



Who can we be? Weaving and untangling through craft and creativity on a doctoral journey

Cynthia Kinnunen, MA
Doctoral candidate
Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada
Junior Research Fellow
Laurier Centre for Music in the Community



“I am being worked on as much as I'm doing the work.”

-Robert Romanyshyn, The Wounded Researcher: Research with Soul in Mind (2020)

“There is a sort of dance of knowledge, a weaving and unravelling of what I understand and do not ... moving from clarity to blurred focus and then a reconstructing and reattaching, re-stitching”

Creativity over time and process

- Creativity as reflexive practice
- Creativity as data creation and co-creation
- Creativity as knowledge dissemination



Where it began...

- Midlife doctoral studies alongside practice
(Bachman, 1992; Heinrich, 2000; Stone, 2001; Wendover, 2006, Thomas et al., 2023)
- Crochet project: embodied, expressive, reflexive, well-being
(Sjöberg & Porko-Hudd, 2019; Pöllänen, 2015; Corkhill et al., 2014)
- Documenting a journey through creative practice
(Leavy, 2020; Kara, 2020)
- Multi-modal, iterative, living inquiry
(Irwin et al., 2018; LeBlanc et al, 2024)



- **Autoethnography, reflexivity**

(Etherington, 2004; Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Holmes, 2020; Adams & Herrmann, 2023)

- **Midlife, transitions**

(Bridges & Bridges, 2019; Feiler, 2020; Infurna et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2023)

- **Arts-based research and embodied practice**

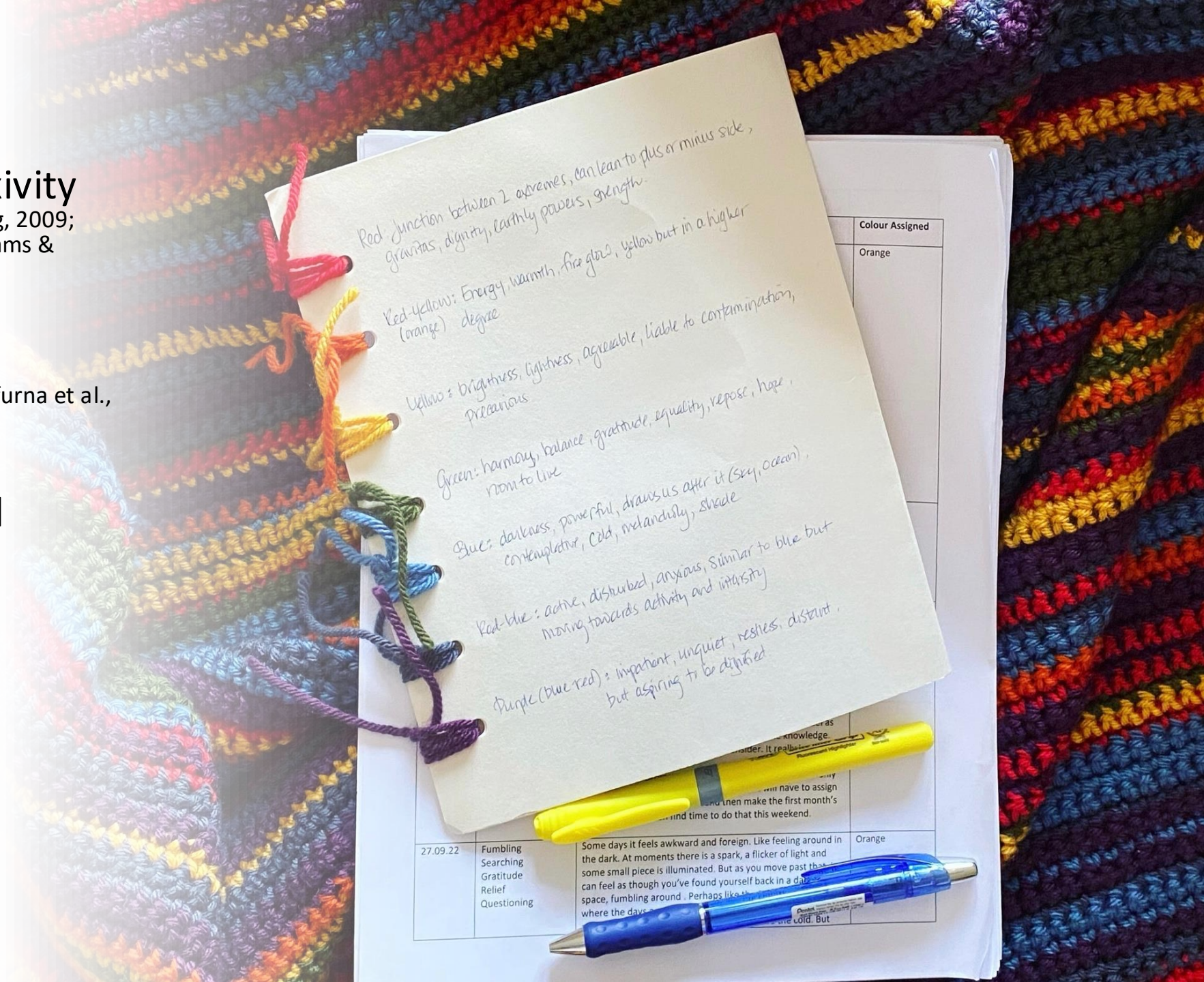
(Leavy, 2015; Kara, 2020; Reitsma, 2022)

