

**Making Up (For) Society?**  
**Stitch, Bitch and Organisation**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

We discuss the emergence of the craft movement known as *Stitch'nBitch*. Prevalent around the globe, particularly among women, this movement organises in local places, such as hotels and cafes, and virtually using the Internet. The women meet to knit, stitch and talk, using new technologies as an enabler and resource exchange. At the same time, their presence can be seen, in part, as a response to social and technological changes, both at work and in wider society. We introduce five themes to assist in the interpretation of this new form of organising, discussing (1) remedial, (2) progressive, (3) resistance, (4) nostalgic, and (5) ironic possibilities and we draw on illustrative interview data to outline possibilities for further research.

**Keywords:** *Craft, Information Society, Leisure, Gender, Nostalgia.*

Here we present preliminary findings from exploratory interviews with young women who participate in a new global and local movement. *Stitch'nBitch* is the term used to describe the movement where women meet virtually, through the Internet, and physically, often in local cafes and hotels, to socialise and to share their craft. Named after a book written by the editor of the New York-based feminist magazine BUST (Stoller, 2003), the movement is evident in Europe, particularly Zurich, many parts of the USA, including Chicago, New York and Los Angeles (Craft Yarn Council of America, 2004), and in Australasia, for example in Melbourne and Sydney (Stitch'nBitch yahoo groups, 2004). *Stitch'nBitch* groups can be found on university campuses, in clubs, pubs, cafes and private homes, and they are formed by and for women who organise and get together to knit as a highly social form of creative leisure production (Lemke, 2004).

The groups meet to discuss their knitting projects, to exchange skills and to enjoy each others' company (McAdams, 2001; Yahoo groups, 2004)

[*Stitch'nBitch* involves] meeting a network of people and like people with a familiar interest and you can catch up and have a good gossip. Exchange ideas and information and what not (Sales coordinator, age 33).

I think we're one of the less [formal] groups because we don't focus so much on the knitting, it's more about being social and being out (Textile student, age 24).

It's just to do something while we're hanging out together, I suppose (Wool shop worker, age 30-35).

Some gatherings are for stitching such as cross-stitch, embroideries, tapestry and small weavings. Other groups include a social welfare contribution as part of their organisation; for example, 'Afghans for Afghan' is a project being undertaken by one University-based *Stitch'nBitch* group that creates multi-coloured knitted or crocheted patchwork blankets to send to Afghanistan. Another group is dedicated to raising funds for Médecins Sans Frontières/ Doctors Without Borders (McPhee, 2006). An important characteristic of the groups is their use of information technologies such as chat rooms, email and blogs to share and develop their craft in particular and life experiences in general.

In summary, the identifiable characteristics of *Stitch'nBitch* groups appear to be that they are social, third place, based on craft production and predominantly female. It is notable that the appearance of this new form of organisation occurs at a time when there has been a resurgence of interest in

handcrafts among young women (Sholnik, 2004; Wheeler, 2004). Accordingly, one name being used for participants in *Stitch'nBitch* groups is *Chicks with Sticks*. Indeed, the number of young women knitting has grown rapidly in the last few years. For example, the proportion of women between 25-34 years of age increased from 13 to 33 percent (Craft Yarn Council of America, 2006; Sholnik 2004). In America, 36 percent of all women know how to knit; this is a 51% increase over the last decade (Craft Yarn Council of America, 2006). New retail outlets are being established in relatively affluent areas suggesting that the activity is being pursued for reasons other than the economic.

In this paper, we suggest that the organisation of such groups may be a response to social and technological changes of the new millennium, a response that uses material culture to enhance social connectedness and well being of women to counter the alienation that can be experienced in life and work within the Information Society. In particular, we review claims that the Information Society has resulted in profound changes in the way people live, communicate and connect with one another, thereby providing a trigger for new, more community-focused activities using craft production.

