

Knitting Piece Reflection

The concept of the **Sociological Imagination** explains the connection between an individual's lived experience and the wider cultural and social contexts which influence it. Many issues which seem only to affect an individual based on their own actions may instead stem from a larger societal issue outside of their control. (Cumming, 2020)

The creative piece I made involves two parts. The first is a hat for a newborn, for which I referenced my own baby pictures to knit a hat similar to one I wore. It is being unravelled, and the yarn is being used to knit a piece of fabric with a modified Fair-Isle motif. (Starmore, 1988) I selected the colours pink, blue, and white for two reasons. They are the classic colours used for babies and the colours in the Transgender pride flag.

When approaching this from my lived experience as a transmasculine person, the pink hat represents being expected to look, dress, and act a certain way based on the circumstances of my birth. The unravelling of the hat is to show the way these expectations and the **gendered socialization** I experienced destabilized my sense of self. (Da Costa, 2023) Finally, the knit piece being made from the unraveled yarn represents the remaking of myself into someone new, but still connected to my past.

From a wider cultural context, the choice of knitting as my medium was intended to explore the gendered perception of the art. Knitting is widely perceived as a feminine craft, which dates back centuries, including paintings of the Madonna where she is depicted knitting. (Rutt, 1987, p. 44) I did not properly learn to knit until after I transitioned, and the response has been interesting. I have had several people, typically middle-aged or older women, try to reassure me that historically, men were the ones who did the majority of the knitting. They seem

to worry that I may find participating in this craft emasculating. To me, this hints at a subconscious cultural belief that things deemed “women’s work” are less impressive or valuable.

I was also interested in the way the art of knitting is passed down. Historically, it has been taught orally, often from mother to daughter, and the act of knitting itself can often be social. To this day, knitting groups meet on a regular basis to share knowledge and help each other out. However, with the growing accessibility of teaching resources on the internet, many people are teaching themselves to knit through videos and online articles. This is how I taught myself to knit, despite the fact that my mother is also a knitter. I often find myself craving the social aspects of knitting, and I attend knitting groups and events as much as I can. All of this social and cultural context has affected the way I knit and create, from the patterns and colours I choose to the way I hold the yarn in my hands.

References

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