- **Thematic analysis**

(Braun & Clark, 2021, Seldaña, 2021)

- **A/r/tography**

(Springgay et al., 2005; Irwin et al., 2018)



- How does it feel to be a middle-aged woman returning to higher education?
- How does it feel to be a remote student?
- How does this relate to my own work as a student, as an emerging researcher, as a practitioner?
- How and where do I find community?

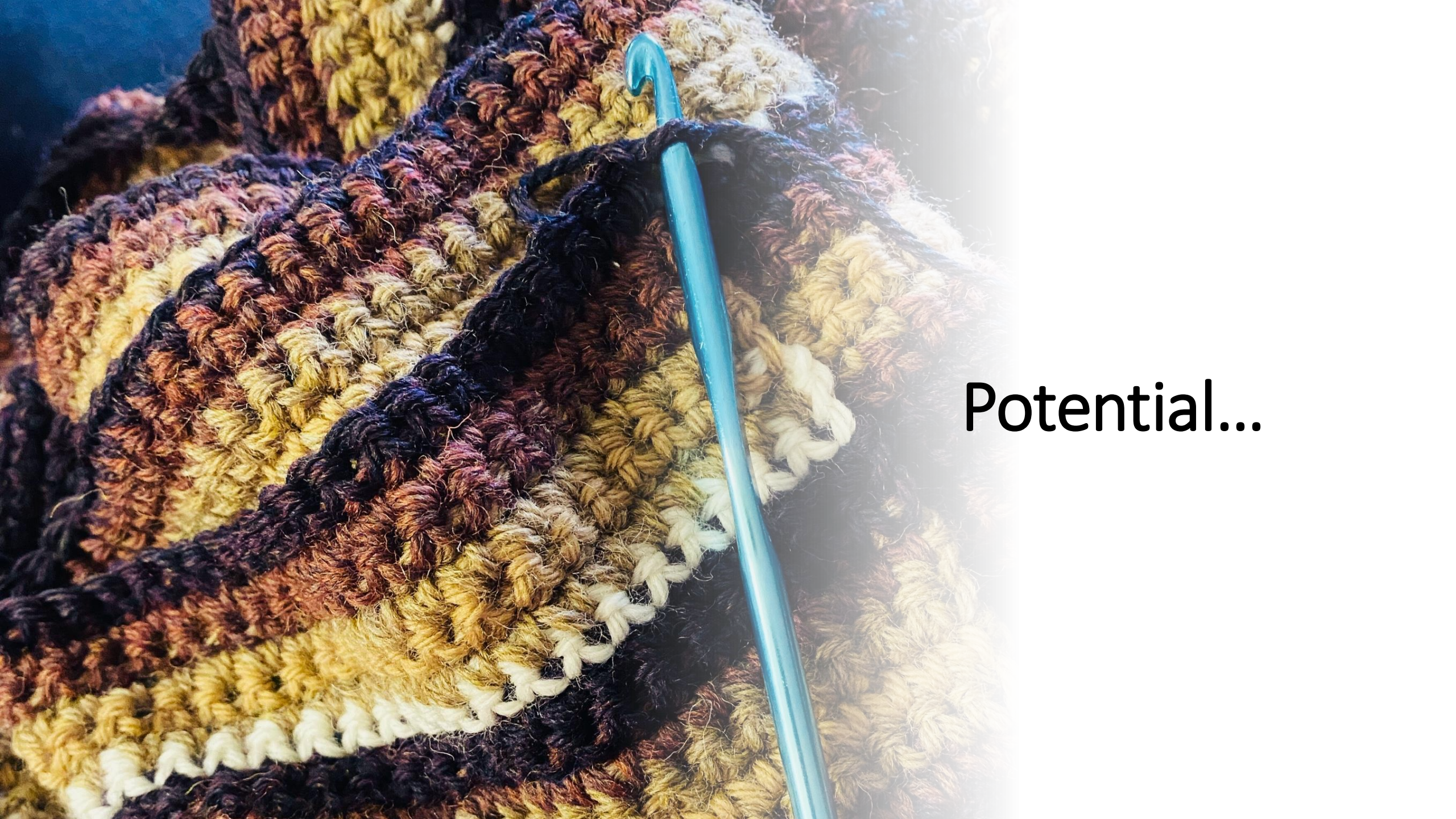


Data

Year One (Prep)

- Daily journal and meta-notes: 26,144 words
- Daily keywords: 347
- Crocheted blanket
- Music
- Poem





Potential...

Year Two

(1st in-person PhD Year)

- Daily journal and meta-notes: 33,984 words
- Daily keywords/phrases: 1,047
- Crocheted blanket
- Music
- Poetry

self-compassionate, peaceful, contemplative, grounded, grateful, connected, balanced