First, and based on a review of the extant literature, we argue that *Stitch'nBitch* among young women is an example of a new way of connecting, based on traditional craft skills and using venues traditionally associated with gatherings of men - the pubs. It may be heralding a new art and craft revival such as occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more recently in the 1960s Hippie Era. We supplement this review with data drawn from a convenience sample of ten semi-structured interviews with members of three urban Australian *Stitch'nBitch* groups, data that suggest that *Stitch'nBitch* collectives may serve a useful function in remedying, or making up for, what women feel is absent in contemporary working and social life. The selection of knitting is an interesting turn as it is highly labour intensive but pragmatic form of individual production rather than consumption.. We then complicate this, *remedial*, perspective and use both the review and the interview data to develop a typology of five different themes that inform understanding of *Stitch'nBitch*, each of which may assist in developing a future research agenda into this contemporary form of organisation.

## **Methodology**

A cross-sectional survey was conducted using face-to-face interviews in order to gain first-hand perspectives from within Australian *Stitch'nBitch* groups as a first step in developing a research

agenda into the *Stitch'nBitch* phenomenon. The sample was drawn from members of four different groups after 12 visits to these groups. Potential interviewees were contacted at the groups and interviews were conducted in a mix of public places, ranging from 31 to 51 minutes in length. As we were particularly interested in the views of young women, all interviewees were under 40. Our interviewer was also a young woman (aged under 30) as we aimed for both interviewer and interviewee to be from the same generation.

A semi-structured interview approach was chosen to allow a mix of consistency and flexibility. Ethics approval was obtained and all interviewees gave informed consent. They were asked about why they learned to knit, why they continue to knit, what they knit, where and with whom they knit, how they joined the group, contacts at the group, feelings about the group, use of technology, other forms of recreation, others' reception to their knitting, and past and social influences on knitting. All interviews were taped and transcribed, and a template analysis (King, 1994) was conducted based on themes identified from the literature review. As the research discussed here is at an exploratory stage and as these data are drawn from a small sample, they are interwoven<sup>1</sup> through out the text for illustration to supplement that review rather presented in a separate section for testing or thick description. In order to maintain the anonymity of the interviewees, they are referred to here only by age and occupation.

## **The Information Society**

It is notable that the growth of *Stitch'nBitch* is occurring at a time when the opportunities revealed by progress in information technology are being diffused across many parts of the globe. For example, the *Stitch'nBitch* groups listed in Yahoo.com (2004) show how women appear to be harvesting the opportunities for the development of social capital through engagement in craft as well as engagement in technology. Rheingold (1994) was one of the first to present some of the implications of such new virtual communities and cultures, believing that they provide for the development of social capital, or 'resources that may be called upon by sole virtue of being one of a network of durable social

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<sup>1</sup> We apologise for the pun.

relations' (Bourdieu, in Wacquant, 1987:69), and associated choices and activities that could be leveraged for benefit of individuals and groups.

## **COMMUNITARIAN LEISURE – KNITTING TOGETHER NOT BOWLING ALONE**

Rheingold's virtual communities are important to the discussion of *Stitch'nBitch* as the movement uses aspects of the technology in its endeavours and can be seen as an embodiment of the cliché of both acting locally and being connected globally via the Internet. However, while *Stitch'nBitch* groups use information technology as an enabler and resource exchange for the dissemination of information, they appear, at the same time, to be in part a remedial response to the Information Society in the sense that people are now connected 24/7/365 to the rest of the planet but often not connected at all to their community and place:

Populations are spreading out and people being away from their family and community group...in a way it substitutes [for] the family to a degree (Sales coordinator, age 33).

The opportunities for global connection are acknowledged with insights to the limitations of online friendships between like minded people. The relaxation afforded by knitting is important to this respondent.

