corporeal selves; thus the body and its actions offer an option to both alter culture and gender. A man cross stitching versus a man woodworking has very different gendered meanings. For men, the mere act of taking up a needle and thread is a way of utilizing the body and culture in the performance (and subversion) of gender. For women, it is also a utilization of the physical self in a gender performance that can be both subversive and reifying. I focus on crafters who work in the genre of what Bratich and Brush (2011) refer to as "fabriccraft," these include embroidery, knitting, and cross stitching. After "form" the second category of interest in my project is subversive *content*. I define fabriccrafts as subversive in accordance with a scheme developed after careful review and pre-coding of 25 images of embroidery and cross stitch patterns and completed crafts taken from Etsy.com and Subversivecrossstitch.com. The fabriccrafts are defined as subversive if they feature any of the following characteristics or elements in textual or visual components:

- Ironic references to femininity or masculinity
- Sexuality
- Danger
- Nudity, including erotic and pornographic content
- Slang
- Pop cultural references
- Violence or weapons
- Slurs or expletives.

These elements can stand alone or be utilized in combination with more traditional elements for ironic effect. For example, a popular kit from Julie Jackson's subversivecrossstitch.com website is "Shut Your Whore Mouth." The design features the jarring juxtaposition of a gendered slur against women, along with a threatening tone, within the context of a traditionally non-threatening and demure craft form. Another example found on etsy.com incorporates popular culture, in this case Walter White, the high school chemistry teacher turned

hardened meth king from AMC's show "Breaking Bad". White's glowering, menacing visage is juxtaposed against a traditional background, complete with pastel floral border. The traditional "kiss the cook" phrase is turned on its head, instead referencing White's role as a legendary "cook", or maker, of methamphetamine. These examples serve to demonstrate the tongue-in-cheek humor of Subversive Crafting and how the mixing of cultural elements like irony, popular culture, and gender norms are employed by participants.

Shaw (2001) conceptualizes women's leisure as a political practice and site for gender resistance. She notes that it is a potential site of empowerment on the individual level, which can bring about larger social change. This parallels Risman's (2009) that gender performances on the individual and interactional level can impact the larger gender structure. Women are motivated to reinvent crafting into something that reflects their recognition of gender as a social construction and their ironic approach to it (Goldner 2013) but also preserve the nostalgic connections to previous iterations of feminine culture.

Data and Methods:

My study poses several questions: *Can a crossing of gendered hobby borders potentially undo gender? Can men's forays into feminized crafting potentially act as a catalyst for progress on gender equality? Does the gender of the crafter matter in the ways that feminine elements are appropriated or resisted in subversive crafting?*

Data for this study was gathered through in-depth interviews. Interviews allow for an interpretive exploration of how people make sense of meanings, give clues to emotional impact, and insight into cultural logics and schemas that people utilize to understand and enact culture (Pugh 2013). Through such interpretive, interview-driven research it is possible to "reconstruct

landscapes of meaning" (Reed 2011). These landscapes are made up of various sources and types of meaning, but are always culturally situated (Pugh 2013). Interviewing men and women involved in subversive crafts allowed me access to many layers of information about motivations, meanings, emotions, practices and beliefs through their narratives. This gives me access to, in Pugh's words, "the culture they use" (2013:50).

I conducted standard open-ended interviews with crafters whose work falls within my subversive craft framework. I interviewed 19 people (n=19), including 7 men and 12 women, who participate in subversive crafting. All respondents identify as white, and the ages ranged between 22 and 45 years old. Respondents came from every region of the country, and all lived in urban or suburban areas. While there are no statistics on the number of men and women who participate in subversive crafting, the world of fabric and fiber crafts is widely accepted as female-dominated (Bratich and Brush 2011; Parker 2010). Including 7 men gave me an oversampling of male participants and provided me with enough variance to be able to systematically compare the responses of male and female-identified participants.

