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Women's Perceptions of Flourishing Through Quilting as a Leisure Activity

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Abstract

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by

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MA, Simpson University

BA, California State University, San Bernardino

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Quilting is a self-chosen leisure activity for millions of women in the United States. Previous research on quilting suggested that quilting is influenced by the emotional state of the quilter. However, the emotional experiences generated during quilting have not been fully explored. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore quilters' perceptions of what quilting as a leisure activity does to enhance their well-being and increase flourishing. Positive psychology well-being theory was the theoretical foundation for the study. Semistructured interviews with 12 adult women who quilt as a leisure activity were the basis of the narrative inquiry. Data were recorded through in-person and telephone interviews that were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis to develop overarching themes. Findings revealed that quilting contributed to participants' well-being and built flourishing through three primary avenues: creativity, relationships, and positive emotion. Quilting provided an opportunity for creative expression and growth as artists. Quilt-making activity was centered around relationships with other quilters and with the larger community, and quilting was linked with positive emotion as participants experienced great joy in their quilting activities. This study has implications for increasing well-being and building flourishing in women through the adoption of quilting as a leisure activity.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. First, to my mom, Nancy Lee Robinson, who taught me to read and taught me to sew. When I started writing my dissertation, she became my first reader and she has always been my greatest cheerleader. Mama, you taught me to say “I love you” and for that I am forever grateful.

To Dan, the love of my life, and a man of gold. Thank you for always shoring me up, and for the late-night wordsmithing sessions. Iron sharpens iron, and having you walk this path with me has made me a better person. To my daughters, Beccy, Amy, and Hannah, your encouragement that I could do this meant the world to me. I love you more than life itself.

And to my dad, Tom Halley, who never fails to tell me know how proud of me he is. The respect is mutual, Dad.

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To the participants, thank you for sharing your quilts and your stories with me. You are creativity, warmth, and inspiration embodied.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Quilting has been viewed as women's work and has been considered an acceptable way for women to express their creativity and political views (Berlo, Crews, Ducey, Holstein, & James, 2003). Quilting is an area of creative work rich in tradition, with patterns and techniques passed down through generations and from one quilter to another (Halbert, 2009). Previous research on emotions and creativity has suggested that creativity is influenced by emotional states (Conner, DeYoung, & Silvia, 2016); less well understood is what emotional states emerge during creative activity. Similarly, previous research on quilting has suggested that quilting is influenced by the emotional state of the quilter: depression (Grace, Gandalfo, & Candy, 2009; Reynolds, 2000), grief (Carocci, 2010; Jones, 2007; Krone & Horner, 1993), anger (Collier & Karolyi, 2014), emptiness (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Wall & Stasz, 2010), and loss of perceived control (Dickie, 2011; Keating, 2008; Reynolds, Vivat, & Prior, 2008). However, the emotional experiences generated during quilting have not been fully explored (Howell & Pierce, 2000; Tepper et al., 2014). This study addressed how adult women who quilt related the activity of quilting to their well-being and flourishing. In positive psychology well-being theory, flourishing is described as the gold standard of well-being (Seligman, 2011). Research on women's perceptions of their emotional experiences related to quilting may broaden the current understanding of self-chosen leisure activities in which women participate to increase well-being and build flourishing.

In examples of emotions driving creativity, quilters have expressed in quilts their thoughts and feelings about the devastation, grief, and loss of security after the terrorist

attacks on America on September 11, 2001. Women made quilts to express their feelings of vulnerability and loss after wildfires ravaged their neighborhoods in southern California in 2015, or to express their anger and fear over a cancer diagnosis or their feelings of grief and loss after a miscarriage (Quilt Alliance, 2016). The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was designed in response to the lack of government action on AIDS research (Jones, 2007; Yep, 2007). Although originally created to make a political statement, the AIDS Memorial Quilt also fulfilled the role of a mourning or memorial quilt. The AIDS Quilt project provided people with a physical space (a 3-foot by 6-foot quilt panel) in which to memorialize and celebrate the life of someone who died from AIDS. A community formed among the makers of the commemorative panels and provided an emotional space where they could share what was then considered the unacceptable grief of losing a loved one to AIDS. Research published on the AIDS Memorial Quilt does not tell us how the quilters related their quilting experience to their emotions.

This chapter includes the background of this study, the problem and purpose statements, and significance of this study. The research questions and theoretical framework are presented, followed by a discussion of the nature of the study, definition of terms germane to this study, and a discussion of the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations of this study.

Background

For centuries, quilting has been considered women's domain. Young women learned the skills and techniques passed down from their mothers and grandmothers

(Arthur, 2002). As a women's craft, quilting has contributed to the homes of quilters with covers for beds and art for the walls. Quilters can be found in all age groups, starting from around 10 years of age and extending upward into their 80s or older. From the Quilting in America 2014 survey, a dedicated quilter was defined as a person who spent upwards of $500 a year on quilt-related purchases, including sewing machines, fabric, notions, tools, patterns, books, computer programs, batting, and thread (Creative Crafts Group, 2014). A revival in quilt making began in the 1970s in the United States, and that movement continues to this day. In 2014, reported quilt-related spending by quilters in the United States reached $3.76 billion a year, up 5% from 2010 (Creative Crafts Group, 2014). There are more than 16 million active quilters in the United States, meaning 5% of Americans quilt. Most dedicated quilters create their quilts in a studio or room devoted solely to sewing and quilting activities. On a global scale, tens of thousands of quilts are being made by individuals and organizations around the world for purposes of health advocacy, health and well-being, health education, fundraising for medical research, and memorials to those who have succumbed to illnesses (MacDowell, Sikarskie, Worrall, & Richardson, 2011).

Quiltmakers ply their craft for many reasons. Some women identify friendship among quilters as the most compelling reason they quilt (Piercy & Cheek, 2004). Some make quilts to keep their minds and hands active (Dickie, 2011). Creating a quilt, something of lasting significance, illustrates Erikson's concept of generativity—doing something that benefits those who come after us (Cheek & Piercy, 2008). Quilters create quilts for wounded veterans, preterm babies, and children removed from their homes.

Local quilting groups supply quilts for Child Protective Services to have with them when children are removed from their homes. The children are allowed to keep these quilts as they move on to new homes. For others, quilt making is a full time occupation—the way they make their living. There are numerous professional opportunities in the field for those who teach quilt classes, workshops, and retreats; those who are commissioned to make quilts for others; and those who quilt, by hand or machine, the creations of other quiltmakers. For others, quilting is primarily a means of self-expression. Quilters create quilts in recognition of birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries. Giving from the heart in celebration is an act of gratitude, and gratitude increases happiness, which is a component of well-being (Schueller & Seligman, 2010). Quilters create the softest of quilts to celebrate the birth of a new baby, acknowledging the cycle of life and all the hopes and possibilities born with the new child. These activities increase well-being and build flourishing of the broader community. What has not been studied is how women who quilt relate their participation in quilting to building flourishing in their lives (McWhirter, Nelson, & Waldo, 2014; Tepper et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

Predominant research in psychology on the association between creativity and emotional functioning has focused on how creativity is fueled or stymied by emotional states. Creativity has been associated with negative states like madness or sadness (Conner et al., 2016), yet research has also shown that creativity stems from a place of positivity for most people (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Le, Cropley, & Gleaves, 2015). Although previous research suggested that creativity could be influenced by emotional

states and that generic creative activity could influence positive affect and flourishing in college students, the effect of creativity on emotional well-being is less well understood (Conner et al., 2016). It is not clear how specific creative activity such as quilting can influence well-being and build flourishing in students or any other population.

Quilting falls within the textile handcrafting and art-making realms. Researchers have found that art-making may enhance the lives of women experiencing bereavement (Isis, 2004), breast cancer (Öster, Magnusson, Thyme, Lindh, & Åström, 2007; Reynolds & Lim, 2007), mental illness (Reynolds, 2000; Van Lith, Fenner, & Schofield, 2011), or chronic illness and disability (Reynolds & Prior, 2003; Reynolds, Vivat, & Prior, 2011). The broad range of applications that quilting has suggests that there are numerous therapeutic advantages to its performance. Quilting communities are often available in rural areas that lack access to mental health services, and can function as a significant part of a woman's support system when other resources are unavailable (Kelly, Cudney, & Weinert, 2012). Occupational therapy research indicated that women used quilt making as therapy during everyday stress and also during times of exceptional stress (Dickie, 2011). The repetitive motion of quilting had a calming effect and provided space for contemplation. Krone and Horner (1993) examined quilting as a means of facilitating mourning and found that it was the "solitary creative process" (p. 123) of quilting that facilitated reflection and reminiscence in the bereaved.

Collier and Karolyi (2014) found that women textile handcrafters who used textile handcraft activities (knitting, sewing, quilting, spinning, or weaving) to help them cope when they were in a bad mood reported greater mood repair than did women who used

other activities (e.g., exercising, reading, spending time in nature, venting, religious activities, and resting). With most textile handcrafts, mood repair was reported to occur while participating in the activity, but not lasting beyond the time of participation. Quilting was one of the only handcraft activities that provided positive benefits (mood repair) after the activity was over. According to participant reports, improved mood lingered after quilting (Collier & Karolyi, 2014). It is known that quilting has the potential to positively affect mood. What is not known about quilting is how women who quilt perceive quilting's role in increasing well-being and building flourishing.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to explore how adult women who quilt related participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and flourishing. Narrative inquiry was used to explore this phenomenon. This research serves to broaden scientific literature on quilting as a self-chosen leisure activity and quilters' perceptions of the relationship between quilting and their own well-being and flourishing. The ability to flourish is defined as a person's ability to continue to grow through struggles as well as good times (Seligman, 2011).

Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of adult women who quilt as a leisure activity?

Research Question 2: How do adult women who quilt as a leisure activity relate participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and building flourishing?

Theoretical Framework

To illustrate quilting's relationship to the well-being of women who quilt, some researchers have used theoretical models that suggest a series of developmental stages (Cheek & Piercy, 2008). Others have chosen models of occupation (i.e., the physical activity of working with one's hands) to explain the benefits of quilting (Dickie, 2011; Reynolds, 2010). Numerous theoretical models of well-being have been used to shed light on the relationship between quilting and well-being (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). Based on the models of well-being used in previous studies (Burt & Atkinson, 2012), I decided to use the positive psychology well-being model developed by Seligman (2011).