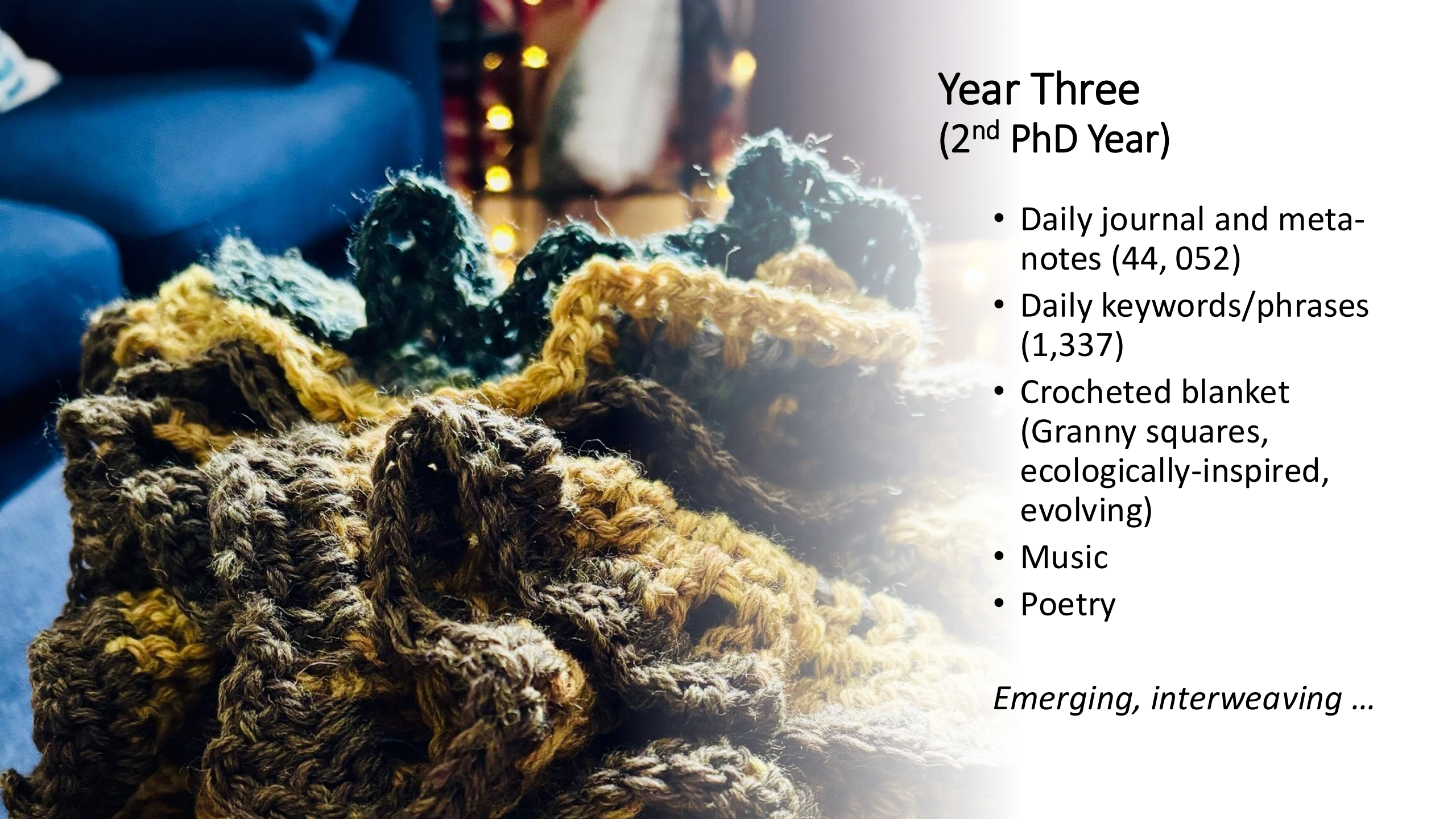
optimistic, hopeful, aspirational, wonder, engaged, excited, courageous

accomplished, satisfied, creative, curious, focused, productive, interested

meandering, tired, searching, stretching, questioning, wandering, foggy, open

struggling, fearful, vulnerable, worried, insecure, uneasy, uncertain, uncomfortable, tense, doubtful