Interviews lasted on average one hour, ranging from 32 minutes to 1 hour 20 minutes. Respondents were recruited through contacts made via online communities including Ravel.com groups, Meetup.com groups, and Etsy.com. These online platforms allow people with similar interests to create communities, both virtual and face-to-face, and are particularly popular with crafters. Ravel.com is completely dedicated to people who work in fabriccrafts, and Etsy.com is the largest online crafting marketplace in the world. These sites allowed me to get in touch with crafters from various locations, both local and national, for recruitment purposes. Interviews were conducted via Skype due to the national reach of the sample, and audio recordings were taken of each interview. While the interviews were open-ended, central themes included the role

of crafting in the participant's life, sources of inspiration, personal history with crafting, any tensions surrounding subversive content, reception from family and friends, and the relation of gender to crafting. Following Shively (1992) I invited participants to conclude the interview by providing feedback on cultural objects, in this case works of needlecraft that I coded for various degrees of "subversive" characteristics, including those that contain no subversive characteristics to those that include pop culture, profanity, and sexualized imagery.

Collection and analysis of interviews followed an iterative trajectory, with frequent observation, revisiting of collected data, and the subsequent writing of analytic memos based on emergent themes (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995). Following Luker (2008) the goal of qualitative analysis is to produce "mental maps;" these then can illuminate the function of gender norms and gender resistance in social life. By delving into the words of interviewees and observations again and again, researchers are witness to the emergence of persistent themes, ideas, and potential contradictions which will illuminate how people are negotiating gender identity with gendered action, revealing times when men and women are accepting and resisting gender norms.

Analysis of interview transcripts was done with the aid of Dedoose qualitative analytic software. While coding was largely open, I also adapted six extant codes specifically drawn from previous work on gender resistance; these will allow for the analysis of resistance to feminine gender norms. I adapted Radner and Lanser's (1987) coding strategy for feminist resistance. Radner and Lanser initially designed the coding scheme to use on pieces of art or craft - specifically cultural objects produced by women with the goal of examining "feminine resistance" to gender norms. Radner and Lanser applied these to works of embroidery and

needlework, and other feminine handicrafts, within the scope of several hundred years up to the 1980s. Their work provides six initial codes:

- Trivialization
- Appropriation
- Juxtaposition
- Indirection
- Distraction
- Incompetence (at traditional feminine activities/skills)

While these codes were initially applied only to the output of female crafters, I think that they are useful codes for understanding gender resistance, not just feminine resistance. Because men and women are both taking part in subversive crafting I utilized these codes to analyze both the crafts themselves as well as the way people spoke about and perform relating to craft. These codes of resistance provide a useful framework for comparison. For example, claims to incompetence of feminine skills will mean a very different thing coming from a female crafter rather than a male; coming from a female it is resisting gendered norms, from a male it is potentially reinforcing what is "woman's work." Keeping in mind that the producers may not view themselves or their products as feminist, I utilized this coding scheme to help measure gender norm resistance in their responses. The individual codes in this schema were combined with emergent open codes, and function differently for male and female respondents.

The code which applies to all subversive needlework is that of *trivialization*, which Radner and Lanser (1987) describe as "employment of a form – a mode, genre, etc. – that is considered by the dominant culture to be unimportant, innocuous, or irrelevant. "We are hypothesizing that when a particular form is considered unthreatening, the message it carries, even if it might be threatening in another contexts, is likely to be discounted or overlooked" (1987:420). Since the forms of embroidery and cross stitch meet these criteria due to their

feminized associations, this category applies to the items created by the crafters themselves. Trivialization applied to sentiments expressed about "just crafting" or downplaying the skills and artistry required. Resistance to trivialization can be understood as claims of artistic status over craft, mentioning the devalued history of female craftwork. I believe that the trivial, devalued nature of craft is actually quite significant, because it is a low-investment activity so the consequences for participation are lessened, such as when men participate in Drag for charity (Bridges 2010). This reduction in potential social sanctions opens up the possibility for gender play and risk-taking within a lower-cost realm.