I've had like people who've done amazing things for me, like, um, they've sent me stuff from overseas. For example there's a girl in Japan, I really wanted a Japanese knitting book and she sent me one. People don't do that for you and she's done it for heaps of people which has been really great....I think I got a real kick out of the fact that I could see progression in something 'cause I felt that I, just, in other parts of my life I just wasn't seeing progression in anything, so it was just nice to have that....I think it's been a big push for a lot of people who are, um, using computers on a daily basis; I found that was true for me. You need an outlet of some kind.... knitting encourages flow, so in terms of not worrying about whatever's on your mind and just concentrating on what you're doing, um, it's been a huge plus for me....you forget about your surroundings....it helps you sort of connect with the birds of a feather and find other people who are doing the same similar things....online can only give you so much (Web developer, age 30-35).

This attribute of relaxation and slowing down within a community setting is valued by this young knitter.

Lives are really busy and lives are changing and people don't have time...and the thing I like about ... knitting is you have to take your time, you have to stop what you're doing and you can't multi-task while you're knitting, you can't do anything else. So the thing I love about these knitting groups is, it's sort of this return to a community type of feel and the relationships that you make with these people who you would probably never really meet in any other circumstance but you've got that common thread – pardon the pun- and that's enough to bring you there.... I like that it sort of breaks down barriers that way.... Everyone

does a lot of stuff on their own and I suppose this is a return to this community feel (Textile student, age 24).

The quotes from the next two respondents demonstrate that home and work are not enough; that a community connection is important. However the structure of our cities and lives makes this connection difficult.

I think there's a tendency for people to stay at home a lot more now, and that has probably led people to think about what they could do at home, once they've finished their renovation and their back yard. There's also a need to make something...people need to feel that they've made something that's their own.... I think people are really unsatisfied in their little cubicles at work, and fluorescent-filled environments, and you know, they want to...do something that's creative, it's not just watching telly. Telly's terrible at the moment and reading is very solitary. A lot of sports are very solitary, because you can't really chat and swim (Wool shop worker, age 30-35).

I often find that, especially in the outer suburbs, a lot of the time you come into the city to go to work, you spend an hour plus travelling, you go home and you're just there to eat and sleep so there is no time for there to be any community structure (Business analyst, age 31).

This lack of connection has been particularly evident in contemporary leisure activities. Until recent times, leisure has been seen as an individual activity of consumption (Arai and Pedlar, 2003); for example, women may join a gymnasium for recreation and personal fitness, and the home has become a privatised setting for consumption activities, including leisure activities (Ritzer, 1999). At one extreme, Robert Putnam's (2000) *Bowling Alone* describes what can occur when people retreat from a community into their own lounge rooms and watch the television set, which, in Australia, is now increasingly likely to be part of a 'home theatre', a separate room that emulates the experience and quality of the movie cinema. In contrast, Putnam argues that a richly networked society, high on social capital, is required before there can be any valuable degree of social inclusion. Arai and Pedlar (2003) also suggest that there is a need to focus more on community and the common good in leisure studies in order to develop understanding of shared meanings in community and to include oppressed and marginalised citizens.

In this context, the *Stitch'nBitch* movement may be reflective of a move towards a community focus that will build not reduce social capital, and we propose that the emergence of *Stitch'nBitch* reflects a wish for more self-expression of creativity and social connection at a community level through

leisure. As Flew has commented, '[i]nteractivity, virtuality, and globalization, as developments associated with digitization, convergence, and networking, have promoted new forms of social interaction, new possibilities for the construction of identity, and new forms of community' (Flew, 2002:209). Within *Stitch'nBitch*, these 'new possibilities' are demonstrated through the use of blogs, a type of electronic diary with images and links to other on line sites. Knitters share their current projects, exchange thoughts and concerns in blogs that, according to the 'web ring' rules, must be updated at least once a week. The blogs allow readers to lodge responses by posting comments that are visible to all readers. We surveyed one knitting blog site that, as of January 2006, had 800 active blogs and was growing rapidly (Knitting Blogs Web Ring, 2006).