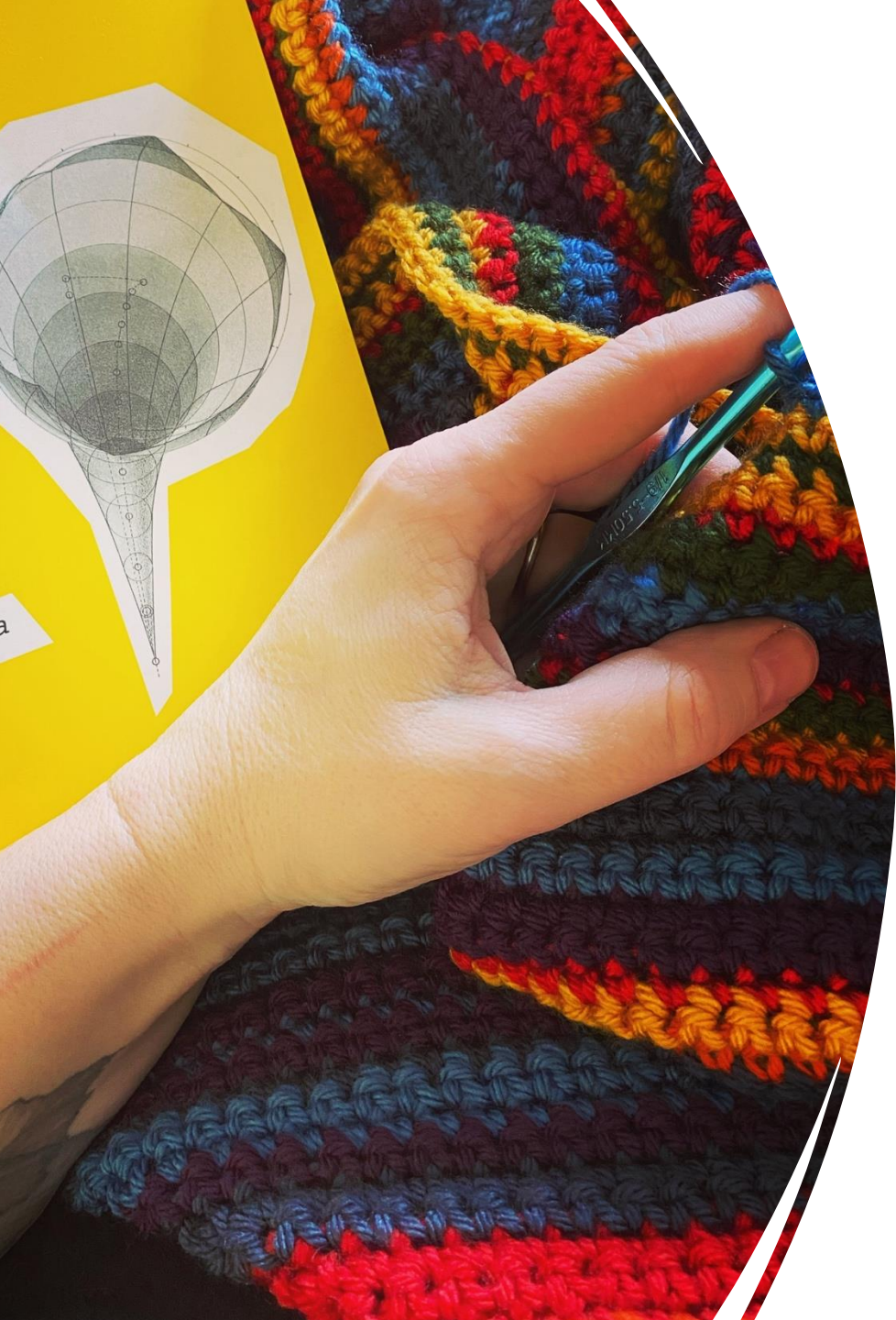
resigned, helpless, frustrated, overwhelmed, negative, stuck, disheartened, pressured, melancholic



Year Three (2nd PhD Year)

- Daily journal and meta-notes (44, 052)
- Daily keywords/phrases (1,337)
- Crocheted blanket (Granny squares, ecologically-inspired, evolving)
- Music
- Poetry

Emerging, interweaving ...



Early findings

- Vulnerability and uncertainty
- Belonging and (dis)connectedness
- Transitions and identities
- Optimism and reflexive practice
- Ritual and reflection

Kinnunen, C. (2024). [Weaving and untangling identities: exploration of a midlife journey as a practitioner-researcher-student](#). *Transform: New Voices in Community Music*. York St. John. 122-139.

Ritual and reflection

- Importance of ritual
- Care, contemplation
 - Weaving ends
 - Control, grip
 - Weight, carrying





Multimodal stages

- Unfinished, iterative
- Multiplicities of meanings
- Edges (where do we end?)
 - Temporal
 - Technological
 - Tactile
 - Meaning-making

Creativity over time and process

- Creativity as reflexive practice
- Creativity as data creation and co-creation
- Creativity as knowledge dissemination