Appropriation refers to adapting to "feminist" ends, things usually associated with masculine culture, such as guns, profanity, sexualizing women, or violence. This code is adapted to apply to whether female crafters included such male-coded elements in their work, or if male respondents include female-coded elements such as traditional fabriccraft content like references to family or home, in their designs. The final four codes apply to the responses of both male and female participants, but again the analytic meanings change based on the gender of the person to whom they apply. *Juxtaposition* refers to ironic arrangements of elements – a common feature of subversive crafting in general. *Indirection* involves putting distance between a message and messenger through metaphor, impersonation or hedging. An example would be a crafter having a crafting "persona" to whom they attribute the more subversive elements of their work. *Distraction* is a strategy employed to draw attention away from or cover up the subversive nature of a message. Finally, *Incompetence* involves making claims to incompetence at traditionally feminine activities or skills, such as domestic chores or even needlework. Men and women make various claims to crafting competence, with women downplaying their skills while men tend to accurately evaluate or overestimate their abilities. These six adapted codes provide a useful

starting framework with which to analyze the gender resistance strategies found in the relationship to gender, particularly femininity, for both male and female respondents.

These codes are not exhaustive, but serve to start to understand the way that elements of culture - like images or words and phrases - were employed by crafters, and if there were differences in how male or female crafters employed these cultural components. I not only questioned them about their individual attitudes and practices, but also how they interacted with other crafters and family members. By collecting both individual and interactional data I gained insight into how they did gender, but also potentially undermined gender through their participation in subversive crafting. Data analysis focused on answering my three main research questions, dealing with the potential of gendered hobbies to undo gender norms, examining men's participation into feminized crafting as a potential catalyst for gender equity, and exploring the potential ways the crafter's gender matter in their use of design elements in crafting.

Findings

Subversive crafting is undertaken by women with a heightened sense of gender awareness (Stalp and Winge 2013), and my findings demonstrate this is also the case with male subversive crafters.

Gender and the Uses of Culture

Table 1 displays the breakdown by gender of Radner and Lancer's (1987) six core codes for gender resistance. As previously mentioned, simply by participating in a feminine craft form

my respondents are engaging with a trivialized medium, due to the long association of fabriccraft with women (Bratich and Brush 2011, Parker 2010, Stalp and Winge 2013). As irony and humor is central to subversive crafting it is not surprising that all respondents explicitly and consciously enjoyed juxtaposing ironic content with a feminine form of crafting. Alice, 32, likes "the juxtaposition of a feminine craft with a non-feminine sentiment, or at least one that women can relate to or have heard, like 'shut your whore mouth.'" By calling up the all-too-common experience of women who have faced a gendered slur, she is positioning herself as sharing a bond with other women. Creating pieces that reappropriate sexist language is an expressly feminist act for Alice, and she expects them to be received as such. Jake, a 33 year old father of two from Seattle, sums up the motivation male respondents expressed regarding ironic juxtapositions:

> It's about mixing it up, you know? It makes me laugh to think about having something super geeky, like something like the Tardis or a dalek from Dr. Who daintily cross stitched and hanging in my office. It's surprising and funny and I get a real satisfaction from making something like that, from putting it out there. And other people laugh too. That's great.

While the satisfaction Jake gets from creating, and then displaying something that he finds humorous is a motivating factor, he is acutely aware that it is the combination of the feminized form of cross stitching combined with the popular, "geeky" fandom iconography of the popular BBC show Dr. Who (coded not only somewhat masculine through its association with geek culture, but also very modern) which is the source of that humor.

While all respondents shared trivialization and juxtaposition, male crafters were much more likely to borrow imagery and symbols from feminine culture than women

were to incorporate more masculine symbols. One female respondents incorporated gun imagery into her cross stitch, and one other regularly utilized violent threats such as "I'll cut you" into her work. Men frequently used floral and pastel motifs, and incorporated overtly "cute" elements into their designs, frequently citing increasing the humorous impact as a motivator. Several women expressed that they specifically shied away from gratuitous violence or profane language. For example Kate, 24, said:

> I think it is great that people have taken cross stitch and made it into something modern that people can appreciate today, but I don't really care for the people who just make offensive images for the sake of being offensive. For example, I hate the "c-word" and I have seen several people make pieces just depicting this word, and I think that is completely useless besides being offensive.