## **FROM THE GENDER DIVIDE TO CYBERFEMINIST CHICKS WITH STICKS**

The existence of *Stitch'nBitch* groups as women's groups may give further cause for optimism against a backdrop of what feminist theorists present as a gender divide in participation in technology (e.g., Wajcman, 2004). Despite the decline of female participation in information technology, there has been a continued discussion in the feminist literature about Cyberfeminism, which is a construct developed to allow a voice to women who wish to participate in technology on their own terms. For example,

I'm interested in, um, websites and technology and stuff like that, something that I wanted to get back into is more sort of creative environments and sort of working with flash.... I'm into a, I guess it is a whole sort of 50s or 60s kind of aesthetic.... I do a lot of thrifting and go to second hand places and find things that I like and it's something that I want to work toward, of getting my own place and fitting it out the way I like.... online is great for finding out different things, different ways of doing things or treatments that you might not have seen before, so it's, I think it's pretty much the unusual and not the broad standard stuff that I get a kick out of (Web developer, age 30-35).

It's a big part of who I am becoming, I think, especially given I'm wanting to design, and really I'd like to have a home with a room which is just dedicated to me designing, you know, really modern things for the modern woman. That's really what my dream would be, ultimately, yes.... Every design I look at is just from the point of view of seeing to what extent it can be modified or made better, I never see the end product. (Wool shop worker, age 30-35)

Luckman suggests that Cyberfeminism is important to the generation of women who are participating in *Stitch'nBitch*: 'Cyber feminist discourse gives voice to a particular 'women-with-attitude' spirit within computer culture. This modern, hip, sassy, post feminist approach to life in a wired world



holds substantial currency for many young women' (Luckman, 1999:36), and is embodied in the character Purl, whose cartoon image can be purchased emblazoned on (machine-produced) items such as t-shirts, bags and mouse pads (see [www.stitchnbitch.org](http://www.stitchnbitch.org)):

I guess at the moment it has that "cool" factor as well, which is, like I feel much more comfortable about sitting in a cafe on my own knitting than I would doing cross-stitch or, you know, another form of craft that's not quite so edgy at the moment (Student, age 23).

However, based on some negative response to the age group used in our sampling frame, we are well aware that *Stitch'nBitch* is not just for the young. Indeed, the emphasis on youth may have been overstated:

There also seems to be this concept that, you know, *Stitch'nBitch* is just this thing for young people who are kind of like punk rockers who swear or something. There is this sort of media thing that's been going on, you know, it's not just for grandma any more: we're the cool, young, hip, you know, sort of socialite people. So, um, ...it's this whole media thing that's been going on (Web developer, age 30-35).

Ironically whilst the women who *Stitch'nBitch* may be rejecting technology, the same skills are required to read a knit pattern as to read a computer program – 'slip stitch, knit stitch, pass slip stitch over':

In fact knitting programs, I probably find them easy to read because they're kind of like technical documents. Maybe I like it as well because it is a logical progression. You build up the rows, building it up sequentially in a structured manner, so perhaps that appeals to my logical sense (Science student, age 27).

Architecture is a very practical, creative profession. Like you know it is about designing buildings and there is also I guess an understanding of maths and stuff involved and maybe that ties across to knitting (Architect, age 34).

The feminist author Plant notes 'female programmers and multi-media artists were to discover connections between knitting, patchwork, and software engineering and find weaving secreted in the pixelled windows which open on to cyberspace' (Plant, 1995:58). A woman must have the skills to engage with technology in the same way required to become a reader of patterns. A knitting program is very similar to the BASIC programming languages still in use today. The skill base required is important for women and needs to be appreciated and applauded.