Seligman's (2011) positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) model of well-being provided the theoretical framework for this study. According to Seligman, the goal of positive psychology in well-being theory is to measure and build human flourishing. In this model, Seligman defined five essential elements for experiencing lasting well-being: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The initials of these five elements form the acronym PERMA. The five essential elements are defined as follows:

1. Positive emotion (P): Positive emotion is a key component of well-being. Any positive emotion counts, with enjoyment in the moment as the goal. Art-making interventions have been found to reduce stress and anxiety (Bell & Robbins, 2007) and increase positive affect (Conner et al., 2016).
2. Engagement (E): Engagement is the act of being fully involved in a project, task, or situation. Engagement can be evidenced by experiencing a state of

flow, in which time seems to stop and focus is entirely in the present. Quilting is a creative activity, and creativity has been linked to flow states, which have positive effects on subsequent flourishing and happiness (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014).

3. Positive relationships (R): Meaningful positive relationships are essential to humans as social beings. Friendships with other quilters are the primary named reason some women quilt (Piercy & Cheek, 2004).
4. Meaning (M): Meaning comes from giving to others or bettering the human condition. Many quilters practice philanthropy, giving away their quilted creations to be auctioned off to raise money for causes they support.
5. Accomplishment/achievement (A): Accomplishment involves mastery or success, whether over one skill or a complete project. Creating quilts requires mastery of basic sewing abilities, and completing more intricate quilts requires more advanced skills.

Positive psychologists seek to discover things people are already doing that contribute to their well-being (Sheldon & King, 2001). Quilting is an activity that women are already doing on their own initiative. This study addressed women's perceptions of the influence of quilting on their well-being.

Nature of the Study

This qualitative investigation included a narrative methodology to explore women's perceptions of how quilting influenced their well-being and helped build flourishing. Semistructured interviews were conducted with female quilters over the age

of 18 to explore the lived experience of women who quilt as a leisure activity. Semistructured interviews with women who quilt for their enjoyment, not for income, were analyzed to explore their lived experiences of quilting.

I focused on how women used quilting to increase subjective well-being and build flourishing. The semistructured interview format allowed me to ask clarifying questions during the interviews, leading to greater depth of knowledge about the lived experiences of women quilters. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit adult women who quilt as a leisure activity. Using narrative inquiry, I explored the emotional experiences of quilting before, during, and after specific quilting experiences. Polkinghorne (1995) described narrative inquiry as "a sub-set of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action" (p. 5). Polkinghorne further divided this approach into the categories of narrative analysis and analysis of narratives. Narrative analysis is a method by which researchers "collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesize or configure them by means of a plot into a story or stories" (Polkinghorne,1995, p. 12). Narrative analysis is distinct from analysis of narratives, which involves the collection of stories by researchers who then sort the data into "themes that hold across a collection of stories" (Polkinghorne,1995, p. 12). Narrative analysis moves from elements to stories whereas analysis of narratives moves from stories to elements. I used the analysis of narratives method, sorting the collected stories into categories in the search for themes that held across the collected narratives.

To explore the quilting experience in more depth, I asked participants to bring a quilt or a photo of a quilt they made to the interview. In the event of a telephone

interview, the participant e-mailed photographs of a quilt or quilts she made to me prior to the interview. Quilted works were not be analyzed but were used to help the participants remember and relate the emotional experience of a specific quilting experience. Photo-elicitation interviews are an effective means of facilitating reflections that may otherwise remain unheard (Clark-IbáÑez 2004). Previous studies indicated that interview reflections were enriched by changing focus from creative activity in general to a more specific analysis of the making of selected pieces (Hunt, Truran, & Reynolds, 2016).

Data collection included audio recordings of all interviews, the corresponding transcripts, and photographs of quilts made by the participants. A professional transcription service was used to transcribe all interviews verbatim. After I verified the transcriptions and corrected any misidentified words, I used thematic analysis to determine themes of individual interviews and overarching themes revealed during the study (see Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014; Charmaz, 2006).

Definitions

To fully understand this study, it is important to understand the following terms:

Flourishing: Living within an optimal range of human functioning (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005).

Narrative: A particular type of discourse; “a storied narrative is the linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings, and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7).

Quilting: The stitches that hold the three layers of a quilt together. The term quilting can also encompass the whole of the quilt-making process. For the purpose of this dissertation, quilting refers to any portion of the quilt-making process, not only the actual quilting stitches. This includes selecting or designing a pattern, choosing fabrics, cutting and sewing the fabric, stitching the three layers together, embellishing the quilt with three-dimensional items (e.g. beads, ribbons, and buttons), meeting together with other quilters around the topic of quilting, and attending quilt exhibits.

Well-being: A combination of feeling good as well as having meaning, good relationships, and accomplishment (Seligman, 2011). Well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), satisfaction with life, fulfillment, and positive functioning.

Assumptions

One assumption of this study was that the interview questions were worded in a manner the participants could understand and accurately answer. Another assumption was that the interview responses would answer the research questions. A third assumption was that quilters' recall of their emotional experiences during quilting would be honest and would not be an account created for the purposes of this study. A fourth assumption was that quilters would be willing to take part in this study designed to broaden the understanding of how quilting relates to emotions. A final assumption was that none of the quilters in the study would be beholden to me in any way; there would be no conflict of interest between me and any of the study participants.

Scope and Delimitations

Although many men quilt, this study was limited to women. The experience of quilting may be different for men than women (Wall & Stasz, 2010); therefore, men were not included in this research. Women of all ages quilt, but the experience of quilting may be different for younger women than for older women (Stalp, 2006a). This study addressed the lived experience of quilters over the age of 18 living in the United States. Women who quilt may be involved in other textile handcrafting, but this study addressed their experience of quilting only and no other activities. The experience of quilting may be different for women who quilt professionally (to bring in income) than for women who quilt nonprofessionally (Stalp, 2006a); therefore, this study looked only at women who quilt as a leisure activity. Findings of narrative inquiry are specific to the research participants and are not typically generalizable to the broader human population.

Limitations of the Study

Because there were no men in the study, there would be no comparison of the perceptions of men and women regarding emotional responses related to quilting. Participants were located geographically within driving distance of my office in Northern California. The findings were limited to the women in the study and may not be generalizable to other populations or women from outside the geographical area of those interviewed. Although this was a narrative inquiry, the findings may not be applicable to quilters of previous or future time periods. I have been a quilter for over 30 years; although this provided me with insider status, it may have also biased my analyses of the content of the interviews. Themes were reviewed by my committee to mitigate any bias

or tendency for me to insert themes not found in the data or interpret meaning where there may be none.

Significance of the Study

Quilting has long been part of women's culture and has given voice to women where society has marginalized them. The quilting bee was a way of bringing women together and solidifying community (Hall & Kretsinger, 1947). More recently, quilting has been demonstrated to be a growing area of commerce and professional development. Larger groups of quiltmakers and practitioners have established evidence that quilting can provide group activities or recreation. There are some therapeutic benefits such as emotional connection and an environment for creative expression. There has been a longstanding history of women sharing the experience of quilting. Quilters form a community of women supporting each other and positive relations have been seen throughout quiltmakers in contemporary times (Stalp, 2006a).

Women today prioritize and honor their quilting time (Stalp, 2006b). More than simply women's work, quilting is homegrown therapy, or a type of indigenous healing (Roberts, 1998). Women quilt of their own volition. Quilting is something women have traditionally chosen as a means of enhancing their well-being. Many quilt makers understand that participation in quilting is central to their well-being (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). Recent research has linked quilting to mood repair (Collier & Karolyi, 2014). Quilting may be complementary to other medical or psychological treatment, and can be a valuable component of a women's support system, especially in rural areas with little

access to services (Kelly et al., 2012). To recognize this is to validate and empower the psychological work women do through quilting.

This study was significant because of the connection that it made with a traditional activity to actual therapeutic advantages or changes. I analyzed women's perceptions of their emotional experience of quilting to broaden the understanding of activities women choose to engage in to increase subjective well-being and build flourishing. The discussion of quilting and women's flourishing can change social interactions and create a new awareness and openness about emotions and efforts to maintain positive emotional dialogue.

The findings from this study may be of interest to many different groups, including scientific and clinical communities. A poster presentation of the research findings will be created for Walden University's semiannual symposium and publication will be sought in Walden journals. Findings may also be of interest to contemporary quilt makers and quilt historians. I will submit an article with the findings to *Uncoverings*, the official publication of the American Quilt Study Group (AQSG), and seek to present a paper at Seminar, the AQSG annual convention. Quilt-related trade journals will be contacted for publication of an article on the findings of the study. Speaking engagements at both professional and nonprofessional women's organizations will be sought with the goal of reaching a broader audience with the research findings

Summary

For the purposes of this study, I examined the literature on quilting, flourishing, and the narrative method of qualitative research. I interviewed women quilters over the

age of 18 to explore their lived experiences of quilting by using a semistructured interview technique and analyzed the data using thematic analysis. This study was an exploration of women's perceptions of the role of quilting in building flourishing. The next chapter includes the literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The merits of quilting as a means of increasing emotional well-being have not been adequately studied. The purpose of this research was to explore women's perceptions of what quilting as a leisure activity does to enhance their well-being and increase flourishing. Narrative inquiry was the philosophical method of inquiry best suited to explore this phenomenon. In this chapter, I discuss the literature search strategy; the theoretical framework; and previous research on quilting, including the social side of quilting; quilting as identity development; quilting and creativity; quilting and health; the creative arts as therapy; quilts as important cultural artifacts; quilters as memory keepers; and quilting and well-being.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted primarily within the Walden University library databases. The databases searched included PsycINFO, Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, SocINDEX, CINAHL, MEDLINE, and PubMed. To extend the search beyond psychology, medical, or social sciences databases, I used ProjectMUSE, a database focusing on the arts, folklore, and social sciences. Search terms included *quilt*, *creativity*, *self-expression*, *coping*, *well-being*, *flourish*, and *narrative*. The reference sections in articles found in the database searches were helpful for locating further information. The search was later extended to particular authors by name: Seligman, Reynolds, Collier, and Dickie.

Although the database searches generated a large number of articles, there were very few recent articles about quilting. Because of the dearth of academic literature on

quilting in the databases, I conducted an Internet search on *quilt and research*, which led me to the following sources of scholarly research specific to quilting:

1. *Uncoverings* is the biannual compilation of quilt research published by the AQSG, one of the premier organizations in the United States for quilt-related research. In addition to online searches of their publications, I met with quilt researchers at the AQSG Annual Convention and at the International Quilt Study Center and Museum, which is affiliated with the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. These meetings expanded my knowledge of historical and current quilt research.
2. The Quilt Index is a virtual repository of quilts and quilt-related documents and ephemera. This publicly accessible online database is fully searchable and contains quilt information from around the world, making it a valuable tool for quilt research and education. The Quilt Index is affiliated with Michigan State University (MacDowell, Sikarskie, Worrall, & Richardson,. (2011).