Moving
forward

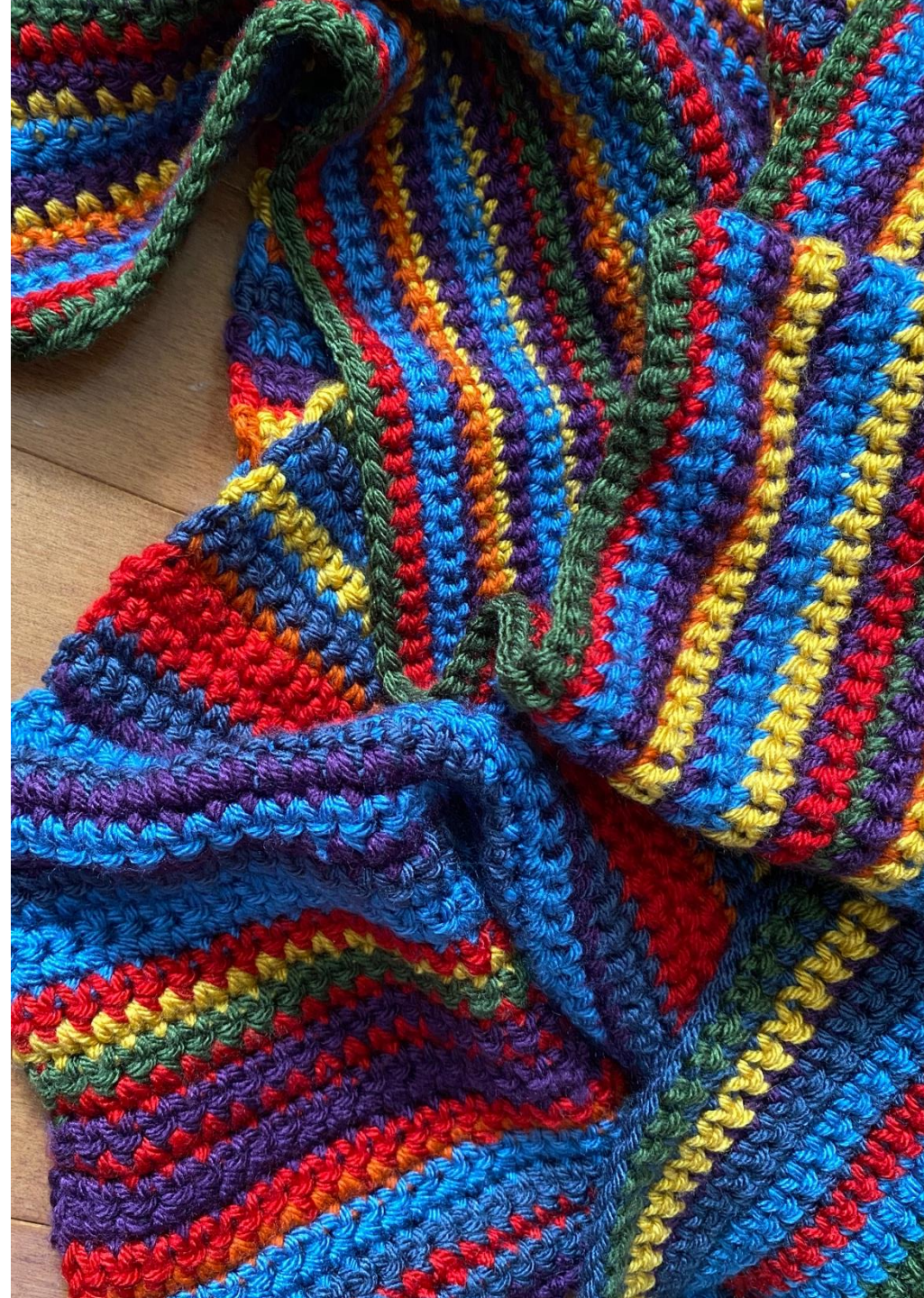


unravelling the edge of me

**Poem and musical clip published in [unpsychology magazine, issue 10 \(Edges\)](#)*

vibration, fibre, colour, marrow ... where do they intersect?
in a temporal space that becomes an amalgam of a year
an aging and an emerging
a liminal calendar across planes
seen, felt, contemplated but still changing even after, always
where does this time end?
where do I end?

between the struggle to weave these impossible emotions
together
to accept the reality of what was
and its presence in what still is