## Remedy, Progression And Resistance:

### Three Initial Themes in Stitch'nBitch Research

In summary, we may begin to understand the role of *Stitch'nBitch* by considering it under a *remedial theme* as part of a movement away from the individualism of the Information Society to a more collective recreation that meets a need for social connection. Like much leisure, craft in recent decades has also been a solitary and passive activity. We suggest that the return of women to basic crafts is not simply a rejection of technology, for in many cases *Stitch'nBitch* is technology-dependent. Under an alternative, *progressive theme*, *Stitch'nBitch* may be a unique Cyberfeminist phenomenon, one of women expressing their own thoughts and reflecting their own circumstances and environment; women gathering together in a 'third place', separate from home and work, for social activity and the expression of individual creativity (Florida, 2004):

I think doing craft is much more immediate than the satisfaction I get through being creative at work; it is such a long drawn-out process (Architect, age 34).

That this place may often be the local pub, traditionally a bastion of masculinity, is also noteworthy, for *Stitch'nBitch* may also be understood through a third, *resistance theme* as a new protest movement using craft as a subversive vehicle for comment on gender as well as on the increasing commodification of society and technology. The resistance theme may be associated with the emergence of a new Arts and Crafts movement. Globalisation, global fashion and mass production of apparel may be causes for protest for some groups, whose local production of single pieces of unbranded knitwear may be a small effort to refute the ubiquity of the Nike sweatshirt. Many knitters responded to the terrorist bombing of July 2005 in London with postings on the web rings. As posted by one contributor: "I want to knit a big comfort shawl for London" (McPhee, 2006b). Environmental concerns are reflected in the use of organic fibres such as silk, cotton and wool, often in minimally processed forms, reminiscent of both Arts and Crafts and hippie movements of the past.

## THE BRITISH AND THE AMERICAN ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENTS

The painter, poet and philosopher John Ruskin and designer William Morris helped renew the status of craft during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. For example, Metcalf (1993) refers to the influence of Morris, who was himself influenced by the nostalgia of Ruskin, who contrasted the ‘spiritual deadness’ of machine-made goods with the craftsmanship of the Middle Ages, where goods may have been imperfect but where their makers were not reduced to ‘slavery’ (Poulson, 1989:35; see also Metcalf, 1993:46; cf. Osborne, 1970). Kuspit (1996:19) comments that, for Ruskin and Morris, craft became a way of restoring the ‘lost utopia of unalienated work’. This was the height of the American Arts and Crafts movement (Browne, 1994), whose legacies remain in craft’s appreciation of workmanship (Kirkham, 1998; Markowitz, 1994; Parry, 1989). Rather than being uncritical, craft can instead be regarded as subversive to mass production because it is hand-made. Similarly:

I got really engaged and enjoyed the fact that you could make things for friends rather than buying something that is mass-produced or whatever. I can give them something that I have made rather than thought about it for five minutes.... I like the feel of the wool (Sales coordinator, age 33).

For me it’s about making things using traditional methods and materials and being able to make something from the raw materials right up to a useable item.... To take that time out to just make something with your hands and use your ideas of colours and textures and all of that sort of thing. I find that quite satisfying.... Some people like to knit because of the process of the making. For me it’s about making something I can wear and use. Even though I enjoy the process it’s really about the thing.... I like to remove the technological aspect from it. I like to use the traditional sticks.... I use technology because I have to and it makes certain aspects of my life easier, but if I had the choice I probably wouldn’t use it because I think it’s a bit unnecessary in a lot of respects and it’s taken away from these traditional ways of doing things.... I’m quite into self-sufficiency.... I’m quite into traditional values.... and craft is part of that (Science student, age 27).

Like it can be done on a machine, but knitting to get the same results you’ve got to do it by hand and it takes love and it takes attention and concentration so that’s what I love about it.... You can’t rush it and I love that it’s just against basically everything that’s happening at the moment. It’s a complete rebellion on my part (Textile student, age 24).

Morris produced hand made textiles, books, wallpaper and furniture, and hoped for the unification of art and craft (Metcalf, 1993; Osborne, 1970). Their work assisted social developments, such as the British Arts and Crafts Movement, whose followers opposed mass manufacture and misuse of the machine (Browne, 1994; Collins, 1987; Lucie-Smith, 1981).