Theoretical Framework

Psychology has traditionally been studied through the lens of the medical model by which patients are diagnosed with an illness (or mental illness) and treated accordingly. In the medical model, health is viewed as the absence or lessening of illness. Conversely, researchers in the field of positive psychology have begun to look at what keeps individuals healthy versus what makes them sick (Seligman, 2011). Positive psychologists strive to discover what it is people are already doing that makes their lives good and contributes to their well-being (Sheldon & King, 2001), “so the goal of positive

psychology in well-being theory is to measure and to build human flourishing" (Seligman, 2011, p. 29), with *human flourishing* defined as living within an optimal range of human functioning (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Flourishing can also be described as the state of growing and thriving, and is considered the gold standard for measuring well-being (Seligman, 2011).

Previous well-being theories focused on happiness and life satisfaction through three components: positive emotion, engagement, and meaning. Studies indicated that people in cheerier moods reported higher levels of life satisfaction; in application, current level of happiness weighed heavily into the reports of life satisfaction, making it seem as if life satisfaction was mood-dependent (Seligman, 2011). Seligman (2011) began to question the assumption of happiness as the ultimate human goal and expanded the theory of well-being to include two additional components: (a) doing something for the sake of doing it well, or accomplishment for accomplishment's sake; and (b) positive relationships with other people. Seligman incorporated these two components along with the three happiness components in the PERMA theory of well-being.

PERMA Theory of Well-Being

Seligman's PERMA theory of well-being was the theoretical framework for this study. The five components of Seligman's well-being theory are positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The components form the acronym PERMA, and this theory was developed as a guide to help individuals find paths to flourishing.

The five elements of PERMA are the following:

1. Positive emotion (P): Positive emotion is a key component of well-being, with Fredrickson and Losada (2009) suggesting a mean ratio of 2.9 positive to negative affect as a threshold for flourishing. Individuals classified as flourishing experienced an average of 3 positive emotions to every 1 negative emotion over a month's time. Instances of positive affect can be deliberately increased through participation in creative activity (Conner et al., 2016).

2. Engagement (E): Engagement is the act of being fully involved in a situation, task, or project. In research on artists and musicians, Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990) studied those who found pleasure and lasting satisfaction in activities that brought about a state of flow in which the person was completely immersed in an activity with intense focus and creative engagement. Seemingly more important than the finished work was the act of creating. Quilting is also a creative activity and the work itself may be more valuable to the maker than the finished product.

3. Positive relationships (R): Meaningful positive relationships are essential to humans as social beings. Not all relationships are positive, but research has shown that people who have meaningful, positive relationships with others are happier than those who do not (Roffey, 2012). Positive relationships are a support network nurtured through giving and receiving. Friendships with other quilters are the primary named reason some women quilt (Piercy & Cheek, 2004).

4. Meaning (M): Meaning comes from deploying strengths in the service of something larger than self. Experiencing the meaningful life may be different than experiencing the happy life. Baumeister, Vohs, Aaker, and Garbinsky (2013) found that

happiness was largely present oriented, whereas meaningfulness involved integrating past, present, and future. Altruism, or concern for the welfare of others, is common among quilters, many of whom donate quilts to those in need or to be auctioned off to raise money for causes they support.

5. Accomplishment/achievement (A): Accomplishment involves mastering a new skill or completing a project. Quilters take workshops to broaden their skill sets or to improve skills they already possess. Completing a quilt comes with its own reward for accomplishment of a multistep project.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Quilting

Quilt makers have turned to their craft for solace in times of mourning, for celebration in times of joy, and for the many benefits of community with other quilt makers. Quilting has a longstanding presence in culture as a hobby and form of expression. Quilting communities are often available in rural areas that lack access to mental health services (Kelly et al., 2012). Many older women quilt instead of seeking formal psychological services (Howse, Ebrahim, & Gooberman-Hill, 2004). There may be women who will not participate in formal therapy but will participate in quilting. If quilting can help them heal or reestablish equilibrium, then quilting is a valuable intervention or therapy. Quilting and the community formed around it can be a significant part of a woman's support system, and may function as complementary therapy (Kelly et al., 2012). A treating therapist or medical practitioner could suggest quilting as a complement to traditional therapy.

Volunteering is highly correlated with improvements in quality of life (Cattan, Hogg, & Hardill, 2011). Quilters volunteer time and materials to create quilts for wounded veterans, preterm babies, and children removed from their homes. Quilters create quilts in recognition of birthdays, graduations, and anniversaries. Quilters create the softest of quilts to celebrate the birth of a new baby, acknowledging the cycle of life and the limitless possibility inherent in new birth. Giving from the heart in celebration is an act of gratitude and gratitude increases happiness, which is a positive emotion (Emmons, 2007). All of these contribute to the building of community in which the connection between quilters branches out to their circles of influence.

Quilting provides an opportunity to move forward on the continuum of well-being. Quilting may serve as a liminal space for women who want not only to manage their lives but also to flourish. Instead of providing a transition from significant mental illness to a modicum of well-being, the use of quilting illustrates a transition from moderate well-being to flourishing. Finding what people already do that creates well-being is foundational to Seligman's theory of well-being (Seligman, 2011).

Social Side of Quilting

Quilt makers ply their craft for many reasons. Some find the friendships they make with other quilters to be the paramount reason why they continue to quilt (Piercy & Cheek, 2004). Quality relationships play a crucial role in flourishing. Quilting seems to enhance time spent with other quilters. During quilting sessions, people can make friends, laugh, and chat because it is an open environment to be expressive and vent about

personal life. Quilting leads to the creation of supportive social capital, especially for elderly quilters. Supportive friendships are crucial to well-being (Piercy & Cheek, 2004).

Socializing while crafting, such as with a knitting group or quilting circle, boosts overall satisfaction and happiness (Dickie, 2011). Most quilters quilt alone, while some quilt with others in group settings. Individuals who are experienced with quilting are likely to form strong friendships with other quilters. It is important for quilters to create supportive groups that enhance friendship. Through friendship and support groups, quilters can share ideas and skills concerning quilting. Research indicated that for some people, parts of the quilting experience can be tedious and not enjoyable (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). Encouragement from another quilter can be beneficial for the completion of a project (Burt & Atkinson, 2012).

Friendship and other social group aspects motivate quilters and assist them to move toward goals. Research revealed that quilters seeing other people's work can find inspiration to obtain skills (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). It is easier to learn quilting and gain new skills if people have somebody to assist with ideas and expertise. Completing a quilt and receiving praise from others improves personal confidence in the art of quilting.

Confidence is also enhanced through encouragement and motivation from other quilters. Burt and Atkinson (2012) found that having close relationships with other quilters meant that all quilts were valued, even those of beginners. Quilt group gatherings often included a show-and-tell session where quilters were encouraged to show finished quilts. The quilts and quilters were applauded and exclaimed over by the others in the room. A range of cognitive, emotional, and social benefits were uncovered that

participants attributed to quilting (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). This lines up with theoretical well-being models such as Ryff's six-dimensional impressions of psychological well-being, Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory, and Seligman's description of a full life (Burt & Atkinson, 2012).

Producing quilts, particularly altruistically, provides meaning and gives people a chance to assist others. Altruism has been seen as a significant factor contributing to well-being (Cattan et al., 2011). Gifting personal art and quilts to individuals and charity is seen as vital to developing and strengthening community links in ongoing disorders and older age (Cattan et al., 2011).

Research indicated that the quilting experience is enhanced by the people with whom quilters share the craft. The quality relationship is one of the most significant factors that influences well-being (Piercy & Cheek, 2004; Triguero-Mas et al., 2015). The research done by members of sewing groups revealed that participants got the chance to talk, laugh, and share problems in their outside life as much or as little as they wished. The support they received from their quilting friends was extended to their wider lives. Analysis revealed curative factors to be present in the community-based quilting group process (Arcaroli, McWhirter, Hong, Robbins, & Haring, 2011).

Quilting as Identity Development

Goffman's research provided a framework to help other researchers understand the meaning of quilting in women's lives. Goffman (as cited in Conlin, 2014) demonstrated a sequential process of identity stripping and deindividuation that people experience in the course of losing distinctive identities as they adopt part of other

organizations such as prison, ships at sea, and mental hospitals. The changes that women experience when exposed to serious noncommercial quilting are seen as the reverse of the identity stripping process. Women who quilt build layers of unique characteristics that become central to their lives, rather than losing the underlying elements of their personalities.

In many cases, society can be conceptualized as stripping women's distinctive identities as well as the creative aptitude of women. The domestic wages of women are lower, and their emotional labor is historically undervalued within the family. The housework that many women perform is, in many societies, not recognized as a form of employment. The housework performed by women, such as cooking, laundry, and caring for children, is hardly recognized as real work. Women who do unrewarded work may feel trapped in a lose/lose situation, resulting in a loss of identity. Women are doing a separate job that may give rise to a decline of identity and to their sense of self (Stalp, 2006b). Furthermore, women in most cultures occupy jobs that allow little latitude for creativity and personal expression (Gooden, 2014). Quilting is a strategy for women not only to access certain recreational activities, but also to give them a voice as creators of culture. Quilting provides an opportunity for women to identify themselves with a larger culture, one that reaches back to women of centuries past and forward to quilters of the future. The process and the product of quilting are important and are inextricably connected. Quilting provides an opportunity to celebrate and appreciate links with the past and present, to experience tension relief, and to engage in self-renewal for women (Launspach, 2016).

Women are often expected to work outside the home while carrying out the bulk of domestic and child care duties. The modern pace of life, along with women's responsibilities outside and inside the household can leave women with very little time to themselves, or time for leisure activities (Wearing, 1998). Many women learn to balance a job and family life, but they tend to give up their personal time for their family and work duties, including spending time with friends (Crosby, 1991).

For women seeking solidarity with other women, quilting may become an important bonding activity among women and help them form an identity outside of worker and caretaker. "Although some women quilt on their own, many engage in quilting regularly or occasionally in groups of women such as small friendship networks, church groups, quilt guild events, or the modern twist on quilting bees, the stitch & bitch" (Stalp, 2001, p. 4). Participating in group quilting can be a way for women to connect with other women away from work and family obligations, allowing them to learn new skills for their craft and providing them with an outlet and voice, increasing their overall wellbeing (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). Getting involved with quilting can build confidence in women and an identity as a quilter, and allow women time alone to work on something they enjoy, taking time out of their day for themselves (Stalp, 2006b). Quilting and other creative domestic arts were historically devalued by a masculine dominated society, but many young women are beginning to reawaken to the creative arts because it is now a choice, instead of expected of them. (Chansky, 2010; Evetts, 1996).