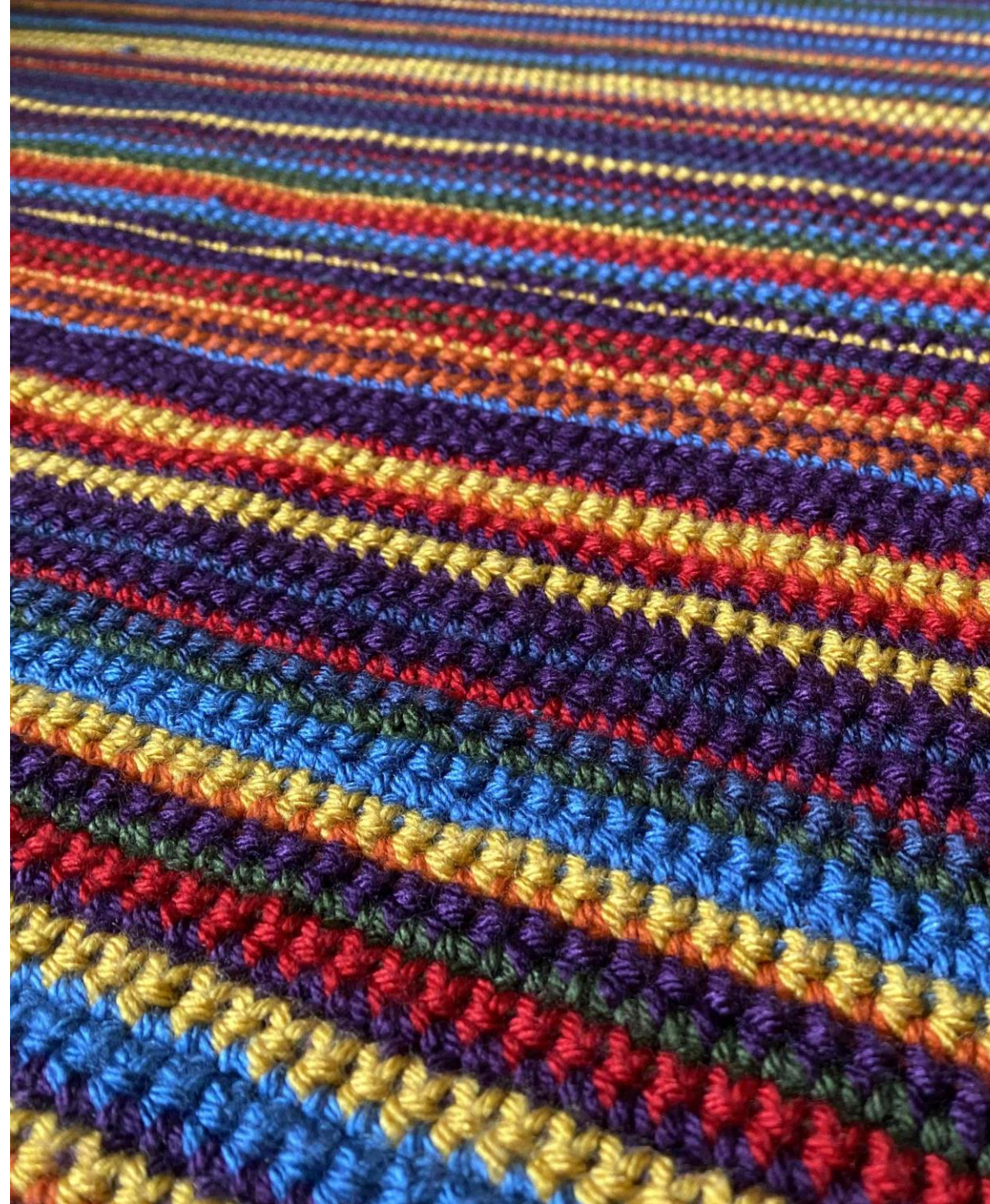
distant insecurities invoke shade and shadow
hooked and pulled forth across time and essence
bold tones, chosen with optimism
indicators of hope in uncomfortable spaces
over distances of geography
of day
of thought
of urges to connect and be seen
they sit exposed
revealing their frustrating splay, damn them

denying
defying
not willing to be told
they hold each other but can't fully commit
their kinship perceived either fraying or clinging
active
impatient



every line,
every hue an edge
simultaneously gripping and letting go
curling and singing,
with the openness of an octave or two
can harmony be here? can it cooperate?
might the timbre
of aging sound and body be present
and hold it all?
can a warmth, a fire glow even
weave itself in
and find residence ... resonance?