Table 1: Evidence of Radner and Lanser's Core Codes

Respondents by Gender	**Trivialization** (form)	**Appropriation** (cross gender culture borrowing)	**Juxtaposition** (ironic mixing of elements)	**Indirection** (distancing product from producer)	**Distraction** (conceal subversive message)	**Incompetence** (claims to lack of feminine skill)
Women N=12 (%)	**12 (100%)**	**2 (17%)**	**12 (100%)**	**0**	**1 (8%)**	**11 (92%)**
Men N=7 (%)	**7 (100%)**	**5 (71%)**	**7 (100%)**	**1 (14%)**	**0**	**3 (43%)**

Less utilized codes were indirection and distraction. All crafters, both men and women, did not attempt to obfuscate their identity as creator from the crafts they created. However, one male respondent Pete, 45, uses a persona name in his online Etsy.com shop that he also uses in

his life as a writer and pop-culture critic. Only one woman used distraction, purposefully making some of her craft pieces look very traditional but changing one letter or using a particularly subtle image in order to surprise her audience. This gave her personal satisfaction but she also felt it boosted the subversive character of her work. For example she created a very traditional sampler with a home, trees, and a traditional sampler alphabet, and above the house instead of the usual "God Bless" it read "Gob Bless," referencing the character Gob (pronounced Joeb) off of the sitcom Arrested Development.

Far more common than these two codes was the use of incompetence. The majority of male and female respondents claimed they did not possess great skill at fabriccrafts. One woman claimed a fairly high level of skill, noting the skill freehand embroidery requires, and one man claimed his work was more art than craft. However most respondents downplayed their prowess, but men and women did so in different ways. Men claimed they were not skilled, and highlighted their relative inexperience in whatever type of needlework they were undertaking. They expressed that it was just a "little hobby" and the goal was fun and expression rather than skill mastery. Women, however, downplayed their skills even though many had been doing fabriccrafts since childhood. While obviously (from looking at pieces of their work) they possessed a high level of skill and sophistication in their chosen medium, the women referenced themselves in comparison to the family members who taught them or who were also crafters. In comparison to women who had been involved in these crafts for decades longer, and who likely gained these skills as through some need to produce clothes or décor for their homes (Maines 2009), my respondents felt that their crafting, especially their subversive crafts, were low skill. The women expressed that their goal with subversive crafting, like the men, was entertainment and creative self-expression, however they expressed desires to better their skills through more

serious projects than subversive craft pieces. Both men and women then trivialized their subversive work, and claimed incompetence in skill level – but women downplayed their abilities while men were more likely to represent theirs fairly.

Table 2: How Crafting Skills were Acquired and whether as a Youth (Y) or Adult (A)

Respondents by Gender and (Age Group)	Mother or Grandmother	Other Female Relative	Spouse	Friend	Self-Taught with Book	Self-Taught with Online
Women N=12	**10 (Y)**	**1 (Y)**	**0**	**1 (Y)**	**0**	**0**
Men N=7	**0**	**0**	**1 (A)**	**1 (A)**	**3 (A)**	**2 (A)**

Table 2 shows the avenues through which respondents learned their fabriccraft skills and whether they acquired them in childhood or adulthood. Gender socialization is a primary predictor of leisure activities in adulthood (Maines 2009), which explains in part why there are comparatively few men who take up feminized leisure activities such as needlework. Out of 12 female respondents, 10 reported learning fabriccrafts from a mother or grandmother, one reported learning from a close aunt, and only one did not learn as a child at home but rather learned from a close friend in her early teens. None of the men interviewed learned to craft in childhood (although the one male respondent with children said he would teach his son and daughter if they expressed interest). And significantly only one of the men learned from a significant female in his life – his wife.