Quilting and Creativity

Self-expression. Self-expression helps people process when trouble affects them. Dickie (2011) noted that scores of women created quilts in honor of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States as a way to work through their fear and grieving. In addition, sensory input, such as the smell of an iron on a damp cloth, and the feel of silken yarn through the fingers can trigger positive thought (Dickie, 2011).

Flow. Flow describes a specific type of engagement. Flow is a mental state in which a person is fully engaged in an activity, has mastery, yet feels challenged by the activity, becomes completely absorbed, feels an energized focus, loses track of time, feels in control, and finds the activity to be intrinsically rewarding (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990). Much of the research generated from this theory examined professionally trained athletes and artists (Nakamura & Csíkszentmihályi, 2005; Rheinberg, 2008). Across activities, research results underscored skill and mastery as essential components of flow.

Some women make quilts to keep their minds busy and hands active or to still their minds through the rhythms between mind and body. The repetitive motion of quilting has a calming effect and gives space for contemplation (Dickie, 2011). Self-assessment during time spent quilting improves feelings of contentment and mastery, and boosts the self-esteem of individuals. Many quilters today use sewing machines rather than hand quilting, but the hum of the sewing machine and the rhythm of feeding fabric through the machine can have the same meditative effect (Talbert, 2013). This evidence defines quilting as an activity promoting peace and calm.

Research indicates that there is a state of flow and psychological well-being inherent in the act of making quilts. Flow is a state of actual enjoyment of an activity attained when people are engrossed in a purposeful and stimulating event, causing loss of self-awareness and distortion of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). According to Reynolds (2006), the experience of flow helped art hobbyists with cancer. These researchers explained that flow improves the quality of life, as well as distracting focus from fear and stress. Concentration and focus on quilting can block out negative thoughts through the flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

According to Balaev (2014), one of the major benefits of quilting is flow, which is the enjoyment that one gets when being fully immersed in a challenging task. Flow makes quilters lose their sense of self-awareness and time. There is a positive relationship between being in a state of flow and general well-being. The more one enjoys and experiences flow, the more likely they are to be satisfied with their lives. Time spent quilting leads to enhanced confidence, self-worth, and mastery. A quilter's sense of self-worth is boosted when other quilters affirm her work. Quilting also enhances cognitive capabilities, which are a major factor for general well-being.

Quilting and Health

Natural disaster. In a secondary response to Hurricane Katrina, a group of first responders returned to New Orleans and began quilting, working alongside displaced residents. Roach (2011) analyzed quilting in the context of responder trauma and as interracial social interaction. Quiltmaking provided post-crisis therapy, developed interracial solidarity, and empowered and bonded the women first responders and the

residents, standing as a symbol of their community spirit, friendship, and love (Roach, 2011).

Quilters expressed their sorrow, anger, and fear in quilts made in response to devastating fires in Southern California (Dickie, 2011). A selection of these quilts was exhibited in a special display at Pacific International Quilt Festival in 2012. Each quilt was accompanied by an artist statement detailing the quilter's process of working through the emotions associated with the loss of lives and property.

Occupational therapy. Much of the published research on quilting and health has come from the field of occupational therapy. Participants in each occupational therapy study shared a common medical diagnosis. Quilting helped maintain positive attitudes in older women with arthritis despite pain, mobility restrictions, and fatigue (Reynolds & Prior, 2011). Some women have found quilting very powerful as a means of focusing away from pain as quilting requires so much immersion (Reynolds, personal communication, June 30, 2017).

Quilting and bereavement. Krone and Horner (1993) examined quilting as a way of facilitating mourning in women attending a bereavement support group. An interesting finding was that the physical activity of quilting, not the verbalization accompanying it, served the grief needs of the participants (Krone & Horner, 1993). It was the "solitary creative process" (p. 123) of quilting that facilitated reflection and reminiscence of the bereaved. In addition to the benefits associated with the act of quilting, the quilt itself served as a link to the memories of the unique and irreplaceable relationship (Krone & Horner, 1993).

Nowhere has this link between a quilt and the memories of a loved one been more publicly evidenced than in the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. This quilt effort began in San Francisco in 1987 when AIDS was a relatively unknown and unrecognized disease in the United States (Jones, 2007). Those who suffered from AIDS at that time were often disowned by family members and kept out of the public eye, even while the disease decimated certain population groups. Scared, frustrated, and heartbroken, friends and family of those who had lost their lives to HIV/AIDS decided to create a memorial that could not be dismissed or denied and would commemorate the lives of the deceased (Jones, 2007). The AIDS Quilt has grown from one solitary 3-foot by 6-foot panel to over 48,000 panels; if the panels were laid out end to end, the quilt would be over 50 miles long. The last display of the full AIDS Memorial Quilt was in October of 1996 when the quilt covered the entire National Mall in Washington, D.C. Because the quilt has grown so large, sections of the quilt now travel for smaller displays. Since 1987, over 14 million people have visited the quilt at thousands of displays worldwide (Names Project, 2018). Quilt panels are still being submitted and accepted for inclusion in the AIDS Quilt.

The AIDS Memorial Quilt Archive Project is currently underway. As of this writing, each of the panels of the quilt has been professionally photographed and digitized, creating a permanent visual record available for viewing on the AIDS Memorial Quilt website (www.aidsquilt.org). Most panels are accompanied by letters, biographies, and photos, all of which speak to the experience of life in the age of AIDS, documenting the effect on those lost and those left behind. These “documentary”

materials, when combined with the Quilt panel images, make a rich tapestry of information – a legacy to future generations.

> The next goal of The Archive Project is to analyze and catalog each panel of the Quilt for both visual and textual content using descriptors developed with the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. This information will be combined with the letters, biographies, and photos submitted by the panel makers into an accessible and globally available database. We hope that soon, The Archive Oral History Project will collect stories and testaments from panel makers on video (Names Project, 2018).

Quilting and mood repair. In one of the only quantitative investigations found to date in the literature, Collier (2011) surveyed 821 women textile handcrafters about their textile-making habits, and found that more than half of the women used textile handcraft activities to help them cope when they were in a bad mood. Those who intentionally used their handcraft in this way reported greater mood repair than did women who used other activities (e.g., exercising, reading, spending time in nature, venting, religious activities, and resting). Collier and Karolyi (2014) expanded this work by surveying 435 textile handcrafters about how they improve their bad moods. Nearly 69 percent used textile handcrafting to improve their moods, with quilting being the technique most often employed (Collier & Karolyi, 2014). For this quantitative study, the women participants were all experienced in textile handcrafts and responded to an online survey in which each woman was asked to think of a time when she was in a terrible mood, not clinically depressed or anxious, but worried and upset, angry, or sad. Participants were asked to

report the extent to which participating in each handcraft had resulted in experiencing rejuvenation (i.e., feeling recently refreshed, repaired, and ready to start anew). Participants also reported how engaged they felt when participating in each handcraft, whether they lost track of time or forgot their surroundings, and whether the activity was arousing or changed their energy level. The textile handcrafts rated as rejuvenating were also reported to be arousing and engaging, and higher levels of arousal and engagement were associated with higher levels of rejuvenation (Collier & Karolyi, 2014).

Although many textile handcraft activities fostered mood repair during participation in the activity, quilting promoted mood repair during and after the activity (Collier & Karolyi, 2014). Quilting stimulated sustained mood repair, an outcome that could not be explained by indicators of well-being, age, income, or education (Collier & Karolyi, 2014). A state of rejuvenation may linger after participation in textile handcraft activities that are arousing and engaging.

The Creative Arts as Therapy

It is appropriate to review the therapeutic use of creative arts, because quilting falls clearly within this realm. Also included in the research are expressive arts such as dancing, singing, painting, and scrapbooking. Art therapy is becoming a more acceptable way of supporting people due to compounding evidence in the clinical and scientific communities. Art therapy may help with mental health, but it may also aid with the physical and emotional well-being of a person. Art may help people in managing behavior, reducing stress, developing interpersonal skills, and increasing self-esteem and awareness. Art therapy may also help address trauma or loss, post-traumatic stress

disorder, or physical and neurological problems (Archibald, Dewar, Reid, & Stevens, 2012).

Art can be used to express emotions safely and through graphical representation. Art facilitates the process of regaining a voice for women (Stewart, 2004). When people are using their hands or whole bodies (such as in dancing) there is a connection between body, mind, and spirit. Being fully engaged in a creative activity like sewing cultivates and engages the mind. Art allows people to feel more secure and safer during therapy sessions (Archibald et al., 2012). People have reported entering an almost trance-like state through which they would go deeper into the issues they were talking about (Archibald et al., 2012).

Creative activities like beading, sewing, knitting, and carving were spoken about by therapy patients as being therapeutic in numerous environments. They found the activities grounding, centering, and a way of being at peace within themselves. If someone is in turmoil, it can be hard to come to that quiet place of concentration. Doing physical work with the hands brings the mind to rest for some people. The development of new skills accompanied these therapeutic outcomes. Self-confidence can be improved with increased knowledge regarding production of wonderful pieces of work. Therefore, art related activities are useful in the therapy process (Archibald et al., 2012).

Creating art, whether done independently or under the direction of an art therapist, has been shown to have beneficial effects on women dealing with medical issues. Participant groups for various studies have included women coping with chronic illness and disability (Reynolds, 1997; Reynolds, 2003; Reynolds & Prior, 2003), women living

with cancer (Reynolds & Lim, 2007), women with rheumatoid arthritis or osteoarthritis (Reynolds & Prior, 2011), and women recuperating from breast cancer surgery or associated radiotherapy (Oster et al., 2007; Thyme et al., 2009). Art making was linked to lower ratings of depression, anxiety, somatic symptoms, and general symptoms over time (Thyme et al., 2009).

Creative arts have been used as a means of coping with loss and grief (Gallagher, 2008; Kohut, 2011), for self-expression with or without words (Karpinnen, 2008; McWillian & Dawson, 2008; Pollanen, 2011), for pain management and symptom relief (Kelly et al., 2012; Wood, Molassiotis, & Payne, , 2011), to mitigate PTSD symptoms in veterans (Hasio, 2010), and as complementary therapy alongside traditional therapies for outpatient physical rehabilitation for neurological problems (Symons et al., 2011). Creative art interventions resulted in enhanced perceived control, building a sense of self, personal expression, transforming the illness experience, gaining a sense of purpose, and building social support (Griffiths, 2008; Perruzza & Kinsella, 2010).

Healing can be defined as the settlement of psychological injury to the best possible extent, leading to physical and mental repair. Healing also means alignment to natural tendencies, and towards becoming whole. Healing is a journey towards a state of wholeness and well-being from trauma (Mount, Boston, & Cohen, 2007).