midlife makes moves we could never expect
and so we still hold tight to threads and tones
and tendrils
the possibility of one moment and all moments
in us and wherever we may end.





unravelling weave and disconnect

STITCH

Slow arpeggiated stitch beat

WEIGHT/GROUNDING

Synth bass

CONNECT/DISCONNECT/REACHING

Glitch vocals

IDENTITY/WAYFINDING

'Ukulele play and weave





References

- Bochner, A., & Ellis, C. (2016).** *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories*. Routledge.
- Bridges, W., & Bridges, S. (2019).** *Transitions: Making sense of life's changes*. Hachette UK.
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2021).** Thematic analysis: a practical guide.
- Corkhill, B., Hemmings, J., Maddock, A., & Riley, J. (2014).** Knitting and well-being. *Textile*, 12(1), 34-57.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009).** The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Creech, A., Varvarigou, M., & Hallam, S. (2020).** Contexts for music learning and participation: Developing and sustaining musical possible selves. *Springer Nature*.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011).** Autoethnography: an overview. *Historical social research/Historische sozialforschung*, 273-290.
- Feiler, B. (2021).** *Life is in the transitions: Mastering change at any age*. Penguin.
- Heinrich, K. T. (2000).** The passionate scholar: A mid-life, woman doctoral student's quest for voice. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 13(1), 63-83.
- Hydock, R. R. (2005).** *Women seeking the doctorate after age 45: A phenomenological study of late midlife development in women* (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University).
- Irwin, R. L., LeBlanc, N., Ryu, J. Y., & Belliveau, G. (2018).** A/r/tography as living inquiry. *Handbook of arts-based research*, 37-53.
- Kara, H. (2020).** *Creative research methods: A practical guide*. Policy Press.
- Kinnunen, C. (2024).** Weaving and untangling identities: exploration of a midlife journey as a practitioner-researcher-student. *Transform: New Voices in Community Music*. York St. John. 122-139.
- Leavy, P. (2020).** *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. Guilford publications.



LeBlanc, N., Davidson, S. F., Ryu, J., & Irwin, R. L. (2024). Becoming through a/r/tography, autobiography and stories in motion1. *International Journal of education through art*, 20(1), 69-89.

Niehaus, E., Garcia, C., Reading, J., 2018. The road to researcher: The development of research self-efficacy in Higher Education scholars. *Journal for the Study of Postsecondary and Tertiary Education*, 3, pp.1–20.

Pöllänen, S. (2015). Elements of crafts that enhance well-being: Textile craft makers' descriptions of their leisure activity. *Journal of leisure research*, 47(1), 58-78.

Reitsma, L. (2022). Making Sense/zines: Reflecting on positionality. In *Pivot Conference 2021* (pp. 317-329). Design Research Society.

Romanyshyn, R. D. (2020). *The wounded researcher: Research with soul in mind*. Routledge.

Saldaña, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*.

Sjöberg, B., & Porko-Hudd, M. (2019). A life tangled in yarns—Leisure knitting for well-being. *Techne serien-Forskning i slöjdpedagogik och slöjdvetenskap*, 26(2), 49-66.

Stone, A. M. (2001). *Midlife women's narratives of self in a self-directed, distance, doctoral learning context: A constructivist approach*. Fielding Graduate Institute.

Turner, K. (2017). “The lines between us”: Exploring the identity of the community musician through an arts practice research approach. *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* 17(3). Grieg Academy Music Therapy Research Centre.

Wendover, W. E. (2006). *Roles negotiated and transitions navigated: Challenges and success strategies of midlife women in doctoral education programs*. University of Denver.

Wenger, E., 1998. Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems thinker*, 9(5), 2-3.

Westerlund, H., & Karlsen, S. (2016). Designing the rhythm for academic community life: Learning partnerships and collaboration in music education doctoral studies. In *Collaborative learning in higher music education* (pp. 87-99). Routledge.



Thank you!

Cynthia Kinnunen
Wilfrid Laurier University

kinn1410@mylaurier.ca