Women reported feeling the weight of feminine history and family tradition in their crafting and noted that taking their crafts in a subversive direction was a conscious departure from what their family members would do with the same skillset. Lenore, 26, stated "When I went to Michael's [hobby store] I found stuff that my grandma would like. I didn't relate, but I thought it was cool to mess around with designs. Like, I have a lot of ones that have literature

characters, or Dr. Who. I thought it would be funny". Women incorporated subversive content to distinguish themselves from their families but also felt the form kept them connected to a long feminine tradition and celebrate women in meaningful ways that feel authentic for their generation. Lisa describes the offerings in traditional needlework as "saccharine" and does not feel they represented her authentic tastes. She is representative of my female respondents who eschewed traditional commercially available patterns and kits in favor of ones they designed themselves, finding them more authentic. Kathy, a 24 year old student from the Connecticut puts it this way: "My mother does cross stitch as well, but her pieces are more traditional than mine landscapes, flowers and such. I think those kinds of images are pretty, but not something I would make for myself." Gabrielle, 22, is an art student in the North East. With echoes of Judy Chicago's famous "Dinner Party," she explains her motivation for doing a series of cross-stitched and embroidered tampons and vaginas.

> I also thought it was really interesting how like you can take this really, vintage, feminine craft and use it to kind of portray something that is more out-there, controversial because it's an interesting sort of juxtaposition. But I grew up in a family where sexuality wasn't really discussed. Like you get the talk when you are little and you don't talk about it ever again… But as I made them I realize that I really connect with it because it's an interesting way to sort of embrace your sexuality or your body, and um, to kind of talk about it when I know a lot of people don't talk about stuff like that. Like I know for example, when I was making them my parents were like "what is that? What are you making?" and when I told them they were kind of disgusted. They were freaking out. They were like "why would you do that, that's so, that's so gross!" Like, I don't know, it's like in my family you just don't address that kind of thing, so I thought it was really interesting.

Gabrielle's quote touches on another important difference between male and female respondents – the idea of family as audience and interactions around subversive content.

Table 3 shows how interviewees responded to questions about how far they would go with subversive content that could be deemed offensive, particularly sexuality, violence, and strong profanity. Men were much more comfortable with the concept of erotic content (although only one male respondent included it in his work). Julia, 25, said she would be comfortable with erotic content, but not pornography. This is in stark contrast to Pete, 45, who makes patterns from scanned images taken from pornographic magazines. Two of 12 women were comfortable with violent imagery, including Elizabeth, 27, who incorporates guns and violent threats into her work. Men were overwhelmingly comfortable with the concept of violent content, however only 3 of 7 actually employed it in any items they had made. The majority of men were comfortable with the use of strong profanity, while only 25% of women were comfortable with it. The largest difference between male and female respondents was in their willingness to hide or remove items from their homes if family came to visit.

Table 3: Limits of Offensive Content and Family as Audience

Respondents by Gender	Comfortable with Erotic Content	Comfortable with Violent Content	Comfortable with Strong Profanity	Would Hide Offensive Work from Family
Women N=12	**1 (8%)**	**2 (17%)**	**3 (25%)**	**11 (92%)**
Men N=7	**6 (86%)**	**7 (100%)**	**6 (86%)**	**1 (14%) (only from children)**

As seen in Table 3, only one male respondent said that he would take down or hide material that would potentially offend his family members, and this was only in reference to children possibly seeing profanity. The vast majority, 11 of 12 female respondents said that they would shield their family from offensive work. Women are more likely to set boundaries on

subversive content in their crafting, and are more aware of audience reactions to potentially offensive material. The previous block quote showed Gabrielle's awareness of her parent's shock at her intricately embroidered vaginas and tampons; her family declared them "gross" and shocking, but she admitted that she would take down items in her home that were on display normally if her parents came over, and especially if her grandmother came to visit. Even though she created pieces that had the potential to shock she still felt the need to protect her family. Contrast this with the reaction of Pete, who not only would not remove material that his family found offensive, but also takes an antagonistic stand towards people who might come across his Etsy.com site and find it distasteful. I asked him about how he creates a design:

> I think I look at what makes me laughs first. First, you know it's the same way with when I'm writing music or if I'm writing satire, "what do I like?" Because I'm the first person in the audience. And if I don't like it, then why am I doing it?" Pushing the envelope. There's a couple different things that come to mind when I think about that. You know Lenny Bruce was a very crude comedian back in the day, and he was above and beyond what anyone else was doing and he was offending people. You know, and when the South Park movie came out, "Bigger, Longer, and Uncut" that was offensive to everybody. And they actually said, "You know what, if we did not offend your particular group, we're sorry. We meant to offend everybody." So there is part of me that wants to be offensive because nobody is. You know if someone looks at my [Etsy.com] page and says "you know, this is garbage, I hate it, I am never coming back again." Awesome! I wasn't going to get your money anyway, but you saw it! (Laughs) And maybe you complained to someone over dinner about it, and maybe that person comes back and they have a completely different view on it and maybe they can buy that pattern that you hated so much. I didn't make it FOR you.

When it comes to creation and display of subversive crafts, it is clear that my respondents consider their creative perspectives, but also think about the reactions of close family members and even strangers. For men this largely did not keep them from utilizing or considering

offensive elements, but for women the considerations of their audience and especially their family limited the scope of their content.

Discussion

Using Culture as Content

Initially I posed the question *does the gender of the crafter matter in the ways that feminine cultural elements are appropriated or resisted in subversive crafting?* My analysis shows that in some cases the short answer is yes. Women were much less likely to utilize sexualized images or realistic nude images. Also, some women were less likely to employ slurs against women such as whore, slut, or cunt, while some women were explicitly attempting to reclaim such language in the name of female empowerment. I posed this question as a way to understand how women and men were employing culture, beyond the obvious notion that subversive crafters were taking feminized forms and injecting some masculinized content such as sexual objectification of women or profanity.

Male subversive crafters appropriate feminine culture, but women reappropriate a feminized form of gendered expression and attempt to revitalize it in ways that seem more authentic to their less traditional experiences of what is feminine (Bratich and Brush 2011, Carpenter 2010, Chansky 2010, Parker 2010, Portwood-Stacer 2007, Stalp and Winge 2013). The combination of long historical connections, gender socialization, and family traditions restricted the lengths to which women would go with subversive content. Cultural schemas about proper womanhood and the boundaries of feminine behavior seem to be employed on a semi-

conscious level (Pugh 2013) that makes women less likely to include more masculine coded cultural elements in their work. Ironically the traditional "feminine" realms of home handcrafts (Parker 2010) and family caretaking (Maines 2009) act as a barrier to both the creation and the display of masculinized subversive cross stitch. This suggests that historical connections tie women to more feminized uses of culture in leisure activities, even when those activities are actively aware of and playfully resistant to gender norms (Ferreday 2008, Findley 2010, Regehr 2012). This also suggests that the way leisure skills are passed down through gendered family trajectories affects how culture gets incorporated into the resulting creations. This has implications for how we understand the relationship between culture, leisure, and gender performance.

Hybrid Masculinity and Resistant Femininity

I asked *can a crossing of gendered hobby borders potentially undo gender?* Men and women in subversive crafting may draw different boundaries in their willingness and ability to undo gender - to make available gender performances that are non-normative. My data does not support an undoing, so much as an internal flexibility, with women demonstrating a bounded resistance and men performing a hybrid masculinity (Bridges 2010, Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Much like the cases of subversive hobbies like Burlesque and Roller Derby, my research reveals that women have consciously played with the meanings of femininity, giving audiences the feminine elements they expect, but also demonstrating the women themselves value and find pleasure in performing femininity (Ferreday 2008, Findley 2010, Regehr 2012). In other words, the performance cannot go too far and still be acceptable. West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that in our performance of gender we are accountable to those we interact with; we must behave in ways that do not disrupt the linkages between our perceived sex and our gender performance.