The role of creativity in health has significantly been misunderstood and ignored in many scholarly studies (DeNora, 1999). Crafts and art can be used as therapy to help improve mental health by diverting attention from hurt and anxiety. Creative arts such as music and quilting can play a great role in the healing process. According to DeNora

(1999), music can create emotional responses, and music therapy may be used to heal trauma. One of the things that music and other creative arts do is shift the mood of the participants so that their minds can focus on something else. Creative arts not only create emotional responses, but may also lead to subsidence, especially for trauma that manifests physiologically. DeNora (1999) found that creative arts such as music can be used as a form of distraction to de-stress and create an aesthetic environment that is conducive to the healing process. Quilting may be used to remember some key events such as loss of a child, or the death of a loved one. Creativity interventions related to music or quilting may help to relieve and counter the negative long-term impacts of trauma.

Healing art therapy is the process of using creative arts to improve mental, physical, and emotional health (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). Creative arts and crafts such as music, quilting, pottery, and designing allow participants to express themselves artistically and to focus their minds away from pain, hurt, and stressful situations, providing a sense of comfort. Formal art therapy has been used to treat illness and conditions such as trauma and depression (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).

Quilting has been viewed as part of a holistic health practice for nurses--a way of caring for their clients that is both emotional and spiritual (Roberts, 1998), as well as a way to care for themselves (self-care). This perspective associates quilting with therapeutic benefits; quilting is part of a growing understanding of art-making as therapy. Art-making is a tool for managing everyday emotional challenges and daily stressors for individuals with serious health issues (Reynolds & Prior, 2011). Art-making has also

been found to be a useful tool for enhancing health and well-being of individuals who are not facing extreme health issues (Titus & Sinacore, 2013).

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that a relationship exists between creative activities such as quilting and well-being. The therapeutic use of art is particularly important for those suffering from many types of mental illness and trauma. Quilting can help people who are suffering from hurt and pain to focus on creative endeavors and speed up the healing process. Quilting may also help build relationships with other quilters, which plays a fundamental role in the healing process (Balaev, 2014).

Quilts as Important Cultural Artifacts

Historically, researchers focused on quilts as cultural or political artifacts, not as a creative art therapy activity. Indeed, researchers found that quilts were linked to important parts of culture, and have been displayed in museums, art shows, and in homes for generations (Hedges, 1977). The University of Nebraska-Lincoln formed the International Quilt Study Center, which is home to over 2300 quilts, and growing (Berlo et al., 2003). The University's study center was formed to maintain the historical and artistic resource of the quilts, keeping them in quality condition and protecting them from damage. The quilts vary in age, some dating from the 1700s and others all the way to the present date (Berlo et al., 2003). Howell and Pierce (2000) explored quilting in a different context, away from a cultural object only, but instead as a restorative activity, noting that creation of a quilt may be a restorative occupation.

Other social scientists investigated quilting in a myriad of ways, and from a number of disciplines (Stalp, 2001). Kuokkanen (2011) examined quilting as a way for

indigenous women to earn a living or bring in extra income. Kuokkanen's 2011 study may extend to women who as homemakers contribute to the family income through their art. Bristow (2013) examined quilting and the social relations between women, cultural differences in quilting activities, race and ethnicity relating to quilting participation, and quilting groups' work within their communities for charity or social change. In line with charity work, Blair and Michel, (2007) examined the AIDS quilt as it was created panel by panel to commemorate those that lost their lives to the disease. The AIDS Memorial Quilt allowed many to share the memory of those they lost through a mutual project with others sharing the same pain.

Quilters as Memory Keepers

Quilters have been described as the keepers of memories (Stallings, 2010). Reminiscing is a way of thinking and talking about one's life. According to Buchanan et al. (2002), the reminiscence process elicits memories of past events or experiences. Reminiscence is an unstructured or structured process that occurs alone, with another person, or in a group, and "can be done for the process alone or can lead to conclusions about a person's life, life's meaning and significance" (Buchanan et al., 2002, p. 134–135). Memories can be kept alive through the telling of personal stories. Memory keeping is entering a new phase in the world today with the increasing prevalence of dementia and memory loss. In a nod to the concept of the family photo album, photographic images can be transferred to fabric and included in the quilt blocks, facilitating the telling of personal stories. For example, a quilt made to commemorate a 50th wedding

anniversary may serve as a type of family tree with pictures of several generations of family members. The stories live on as they are retold with each viewing of the quilt.

When a quilt is passed down to the next generation, an oral history of the quilt and quilter traditionally accompany it. State quilt documentation projects began in the 1970s as researchers realized that quilt histories were not being passed on, and the history of the quilt and the quilter disappeared upon the quilter's death. Documentation began as a written history, predating the Internet, and now includes video recordings of the quilters delivering the oral histories, with quilts in hand. All 50 states and many countries across the globe now have a quilt registry or virtual repository where an image of a quilt and its written or oral history are kept so that this rich tradition is not lost.

Quilts and the quilting process are important symbolically, and in terms of gender, family, and culture. Quilts can serve to bookmark memories in a woman's life, and in her family's history. In creating a quilt, a woman can create a memory of a specific time, person, or event, so when the quilt is touched, used, or looked at in the future, the memory is brought forth again. The quilt helps preserve the memory, just as a photo preserves and captures the moment in time when it was taken. The woman's friends and family members, as well as personal and historical events alike, have contributed to this tradition. "Quilts evoke memories specific to their makers, locally to friends and family, and more broadly to the non-quilting public" (Stalp, 2001, p. 51).

Quilting and Well-Being

With participants from the United Kingdom, Reynolds (2010) found that visual art making as a leisure activity was beneficial to personal growth, mastery, confidence,

and social connectedness, all of which contribute to subjective well-being. In a quilting group in Glasgow, the benefits of quilting primarily occurred in three arenas: the practical process of quilting, the social side of quilting, and the end product (Burt & Atkinson, 2012). Unique to this study was the participants' mention that the colors of the fabrics used were psychologically uplifting. Scotland is known for its dreary grey days and the colorful fabrics cheered the quilters.

Few studies have explored the psychological value of quilting for women. Most research into quilt making and health involved qualitative studies utilizing convenience samples. Quite often, the investigator was a quilter who interviewed her friends or those in her local quilting group, resulting in small, localized, homogenous samples (Burt & Atkinson, 2012; Grace et al., 2009; Wall & Stasz, 2010). Although results of these phenomenological and ethnographic studies may not be universal among the general population, they provide insight into the value of quilting for specific groups of women. This study explored quilting and flourishing from a positive psychology strengths perspective, whereas previous studies have examined it from a more traditional deficit perspective. In addition, this study adds to the body of literature on the meanings and value of craft-based leisure activities.

Summary and Conclusion

This literature review has provided an overview of the current pertinent research available on the topic of quilting and its relationship to women's well-being. The size of the quilting industry and the number of quilters in the United States and worldwide indicate that quilting is alive and well in the twenty-first century. Women have been

drawn to quilting for centuries, well beyond the time when women were required to make quilts to keep their families warm in their cabins at night. It would behoove researchers to look beyond the numbers to grasp the experiences of the quilters themselves. By digging deeper into women's perceptions of how quilting is related to their well-being and flourishing, I explored themes that emerged and extended the knowledge of the meanings and value of quilting as a self-chosen leisure activity. In the next chapter I will describe the methodology that was used to complete this qualitative study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to explore how adult women who quilt related their participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and flourishing. The data for this study were collected from in-depth personal semistructured interviews conducted in the qualitative tradition of narrative inquiry. In this chapter I (a) explain the rationale behind the qualitative approach employed, (b) describe the role of the researcher including any biases, (c) provide justification for the participant sampling method and sample size, (d) describe the chronology of procedural events, (e) explain the data collection methods, (f) discuss the ways the data were coded and analyzed, (f) explain how trustworthiness of the data was ensured, and (g) discuss ethical considerations important to this study.

Previous research on creativity and emotional functioning has suggested that creativity could be influenced by emotional states. Popular myth and some studies have linked madness or sadness with creativity (Baas, Nijstad, Boot, & De Dreu, 2016; Carson, 2011; Kaufman & Baer, 2002; Kyaga et al., 2013; Ludwig, 1992). In other research, creativity appeared to stem from a place of positivity or happiness (Conner & Silvia, 2015; Le, Cropley, & Gleaves, 2015). There has been less exploration of the effect creativity may have on emotional well-being. Conner et al. (2016) found that generic creative activity could influence positive affect and flourishing in college students. It is not clear how specific creative activity such as quilting may influence well-being and build flourishing in adult women. I explored how adult women who quilt related participation in quilting to their well-being and flourishing. The following research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: What are the lived experiences of women who quilt as a leisure activity?

RQ2: How do adult women who quilt as a leisure activity relate participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and to building flourishing?

Research Design and Rationale

Five qualitative approaches were considered for this study, including phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and narrative research (see Creswell, 2007). Each of these methods is best suited to addressing particular questions, problems, or situations. Phenomenology addresses the lived experiences of participants; phenomenological data analysis yields meanings, themes, and a general description of a common experience, but it does not provide an in-depth look at the personal stories surrounding the experience. Grounded theory is used to develop a new theory when existing theories cannot adequately describe the experience that is of interest. Grounded theory is based on the views of a study's participants, with the goal of developing a new theory. Case study provides an in-depth understanding of a limited case or cases. Although a case study might have allowed for greater depth of analysis, this type of study would not have provided the range of meanings held by different quilters. Ethnography is used to describe and interpret the culture of a group and may require extended time in the field to build trust and access to informants. An ethnographic study is most appropriate when a researcher wants to explore the beliefs and actions of a culture group (Creswell, 2007). Although an ethnographic design was used in a study addressing women and the craft of scrapbooking (Reynolds, 2010), the participants in that study were more strictly bounded as a culture. A bounded culture is defined as a smaller group within a culture

and is expressed through the unique ways participants act and react. The scrapbooking study participants belonged to a community of scrapbookers whose trauma narrative scrapbook pages had been published online. This was a smaller community within the larger community of scrapbookers. The quilters in my study may or may not have been part of an established group that met for the purpose of quilting; belonging to such a group was not part of the inclusion criteria for study participants. Because the intended participants were not bounded as a group, this study included quilters who were not members of a larger quilting organization, possibly yielding a greater diversity of quilters.

Narrative inquiry is appropriate when the researcher's aim is to tell the story of individual experiences; participant stories embody a before, during, and after scenario. Any creative activity involves a before, during, and after sequence of events. Narrative inquiry yields rich data, providing a detailed picture of the lives of a small number of participants. Narrative inquiry allows participants to tell the story about an experience, and telling stories creates order, assists in meaning making, and fosters connection with others (Riessman, 2008). Findings of narrative inquiry are specific to the research participants and are not typically generalizable to the broader human population, but can set the stage for later research that may have broader implications.

