8. How does Sherry Turkle explain "bricolage" in "The Triumph of Tinkering"? What is its significance? How does "bricolage" apply to computer programming, your art practice? Explain soft and hard style programming.

<center>Everyone Can Triumph as a Tinkerer</center>

When Sherry Turkle defined the word "bricolage" in *Life on the Screen*, she was giving a name to something rather nameless for most people. Bricolage explains not only hard and soft styles of programming but its potential as learning and teaching style through simulation. Over the course of this semester, I recognized the personal importance bricolage has for my practice.

Turkle compares the hard style of teaching programming to how her French teacher expected her to write essays. Structured programming "is rule-driven and relies on to-down planning" (Turkle 51) where a master plan is devised where what the program does is first defined. Each task is then broken down into sub procedures which are named and "closed off" (Turkle 51). This was the accepted method for programming for many years. The main advantage was that code was easily debugged and understood if the programmer left the company.

The opposite style "soft mastery" (56) which Turkle is naturally drawn to, and also feels most women are drawn to, is where we find her definition of *bricolage*. *Bricoleurs* practice learning by synthesizing the "materials at hand" and learn by rearranging and reconsidering solutions until the right one is reached (Turkle 51). This is a bottom up approach where "playing with the elements of a program" which dispenses with the

more analytical hard style (Turkle 51). Soft-style programmers often found themselves at a disadvantage because they couldn't "learn about how things work by interacting with them" (Turkle 52) or found frustration with prepackaged programming and an insistence on planning that stifled creativity, as in the case of a student named Lisa that Turkle profiles (53). Nowadays, with the popularity of simulations and the acceptance of soft mastery, programming is becoming more and more open to all types of learners and styles where everyone can find success. The message is now "Play with me, experiment with me, there is no one correct path" (Turkle 60). Users can now learn programming through "playful exploration" with drag and drop environments where "programming skills are not required" (Turkle 61).

Bricolage is a natural learning style for a lefty such as myself who navigates a world for right handed people. It means learning to trust in one's natural movements and not force right handed ways of doing and being on oneself. It means making a lot of mistakes to get along in a backwards world. The more I learned about *bricolage* from Turkle, the more of it I saw in myself, especially as I had no formal training in computer programming. How amazing that this style of learning had a name!

I settled on a Fibre major in fall 2012 as textiles offered the most flexibility and opportunity for the artistic experience and outlets I was seeking. Fibre offered the most choice for 2D and 3D representations. It also comes pre-loaded with symbols and thoughts on gender and gender roles, just like how different textiles will inform line, value and textures. *Bricoleurs* solve problems "by entering into a relationship with their work materials that has more the flavor of a conversation than a monologue" (Turkle

51). The conversation in my head is reflected in the series of multiple conversations that occur in creating a fibre project. The materials all have their unique voices – stretchy, noisy, slinky, grainy – that work in concert with my head and hands.

Weaving, tapestry and knitting machines hold a particular attraction for me as one can "program" a loom or create a pattern. For example, a pattern is a program with a set of instructions and symbols, for embroidery and needlework. There is a natural kinship between programming and textiles, where software can aid the design steps and placement of motifs.

The term *bricoleur* has enough artistic appeal to help me shape my future practice and write about my work and concepts in an informed and personal way. I look forward to experimenting to see what happens with different materials and techniques, learning through making mistakes and playfully exploring the world of textiles.

Works Cited

Turkle, Sherry. "The Triumph of Tinkering." *Life on the Screen.* New York: Touchstone
    Books. 1997. 50-73.