In this way women are more hesitant to employ language or images that could be offensive to family members, especially older female family members with whom they share needlework hobbies, because a certain trace of expected femininity must be retained by the crafter. The crafting impetus and production provides links to older family members that the women hold dear, but the content is potentially too transgressive and may threaten those bonds. Because of the stronger family and historical connections, and the fact that women, not men, are more accountable to performances of femininity in feminine realms, the potential for women to undo gender through subversive crafting is constrained. Resistance is acceptable, even expected and embraced, but the risks of gender deviation carry potentially greater cost for female subversive crafters due to the expectations of femininity and the crafting ties that link them so directly to their closest and most revered family members. Women imagine being castigated, or like Gabrielle, have actually been called out by family members for the content of their subversive crafts. This indicates that perceived or actual interactions over feminine accountability stand in the way of the transgressive potential for women's crafts. My analysis suggests that higher social costs, especially with family members, undermine the potential to undo gender through such gender play (Butler 1990) in feminized leisure activities.

Men who engage in subversive crafting are transgressing gender boundaries by embracing a feminized activity with relatively low social costs (Bridges 2010); in the case of voluntary leisure activities that do not necessitate public performance or display, this is certainly true. The embracing of a feminized activity can be seen both as resistance to masculine norms and an acceptance of femininity. However there is evidence that masculine tropes and other forms of culture will be employed by men in ways that parody femininity and reinforce gender binaries rather than undoing them. Much like the men observed by Bridges (2010), who were

voluntarily involved in Drag marches protesting violence against women, my male respondents shared a heightened awareness of gender and a willingness to play with gender norms. Bridges noted that these empathetic gendered performances "often symbolically reproduces gender and sexual inequality despite good intentions" (2010:5). The men in my study and that of Bridges drew upon cultural norms of gender to draw distinctions between men and women and ended up reinforcing stereotypes.

I recognize that men participating in subversive crafting have the *potential* to employ culture to undo gender. But rather than undoing gender they are performing a hybrid masculinity which borrows from femininity but ultimately reinforces the distinction between men and women. The crafts they produce can be similar to those produced by my female participants, but since men were more likely to include sexualized imagery, and also had a very different attitude towards real and imagined audiences, their seemingly transgressive forays into subversive crafting fell short of being revolutionary. The men did not learn to craft on grandma's knee. They did not need to tell people their hobby, and participation was entirely voluntary rather than expected. They were not expected to have great skill at fabriccrafts. Costs and expectations were low for male participants at the individual- and interactional-levels. Undoing gender depends on disrupting the linkage between sex category and gender performance. Because these men were not accountable to do a convincing feminine performance of a craft they did not have the weight of liability, the potential offense of key family members, in their gender performances compared to female subversive crafters.

While Deutsch (2007) asserts that scholars utilizing West and Zimmerman's (1987) "doing gender" framework often focus too heavily on the institutional level, overlooking the potential for gender change at the individual and interactional level, my findings indicate that not

all gender resistance and subversion at these lower levels results in the undoing of gender even when crossing and weakening gender boundaries is an expressed goal of the actor. If undoing gender is the continued enactment of performances which do not reinforce standard gender beliefs, but instead dissolve the boundaries which categorize behaviors, practices, and cultural elements along the lines of what is appropriately masculine or feminine (Connell 2010, Deutsch 2007, Butler 2004, Kelan 2010), then subversive crafting does not achieve this undoing.

Gender Progress? Revolutions stuck in Neutral

Perhaps it is the voluntary nature of hobbies that limits this revolutionary scope. I posed the question *Can men's forays into feminized crafting potentially act as a catalyst for progress on gender equality?* England (2010) and Hochschild and Machung (2003) decry the gender revolution as stalled and uneven. Men have the option of taking on housework and childcare, whereas for women it is accepted as compulsory (Cairns, Josee, Johnston, and Baumann 2010; Chesney 2010). Chesney's (2010) research of men compelled to enter the role of stay-at-home dads found that compulsory participation in feminine activities undid gender at the individual and interactional levels and demonstrated a path for this to lead to institutional level changes towards gender equality. But if hobbies are voluntary they are also potentially temporary, and can be picked up or put down when new interests arise (Maines 2009). For women, needlework and fabric/fiber crafts have "made the transition from drudgery to delight as they [lost] their practical relevance to production" (Maines 2009: 3). For previous generations sewing and needlework were skills that were required, not only to maintain the production of household goods but also to demonstrate proper feminine socialization (Parker 2010). Now they are more a