After an extensive review of qualitative approaches, I chose narrative inquiry as the most appropriate. The other four approaches were deemed less effective in providing the insight necessary to understand participants' perceptions of the contributions of quilting to their well-being. Narrative inquiry was the approach best suited to addressing

the research questions because it had the potential to illuminate the meanings quilters have assigned to their experiences of quilting and provided insight into their quilting cultures. Narrative inquiry also allows for stories, epiphanies, and historical content, yielding a detailed account of personal experiences.

Due to the selection of a narrative approach to the study, the method of data collection that was most appropriate was personal, one-on-one interviews. A semistructured interview format was the technique most likely to yield first-person points of view and descriptive responses to open-ended questions. In addition, this approach provided opportunities for each participant to share her knowledge of quilting and to express in her own words how she experienced the relationship between quilting and flourishing.

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative projects is important because the researcher is the instrument (Janesick, 2001). Because I was already familiar with quilting settings and techniques, I felt comfortable talking with quilters, and this may have put the participants at ease during interviews, creating the atmosphere of a conversation between quilters during the interviews (see Stalp, 2006a). In addition, my insider status as a quilter may have somewhat offset the power differential inherent in researcher/participant interactions (see Zinn, 1979). The tacit knowledge I brought to the interview exchange aided in establishing the trusting relationship and collaborative partnership required for narrative inquiry. This same knowledge was also useful in the

analysis of data, as the added sensitivity allowed easier unearthing and understanding of emerging themes.

Methodology

This section is organized in the following subsections: participant selection, sampling strategy, instrumentation and data collection, procedures, and data analysis plan.

Participant Selection

The participants for this study of quilting and flourishing were adult women who quilt as a hobby or leisure activity. Although many women learn to quilt when they are young, this study was concerned with adult women only. Women who quilt as a leisure activity may assign different meanings to their quilting than women for whom quilting is a source of income (Stalp, 2006b). Although many men quilt, quilting has traditionally been considered women's work and has been the domain of women; therefore, the participants in this study were all women. Gender differences were not part of this study.

Potential participants were identified through the use of purposive sampling followed by snowball sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique used for the identification and selection of information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling is a type of purposive sampling in which the researcher begins by identifying one individual who meets the criteria for inclusion in the study and then asks that individual to recommend others who also meet the study's criteria. Snowball sampling was employed after the initial participants responded and continued until data saturation was met.

Saturation is the point at which the collection of new data does not shed any further light on the issue under investigation (Glaser & Strauss, 2009). Mason (2010) reported that the sample size in qualitative studies is normally small in comparison to that used in quantitative studies. The collection of rich and thick data is a more accepted means of attaining rigor in a narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Fusch & Ness, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994), as opposed to interviewing until saturation of data, a method more commonly used in ethnographic studies. Therefore, the target number of participants was 12 women (see Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Authorization was obtained from the local quilt guild president to attend one of the guild meetings to introduce myself and the study, and to leave recruitment flyers (Appendix B) with my contact information. Because I became ill and was unable to attend the regularly scheduled quilt guild meeting, I dropped flyers off at the meeting, but did not introduce myself or the study. I also publicized the study to the quilt guild members by sending the flyer to the membership via e-mail through the quilt guild parliamentarian with the approval of the quilt guild president. Flyers and e-mails included a brief overview of the research, my name and phone number, and encouragement to contact me for additional information if interested in participating. Initial contact with potential participants occurred when they contacted me via phone or e-mail to inquire about participation in the study.

During the initial contact, I provided an overview of the study and answered questions the potential participants asked. If a quilter indicated she wished to participate in the study and she met the study criteria, an interview date and time will were

scheduled. In addition, each participant was asked to bring a quilt or a photograph of a quilt she made to the interview. The informed consent process was discussed at the interview session, including consent for the interview to be audiotaped and consent for a photograph of the quilt to appear in the dissertation.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

An in-depth semistructured interview was conducted with each participant to explore her perceptions of the relationship between quilting and flourishing. Each interview took between 45 and 75 minutes and was recorded with two digital audio recorders. The interviews were conducted in person whenever possible; telephone interviews were conducted if we could not meet in person. I conducted two face-to-face interviews in a private room at the library and two face-to-face interviews in the quilters' homes. I conducted eight telephone interviews from my private home office.

I developed an interview guideline to provide flexible structure during the interview and facilitate comprehensive responses. The interview questions were open-ended to provide for deep exploration of the perceived connections between quilting and flourishing. Participants were able to provide greater detail while I was able to probe deeper to gain a better understanding of the responses to the interview questions (see D. W. Turner, 2010). Participants were asked to share the story of the quilt they brought to the interview and I kept a picture of the quilt with the interview transcript. The questions for the interview guideline were tested for clarity with peers and volunteer quilters who did not participate in the study. Interview questions were refined as needed based on the responses of these nonstudy participants.

At the beginning of the interview, I discussed the study in detail, including potential risks and benefits to the participants. Informed consent was evidenced by the participant's signature on the consent form, including consent for the interview to be audiotaped. Consent forms were signed and collected at the face-to-face interview session after I discussed the study and answered any questions the participant asked. In a telephone interview, I read the consent form aloud, obtained consent verbally, and recorded it as part of the interview. After obtaining informed consent, I collected demographic data (Appendix C) from the participant. Demographic data aided in describing the context of the participants. Participant debriefing was conducted at the end of each interview. The purpose of debriefing was to provide an opportunity for participants to ask additional questions about the interview or the study or to raise any issues that may have come up during the interview. Immediately following each interview, I documented my reflections on the interview content and observations of participant demeanor, while identifying emerging ideas. Audio recordings of the interviews were professionally transcribed to ensure the study retained a narrative flavor and verbal characteristics of the participants. I compared the transcripts with the audio recordings, making corrections when words were missed by the transcriptionists.

Data Analysis Plan

Qualitative research has richness to it and, as such, the data must be coded and interpreted correctly during the collection and evaluation process to ensure a high level of trustworthiness (Moretti et al., 2011). Data included audio recordings of all interviews, the corresponding transcripts, and photographic representation of quilted works. Quilted

works were not analyzed, but rather were used to prompt memories in the participants and recollections of their experiences creating those specific quilts. I used Microsoft Word and Excel to keep the data organized and to sort the data for grouping around themes as they emerged. Any discrepant cases were reported in the results section and incorporated into the data analysis to illustrate the breadth of the participants' perceptions.

Data were analyzed using the six-step protocol for thematic analysis proposed by Braun et al. (2014). This protocol began with reading and rereading the transcripts to determine potential points of analytical interest, and then using key descriptive phrases to code the dataset. At this point, common thematic elements across research participants were identified (see Riessman, 2008). Development of themes and connections took place by focusing on the participant statements that had bearing on the research questions, as well as on other distinct themes perhaps not directly related to the research questions but warranting attention. The analysis proceeded through grouping like codes into larger themes by identifying larger patterns in the interview transcripts before reviewing and revising themes and developing a thematic map to identify relationships and organize the analysis. As final steps, I engaged in detailed analysis of the data within each theme to refine categories and their organization, and completed a final refinement of the analysis that established its significance and contextualized it in terms of existing theory and research. An additional step suggested by Janesick (2001) was to reflect on, describe, and explain the intuitive moments and creative moments in any given qualitative research project. Following detailed analysis, themes were studied and

interpreted to elicit possible meanings and overarching themes were developed. Thematic analysis was used to group the data and develop theory about the relationship between quilting and flourishing. This data analysis plan fits Polkinghorne's (1995) definition of a paradigmatic analysis, or an analysis of narratives, because the analysis "builds categorical definitions by continually testing their power to order the data. The categories are revised and retested until they provide the 'best fit' of a categorical scheme for the data set" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 10). I created tables to present the data and display relationships, including tables displaying the major and minor themes for each research question.

Issues of Trustworthiness

In this narrative study, validity and reliability were established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. According to Shenton (2004), credibility or internal validity is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness and refers to how congruent the findings are with reality. I reflected on my own biases and assumptions at each stage of the research process, utilizing a research journal to track intuitive moments and critical decisions, thus establishing credibility (see Janesick, 2001; Riessman, 2008).

Transferability or external validity refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). Findings from this study may be of interest to qualitative researchers interested in the connection between flourishing and creatively working with one's hands. Merriam (2009) noted that rich, thick description in reference to the setting, the participants, and the findings of the study is

one strategy that can be used to establish transferability. It is also the responsibility of the qualitative researcher to describe the context of the study and its participants in detail so that the possibility of replication exists. I have provided a rich, thick description of the context of the study and the participants. I have also supported the findings of this study through the use of direct quotes and summaries of participants' interview responses.

Dependability is the qualitative counterpart to reliability. According to Shenton (2004), the study's processes should be reported in detail, thus enabling future researchers to repeat the work. However, this is no guarantee the same results will be obtained in replicated research. I established dependability through the use of audit trails, which involved a thorough collection of documentation for all aspects of the research (see Rodgers, 2008). Documentation used in this study included recorded interviews and the corresponding transcriptions, quilt photos, and the use of an audit journal of decisions and inferences made during the course of the research. Using an audit journal fostered ongoing reflexivity and critical self-awareness about how the research was done and the impact of critical decisions along the way (see Riessman, 2008). Dependability was authenticated by comparing all forms of data.

Confirmability is the qualitative counterpart to objectivity. Trochim (2006) reported that confirmability is the degree to which the research results can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. Therefore, I have ensured that the data and interpretations of the findings clearly originate in the data. In addition, I established confirmability through the use of reflexivity (see Merriam, 2009) in which I, as the

researcher, reflected critically on any biases that I may have about the connections between quilting and flourishing.

Ethical Procedures

The local quilt guild provided a letter of agreement for me to access their membership. After I received Walden University's IRB approval (#12-05-17-0049531) to conduct the study, I engaged in recruitment efforts, starting with the quilt guild members. I did not recruit quilters with whom I have a personal relationship. I did this in order to prevent perceived coercion to participate due to any existing or expected relationship between us.

The participants were adult women over the age of 18, able to recount events of the past, and capable of reflecting on the quilting experience. Participants were quilters for whom quilting was a leisure activity and not a primary source of income. Participation in the study was strictly voluntary. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time, choose not to provide an answer to any question, and stop the interview at any time for any reason, which they were not required to disclose. Participants were asked to choose a name to use as a pseudonym to protect their identity.

There was little psychological risk associated with participation in this study. If a participant had become uncomfortable or upset during the interview, I would have offered to end the interview and provided referrals to her for support. There were no anticipated benefits to participating in the study other than knowing that the information obtained may assist in creating awareness of women's perceptions of the relationship

between quilting and flourishing. I gave each participant a small hand-made quilted item as a thank you for their voluntary participation in this study.