## THE HIPPIE ERA: 1960-1970S

The resurgence of interest in crafts in the 1960s and 1970s was clearly aligned with the anti Vietnam War protesters with 'Flower Power' being an icon of peace and connection to nature and natural resources. The era was fraught with fears that natural resources such as oil would be depleted and; that a nuclear holocaust was inevitable so alternative energy sources must be found. Women in the western world took up their needles and threads during this era. Spinning wheels were in full flight producing yarns for hand knits and looms threaded to produce textiles for wear and domestic use.

Indeed, *Stitch'nBitch* is focused on craft activities as regarded as lowly – textile crafts (see Wolfram Cox and Minahan, 2002). Craft is often seen as solely physical labor, messy and dirty, without an intellectual or aesthetic component (Metcalf, 1994:16) and a perceived minimal contribution to cultural development. Further, craft is gendered and it is not coincidental that we have focused on knitters and sewers rather than the more masculine *bricoleurs* (cf. Gabriel, 2002). In summary, crafts have for several centuries been associated with protest movements and calls for alternative sources of energy and manufacture. *Stitch'nBitch* may well be a form of resistance to the traditional placing of women in terms of physical location (the home compared with the third place e.g., the pub), of isolation (the private home compared with the public place), and in response to the low status of traditional women's textile crafts such as knitting.

### Pattern Making: Further Possibilities

Thus, it becomes clear that we need to be alert to the diversity of motivations present when engaging in what is a basic production process. In this section we also raise two further possibilities that may guide a research agenda into *Stitch'nBitch*: a *nostalgic theme* whereby *Stitch'nBitch* offers a romantic return to the past rather than, for example, a remedy to the present, and an *ironic theme* where the desire for a return to a past is parodied and presented as melancholic; a simulacrum of a past that was never had (cf. Baudrillard, 1993; Golden & Hill, 1991) rather than one to be re-created (see Table 1).

**TABLE 1**  
**A Research Agenda for *Stitch'n Bitch*: Suggested Themes**

Theme	Focus	Description
Remedial	Community	Remedying the individualism of the present Information Society through collective recreation
Progressive	Cyberfeminism	Women's independent expression and creativity
Resistance	Craft	Textile crafts as aesthetically marginal and negatively gendered
Nostalgic	Conservation	Possibility of a romantic return to simpler times
Ironic	Comment	Satirical simulacrum of a melancholic return to a past that never was, thereby commenting on the present more than on the past

Under the theme of *nostalgia*, *Stitch'nBitch* may be understood as a nostalgic, conservative response to a world no longer present; young women knitting their way back to the world of their grandmothers, or perhaps to their mothers:

There's also that sort of great unwashed kind of thing of the Women's Weekly, um, scarf thing that's been happening as well, like feathers and stuff.... 80 per cent of people.... [get] their three balls of feathers to make their scarf (Web developer, age 30-35).

There are lots of knitting dags out there.... people who knit acrylic baby layettes and think that feathers is a great yarn and all they've knitted is scarves for friends and family and who do just kind of sack like jumpers (Architect, 34).

Wajcman says that there is evidence of a 'nostalgia for an idealized past when people belonged to a harmonious community and spent time chatting with friends and neighbors' (Wajcman, 2004:59). This differs from the notion of restoring community in the present day sense of the *remedial theme*, although both have in common the idea that the present Information Age is in imbalance, hence the need to claim or reclaim time, space, materiality, and community and, by association, irrationality (cf. Hancock & Tyler, 2001:213):

We have these mad Thursday night outings where we would go to the local shopping centre and buy things.... we used to go around to each other['s] house every Monday night, cooking a meal, drink champagnes, watch TV and hopefully knit....a great way to go out and meet other people and have the same sort of community feeling or group feeling that we are all

doing a project together or something....I usually get home and [phone] my mother and say I learned this and I learned that which is really cool....It gives something for Mum and I to talk about, like in a way I think it has brought us a bit closer....[I am] letting her know when it comes to craft I am not completely useless (Sales coordinator, aged 33).