source of pleasure, and a form of leisure as opposed to "drudgery." Men are enjoying the display and the participation; women are enjoying the production and the nostalgic linkages to femininity as well as significant people in their lives. I propose that women's familial and historical connections with crafting – those same ones that limit their content and displays that make them accountable for femininity – keep women subversive crafters from undoing gender, and are limited to the individual and interactional levels (2009). I further propose that for men entering into a feminine activity, for it to be truly revolutionary and contain the potential for undoing gender, it must be both requisite and have the potential for institutional level change. Perhaps male artists, rather than hobbyists, who engage in traditionally feminine fiber and fabric arts as part of their profession, and interact with the institutions of the art world, would be able to achieve an undoing of gender and not just an appropriation in a hybrid masculine performance.

Conclusion

My research contributes to our understanding of how culture is utilized in gendered leisure activities, sheds light on the relationship between feminized activities and hybrid masculinities, and clarifies the potential for gender transgression at the individual and interactional level to undo larger gender structures. It illustrates that participation in subversive crafting falls short of the possibility of undoing gender for men and women, but it does offer a great deal of pleasure and satisfaction to individual crafters, even if women self-censor due to perceived interactional level pressures. Women are hesitant to damage family ties through their engagement with more offensive (and masculine) elements of culture. Through their family ties they are socialized into a love of crafting and needlework. Nostalgia and a reference for feminine

crafting history ironically creates boundaries in crafting practice that are difficult for women to cross, even when they explicitly espouse feminist aims for their crafting. Accountability to family matters for women, especially those who were taught by close female relatives, and accountability to femininity undermines women's potential to undo gender in subversive crafting. The implication raised by my research is that other feminine leisure activities in which women play with gender are perhaps similarly limited in their potential for undoing gender. Subversion carries greater social weight for women performing femininity, and therefore greater social risk, for female subversive crafters. This also suggests that the way leisure skills are passed down through gendered family trajectories affects how culture gets incorporated into the resulting creations. Male subversive crafters voluntarily engage in feminine coded activities, but their potential for undoing gender is similarly undermined because they are less accountable on the individual and institutional levels to a convincing or skillful feminine performance. Hybrid masculinities do not undo gender; they simply borrow from femininities and subordinated masculinities in ways which, often ironically, strengthen the masculine/feminine divide (Bridges 2014, Bridges and Pascoe 2014, Arxer 2011). Within subversive crafting male participants express more freedom in their approach to design content because they are not hindered by the familial, historical, and gender-based ties which constrain women.

I see several avenues for further research. First, I propose ethnographic investigation of subversive crafters through social groups and craft shows. Ethnographic participant observation allows members' interactions to be explored and compared to interview data. In theory-driven participant observation, the aim is to directly address a theory and the field site are selected because it is meaningful categorically to the theory being explored (Lichterman 2002). As I am concerned with the negotiations involved in the doing and undoing of gender in the subversive

crafting community I plan to gather data at organized "stitch-and-bitch" groups and also modern craft shows in the Mid-Atlantic and North-East regions. Through systematic and prolonged visits to such sites, researchers can utilize micro-level data to comment on larger social structure, such as gender, with the goal of reconstructing pre-existing theory (Lichterman 2002). In my foray into fieldwork I will look for times when, to quote Messner "gendered interactions, structure, and cultural meanings are intertwined, in both mutually reinforcing and contradictory ways" (2000:765).

Additionally, further interviews with crafters of color may bring up important differences in the understandings of gender and culture in the leisure realm. My respondents all identified as white. For white women fabriccrafts are more likely to be seen as productive leisure activities, as opposed to women of color who are more likely to view it as a skill for the production of needed goods or as labor (Maines 2009). Male subversive crafters of color are potentially less likely to borrow from femininity or other subordinated identities to craft hybrid masculine performances, since hybrid masculinity is associated with whiteness and its preservation (Bridges 2010, Bridges and Pascoe 2014).

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