Transcribed interviews and the corresponding quilt photographs were de-identified and kept in password-protected electronic files on my private computer, and only I have the password to unlock the files. Transcriptions were filed in the computer under pseudonyms; actual participant names were kept separate from the interview data collected. I have exclusive access to the key linking pseudonyms to actual participant names. A printed copy of this key was kept with the signed consent forms in a locked cabinet in a private office to which only I have access. Transcribed interviews were not kept with the consent forms or pseudonym key, but solely on the computer. Paper files will be kept for a minimum of five years and then shredded. Audio files were immediately transferred to computer and erased from the recording devices at the conclusion of each interview. Electronic data files will be kept for a minimum of five years and then scrubbed from the computer hard drive.

Summary

In this chapter I covered the research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, and issues of trustworthiness. In Chapter Four I will cover the actual data collection and analysis, and present the results of the data interpretation.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience of women quilters, ages 18 and older, and how they perceived participation in quilting in relation to their emotional well-being and flourishing. Narrative inquiry was used to explore this phenomenon. This research served to broaden scientific literature on quilting as a self-chosen leisure activity and quilters' perceptions of quilting and well-being. This study was guided by two research questions:

Research Question 1: What are the lived experiences of adult women who quilt as a leisure activity?

Research Question 2: How do adult women who quilt as a leisure activity relate participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and to building flourishing?

In this chapter, I discuss the context of the study, participant descriptions and demographics, the setting and procedures for data collection, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and the results of the data analysis.

Context of the Study

After receiving IRB approval for this study on December 5, 2017 (IRB# 12-05-17-0049531;), I began recruiting participants with a flyer (Appendix B) at a regular meeting of the local Quilt Guild. I had planned to make an announcement of the study at the next regular meeting of the guild, but I was unable to attend. Instead, I dropped the flyers off at the meeting site and followed up by e-mailing the flyer to the guild membership through the guild librarian. Potential participants e-mailed me or called me after seeing the flyer. Additional potential participants heard about the study from their

friends and e-mailed me or called me about participating. In total, 15 quilters from California and six quilters from Arizona contacted me expressing a desire to participate in this study. After choosing first to respond to quilters in one geographic region, I responded to each e-mail and phone call about participation and set interview places and times with the first 12 participants who fit the study criteria.

I decided to keep participation to the same geographical area in California because the inhabitants of this area had experienced catastrophic wildfires 2 months prior to the interviews. Wildfires swept through the area a few months prior to recruitment and burned countless acreage, destroying more than 6,000 homes and claiming 42 lives. Two of the quilters I interviewed lost their houses and almost everything they owned, having only minutes to flee with their lives. One participant who lost her home said when she received word of the fires, her husband grabbed the six quilts off the quilt ladder while she grabbed a robe to put over her nightgown. That was all the warning they had to escape the fires. Every quilter I interviewed was impacted by the wildfires and accompanying loss of life and devastation. Although the difference the wildfires made in the interview responses is unknown, I suspect the interview responses might have been different if quilters had not experienced the extensive devastation so recently. Keeping participation to quilters in this county made the results between participants more comparable than if some had experienced the wildfires and some had not.

Participant Descriptions and Demographics

The participants were 12 women quilters over the age of 18, ranging in age from 33 to 93, with a mean age of 67.25 and median age of 68. Most of the quilters

interviewed were in their 60s and 70s. Years of quilting experience ranged from 3 to 60, with a mean of 29.58 and a median of 26.5. Eleven of the 12 quilters had been quilting for 20 years or longer. Each quilter had at least one room in her home dedicated to quilting; several quilters utilized multiple rooms in their homes for various parts of the quilting process. At the time of the interviews, one quilter preferred to sew and quilt by hand. The other quilters predominantly used a sewing machine to sew their quilts together and to quilt them. Participants spent an average of 13 hours per week in quilting activities, with a low of 1 hour per week and a high of 20 to 30 hours per week. All participants noted that their quilting activity had been impacted by the recent wildfires and at the time of the interviews they were not spending as much time on quilting as they had prior to the fires. Participant demographics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Age	Years quilting	Hours per week spent in quilting activity
Debbie	62	30	1
Helen	57	26	15
Jane	65	45	10
Jody	85	35	20
Kate	58	27	10
Lucille	70	20	10
M	73	60	30
Marty	66	20	20-30
Mary Frances	70	24	12
Phyllis	33	3	5-10
Ranger	75	20	5-8
Ruth	93	45	“a few”

Each participant articulated her practice of quilting during individual interviews. The practice of quilting included her personal quilting history, how and where she quilted, and what she envisioned for her future in quilting. All participants had at least one room in their home dedicated to quilting and expressed delight at having a dedicated space where they could "keep everything out, shut the door, and not have to put everything away" (Debbie). By not having to put their quilting away every time they stopped for the day, it was all waiting for them when they returned, just as they had left it and they could start quilting again right where they had stopped. If their dedicated sewing room was the guest bedroom, the participants said guests might find themselves on the couch. I asked each participant open-ended questions about how she got started in quilting**.** These included how she learned to sew, how she was introduced to quilting, and how she learned to quilt. Although almost every participant in the study was taught to sew by an older family member (aunt, mother, or sister), each participant came to quilting in different ways.

Jody. Jody's mother quilted and collected scraps of fabric to create crazy quilts. She taught Jody to sew on a Singer treadle sewing machine. Jody was one of the only participants whose mother quilted, yet Jody did not start quilting until she was in her 50s. She was stationed out of the United States in the foreign service and began quilting out of boredom. On one of her furloughs to the United States, she bought a sewing machine to take back to Ghana, and she and the other women in her group decided to make the same quilt. At 85 years old, Jody still quilts every day and said, "I don't know what I'd do all day if I didn't quilt." The living room of her home is her dedicated quilting space, with

the television on for company, and one of the bedrooms is her ironing and quilt supply storage room. She enjoys gardening and has been actively writing her memoirs, meeting regularly with other writers in a classroom setting. Jody lives on a fixed income and said she has had to cut back spending on quilting. She no longer spends money on fabric but gets it off the giveaway table at her quilt guild meetings, and she no longer takes quilting classes because of the expense of the classes and materials for each one. She still purchases batting and backing fabric, but machine quilts her creations instead of paying someone to quilt them for her. Jody may have 8-10 quilts in production at any time, and she completes every quilt she starts. She expressed her belief that "quilts should be used and are not going to be doing anyone any good if they're stuck up in a closet somewhere." Jody hangs seasonal quilts in the front entryway of her home (see Figure 1). One of her favorite quilts was a large black and white quilt she made for her son. This quilt was lost in the wildfires last year and Jody would like to replace it for her son, but is not sure if she is up to making such a large quilt again. She sees herself continuing to quilt as long as she is able.

Figure 1. Christmas quilt by Jody.

Ruth. Ruth is the first quilter in her family and she learned to sew from her mother. Ruth sewed only clothing until a tailoring classmate invited her to join a quilting class. Ruth's reaction was, "Quilting? Why in the world would I ever want to do that?" There was no history of quilts in her family or in the geographical area where she lived. She began with traditional quilting techniques, quilting by hand in the 1970s and 80s and making quilt templates out of cardboard from cereal boxes, later transitioning to newer techniques and learning to machine quilt. Living in the San Francisco Bay Area, she had

ready access to popular quilt instructors before they became celebrities in the quilting world. Ruth took her first art quilt class in the 1980s and never looked back. She considers quilts art and she displays her quilts on the walls of her home as if they were paintings. Ruth's work is featured in many quilt books and publications, and she cofounded one of the well-known quilt guilds in her area. She has traveled extensively for quilting, visiting Japan and many cities in the United States. She designed her dedicated space specifically for her quilting and said, "This is where I live." Ruth views unfinished quilts as part of the process of learning. She has no other hobbies, and most of her daily activity is related to quilting. At 93 years of age, Ruth is winding down her quilt-making activity. Quilting takes time, and she is choosing what to spend her time on now. She no longer purchases fabric and does not make many quilts; she no longer attends big quilt shows saying, "It's just too long a day," and she no longer takes quilting classes because she no longer wants to. She has begun giving away her quilting books and fabric and is putting names of family members on the backs of her quilts to designate who gets them when she is gone. Her focus at this point in her life is on the social side of quilting. She still drives and attends weekly meetings at quilt guilds, where she is usually the oldest attending member.

Debbie. Debbie learned to sew as a teenager so she could make her own clothing, but she was inspired to learn to quilt by her great aunt because Debbie thought her quilts were so beautiful. She finally took up quilting when her relatives and friends started having babies, and she made baby quilts as gifts. Debbie is 62 years old and retired, and she participates in some quilting activity every day, even if it is only to read a quilt

magazine or look at and touch her quilt fabric. Her three sewing machines reside in her dedicated sewing room, which used to be the spare bedroom. She views quilts as art and makes quilts to hang on the walls of her home, changing out some of the wall quilts seasonally. She said, “I have a spot in my living room where I can hang a quilt on a rod so I have one for every holiday and change of season.” She stated she valued finished quilts over perfect quilts, and feels like her unfinished quilts “are yelling at me from the closet, ‘Finish me, finish me.’ [laughing] I hate it. They drive me nuts. I have to get them done.” Debbie has not entered her quilts in fairs or shows where they would be formally judged. Her belief is that her quilts should please her, not necessarily be perfect. Debbie said she did not know how she would have gotten through her recent chemotherapy without quilting and the support of fellow quilters. She related that when counting the number of days she has left, she has realized that every day is important to her. She expressed a desire to make more donation quilts in the future and to continue to learn new techniques. Debbie’s personal quilting motto is “finished is better than perfect.”

Helen. Helen, age 57, is a self-taught quilter. She made her first quilt for her sister-in-law who was expecting and thought a baby quilt would be a good gift. “I don’t think I looked up directions or anything. I mean, it was hideous,” she said. She has given most of her quilts away, only beginning to keep quilts for herself in the last couple of years. Helen has taken over the guest room in her home as her dedicated sewing space. Her favorite part of quilting is designing the quilts and picking out the fabric. She cofacilitates a quilt guild and loves to create a welcoming kind of atmosphere, structuring the group so that people feel like their creativity and their ideas are valued. She related

she has seen a shift in quilting from quilters copying exact patterns published by professional designers to quilters designing their own quilts. At the time of the interview, Helen was preparing to travel several hundred miles to attend a large quilt show and take a class from a nationally known quilting teacher. She does not mind having unfinished quilts, and if she has lost interest in a quilt or it does not speak to her anymore, she will give it away. In her words, “Why am I spending time on it when I could be spending time on something that challenges me aesthetically or skill wise?” Helen sees herself as a modern quilter and embraces the use of the Internet in her quilting activity. She will often post a picture of an unfinished quilt on Instagram and ask for opinions from other quilters for how to machine quilt it. In addition, she has learned from online resources how to facilitate quilt guilds. In addition to quilting, she loves writing, journaling, and processing, and wants to “hang around with the nice people who want to make an effort at connection.” In the future, Helen would like to teach quilting and “continue to facilitate and have people be nurtured in a way that they could safely explore and have everybody be kind.”