For example, some young women appear to be claiming place and affiliation at a local level when they meet in *Jazz and Knitting* or *Stitch'nBitch* nights in pubs and clubs around the Australian cities and in regional areas (Stitch'nBitch Melbourne 2004; Knitting in Public, 2004).

Further, Luckman is critical of the concentration of focus on young women Cyber-feminists. She reports that recent surveys have shown that the group taking up technology in greater numbers is the over 55s. This age group is believed to be feeling 'retirement boredom'. Luckman believes that more women of this age bracket and the rest of baby boomers need to engage with technology to broaden the debate.

While we are personally sympathetic to such calls for greater inclusion, we are also conscious of not dismissing the youth and wealth that appears to typify the Cybergrrrls (Everett, 2004) of *Stitch'nBitch* groups. In the sassiness of this youth, we wonder whether the earnestness of the previous *remedial*, *progressive*, *resistance* and *nostalgic* theme are even relevant. For these women have grown up in the Information Age and have nothing to compare it with; they may be neither trying to remedy its effects nor create a new way, sew up a new society. They may have little to resist, for they are able to move freely between home, work and third place, bringing knitting from the hearth to the pub and contacting each other via the Internet in between their meetings. We suggest that theirs may be a playful, ironic comment and an unbundling/re-forming or even implosion (Baudrillard, 1993) of traditional associations and differentiations between time, place and gender rather than an earnest expression of a strongly-held desire for innovation, restoration or resistance. Rather than nostalgia for what was lost, *Stitch'nBitchers* may be expressing melancholy for what was never had, but with recognition that they would never have wanted the lives associated with trousseaux being kept busy with knitting in the first place. Accordingly, we suggest a final, *ironic theme* where the desire for a return to a past is parodied and presented as melancholic; a simulacrum of a past that was never had rather than one to be re-created.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In future research, it will be important to explore these themes further, and to examine the extent to which they are distinct or overlap. For example, we have maintained that there is a distinction in emphasis between the remedial and nostalgic themes but it will be important to address this further in more detailed qualitative work, including research with older age groups. In this paper, and due to space constraints, we have concentrated on individual reasons for knitting at the expense of analysis of the dynamics within the *Stitch'nBitch* groups and others' views of those groups, and we suggest that both of these are worthy of further research.

Further, the themes, remedial, progressive, resistance, nostalgia and irony, may be expressed in the objects knitted, and it is important to distinguish knitting for others from knitting for one's self. In researching this paper we investigated several knitting blogs and talked to the owners of two yarn retailers. The storeowners reported, with some pleasure, that in the last few years, many young girls had moved from basic knitting such as simple scarves to more challenging projects. By challenging they were referring to technical rather than aesthetic challenges. Blogs routinely contain pictures and information on current knitting projects (Wei 2004). These on-line diaries revealed a much richer and creative environment for knitters. Projects ranged from the very popular multi coloured socks, hats, scarves and mittens to original and provocative pieces such as knitted wombs (Carroll, 2006), assorted penises, turkey shaped tote bags, death masks, cup cakes, bridal party gowns and wedding cakes, cd wallets and mobile phone/iPod covers<sup>2</sup>, reproduction sweaters and Victorian tea cosies. Perhaps it is here rather than in interview data that the irony theme is most evident, for knitted objects are also identity statements, and the role of knitting in the making up of identity also deserves attention. As stated by one of our interviewees:

My first project to make is a laptop bag and the coloured wool that I choose expresses who I am, like my favour[ite] colours like black, grey and dark purple and dark colours....it is part of who I am (Sales, coordinator, age 33).

We look forward to further research in this area, which allows for a consideration of organisation and change beyond that of traditional organisation development.

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<sup>2</sup> We expect to see a marked increase in these as Craft Victoria's June 2006 scarf exhibition was titled *Pod*.

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