Kate. Kate, 58 years old, has been drawn to quilts since she was young. She learned to sew clothing in junior high school and that was the extent of her stitching until a neighbor invited her to a quilt guild meeting. “Once I got in the group it was a whole new world”, she stated. Because she started quilting in the 1990s, some of the newer quilting tools and techniques were available to her and she did not start with the traditional quilting methods. She believes quilts should be useable; they should be useful and big.

> You know the part that I absolutely love is when I have finished quilting it and finished with the binding I almost immediately put it in the washing machine and the dryer, and I love taking it out of the dryer and it's got all that, you know, texture. And all the quilting and everything is, you know, it's all sucked together and all, all of the mistakes are hidden and-I mean to me that's when it's really a quilt (laughs)… they sort of become like good friends once they've been washed. They just have that, it's like they hug you back or something. (Kate)

Arthritis has made it difficult to quilt the big quilts she so enjoys and she has begun hiring someone to quilt her bigger quilts for her. She related that she has a lot of unfinished quilts and feels a little bit guilty about it. New classes result in additional unfinished projects, so she limits the number of classes she takes. Making a list of unfinished projects helps her organize them and get them finished, and when she finishes a quilt she will give herself permission to start something new. She admitted to being competitive and self-critical, and having a strong ethic of work before play. Having commitments with quilt groups gives her motivation and accountability; at one point she counted 13 group quilting commitments in a month. She hopes to quilt for many years to come, saying she has a lot of fabric and a lot of ideas and things she wants to try. She has been looking at recreational vehicles for future vacations, always making sure there's room for her sewing machine and her quilting.

Marty. Marty, age 66, considers herself a traditional quilter, although she recently joined an online quilt group, which is fairly modern. Her aunt taught her to sew

when she was 11 and Marty sewed all her own clothing along with clothing for her mother and Western shirts for her dad. Her grandmother quilted and had made identical quilts for her own seven children. Marty has the last quilt her grandmother hand quilted. The first quilt Marty made was a lap quilt for her father. She did not have a pattern or instructions, but tried to copy the quilts her grandmother had made. After making that first quilt, she started learning to quilt by watching quilt lessons on television. She prefers to follow designer patterns, substituting fabrics of her own choosing, and buying the fabric is the fun part for her. She loves to read fiction books with a quilting theme. Recently married, she and her husband schedule out of town trips around days their destination's quilt stores are open. As to her future plans Marty said, "I sew, I quilt. We go travel." She plans to continue to take classes and desires to visit international quilt shows, specifically mentioning those in Houston, Paducah, and Japan. Marty has made quilts for all her grandchildren, just as her grandmother did. She has saved fabric from clothing she made for her grandchildren and plans to use that fabric in quilts she will make for them when they turn 16. Marty said, "It's kind of like I'm my grandma… keeping it going".

Lucille. Lucille, 70, said she had been quilting for 20 years but thinking about it for 65. She saw her first quilt when she was three or four years old, while driving up the coast with her family for vacation. She related:

> a woman moved from Arkansas, the story goes, and she and her family bought a derelict, um, gas station, the old kind with the pumps in front with ... and kind of a ... a cover over the top. Well, she hung out her quilts

> there and ... and put them up for sale and they were the big kind and they were all done by hand. And as we would drive by in those days slower, um, I would see these colors and every time we drove by to go that way, there's no way of ... it's the only way so you'd see them, and they're always new quilts and they blow in the wind and my ... I have a ... a twin sister, and we'd say, "We're going to do that. We're gonna do that." (Lucille)

As children, the twins were taught to hand sew by their mother who wanted to keep them occupied while she tended to a new baby. As adults, Lucille and her sister dyed fabric for quilts together, but her sister passed away before they got to make quilts together, so Lucille decided to take classes and quilt for the both of them. Living on the East Coast, she had accessibility to good quilt teachers and plentiful quilt shows, saying "all the little towns would have a quilt show". She would attend classes when travelling for work, even if she could not do the sewing portion of the class; she went for the exposure to new techniques and the chance to meet other quilters. She likes to make large quilts and does not like to have her unfinished quilts hanging over her, preferring to have fewer unfinished quilts so she can explore new ideas in her quilting. She is active in volunteer work and will take a week out every so often to make crib-size donation quilts to give away through her quilt guild. In her quilting future, she desires to dye more fabric, continue to quilt, and travel to see quilts. At the time of the interview, Lucille was planning a trip to New Jersey and Maryland for quilt shows.

M. M was one of two quilters interviewed who lost their homes in the recent wildfires. She is 73 and has been quilting for 60 years. She said she made her first quilt at age 13, and got serious about quilting 25 years ago. She related that she started out with traditional methods, “trying to be Laura Ingalls Wilder” making her first quilt all by hand. Prior to the fires, she spent about 30 hours a week on quilting activities, about half of that on quilts to be donated through her quilt guild. She previously had a dedicated sewing room and said she cannot imagine not having one in her new home. She uses quilts as home décor, displaying them on quilt stands and on the walls of her home (see Figure 2). She said having unfinished quilts did not bother her, although she always knew they were there in the background, waiting for her to complete them. The fire burned all of her unfinished quilts, so that is no longer a problem for her. M plans to continue quilting as long as she is physically able. At the time of the interview, M had not started quilting again since the fires.

Figure 2. Log Cabin variation by M.

Phyllis. Phyllis was the youngest quilter, at 33 years old. She has been quilting for three years and her dedicated quilting room is the uninsulated garage at her home. Phyllis described her quilting room as her sanctuary:

> …the sewing room is really the only area that I am good at keeping clean and functional in my house. Um, everything else, it's like, you know, the kitchen is full of dirty dishes. There is laundry all over the floor. I mean it's just kind of a mess in there, but the quilting room I keep more as a sanctuary than anywhere else in my life. And that's part of why I like it, and probably also part of why I like keep it that way, because I know that I like it so much. So, I'm more motivated to keep it clean. Um, there's definitely an element there of respect for myself… (Phyllis)

Although she was not from a family of quilters, her aunt quilted and gave Phyllis the first quilt she made. Phyllis sewed clothing for years and only took up quilting after a coworker invited her to a quilt guild meeting. She said she was hooked on quilting from that first meeting and learned to quilt by taking classes and watching online how-to videos. She views quilts as art and her goal with quilting is to learn and to play with the process. She sees unfinished quilts as part of the learning process, admitting to having more unfinished quilts than finished ones. She takes classes to learn new techniques and moves on once she has learned what she wants to. Phyllis designs her own quilts using computer software and envisions being a quilt teacher and designer in the future. Her dream is to partner with someone who would sew the designs she creates and write up the patterns for publication, while she does all the designing.

Ranger. Ranger, age 75, has been quilting for 20 years. She learned to sew in college and discovered her love of fabric then, but only began quilting when she retired. She describes making her first quilt:

> I'll talk about my first big quilt. I, as I said, thought that quilting was cutting out from patterns and little pieces and things like that. And um, my first effort when I retired is, I started taking a quilting class. We lived in the mountains up by Yosemite National Park. And um, the teacher would teach a different pattern every week, and I just couldn't keep up with trying everything, so I would pick and choose a little bit. And then um, the um, um, one of the members of our class had the tragedy of a house fire. And so the teacher suggested everyone make a block and we would give them to this woman so that she would have something to make a new bed for her house. I, being the, you know, practical kind said, "What good would a pile of blocks do somebody who's trying to recover from a fire?". So I said, "I will put it together". I had no idea how to do it. But I bought a simple backing and I put the um, borders and the um, um, ... I don't know what to call them ... the channels in between the pieces. But it was a total experience for me because, I realized that it's a big process from start to finish. (Ranger)

Ranger approaches her quilting from a thrifty and productive perspective. To her, quilts are practical and functional, something people are going to cuddle up under (see Figure 3). She collects scraps of fabric and has inherited fabric from quilters who are

done with quilting and giving away their fabric. She uses what she has and develops patterns for it, not spending a lot of money on fabric or patterns, and only going to the fabric store if she needs thread. She has completed all of her quilts, with the exception of one quilt she started in a class. She described the class as a bad experience, saying she was “angry” she did not learn what she thought she would in the class. She thinks she should finish the quilt even though she does not like it. She has homes in Arizona and in Sonoma County, with a dedicated sewing room in each home, and two or three quilts in progress at any given time. She sews all of her quilts by machine, no longer doing handwork because of arthritis in her hands. At least twice a month she makes a baby quilt and donates it to a charity she supports. Ranger has many hobbies, and in addition to quilting, she enjoys singing in the church choir, exercising, and playing competitive bridge. She expressed a desire to keep quilting in the future, but also acknowledged that she is toward the end of her quilting career and has begun using up her fabric and making quilts to give to charity.

Figure 3. Cuddle quilt by Ranger.

Mary Frances. Mary Frances, age 70, labeled her quilting as “unconventional”. She described herself as more of a fiber artist, not so much a quilter. Her mother taught her to sew when she was young and she grew up sewing clothing and items for her home.

She liked quilts when she saw them in other people's homes and started quilting because she wanted to have some of the things she had seen. Once she realized she could figure out how to make quilts (she never uses a pattern), the making of quilts led to a growing realization of how much she liked quilting. Although she made traditional quilts in the past, she currently makes fiber art using quilting techniques. She has a dedicated room in her home for her quilting and usually has several projects at different stages at the same time, allowing herself to take a break from one piece and still be productive and creative. Once she starts a piece, Mary Frances satisfies her practical side by forcing herself to work with the amount of fabric she has on hand. Instead of purchasing additional fabric to increase the size of the piece, the amount of fabric she has on hand determines the size of the finished piece. She discovered that creating smaller pieces conserved time and money and the smaller pieces lent themselves to more exploration of technique and materials. Prior to quilting, Mary Frances used to work with metal, manipulating the material from one form to another. This is similar to what she does in her quilting, manipulating the fabric from its original form to something else. In the quilt she shared with me, she used fabric with a butterfly design on it, cutting and resewing the fabric so that the butterflies changed form (see Figure 4). Asked about her quilting future, Mary Frances stated she has not gotten to the end of her ability or desire to quilt: "I don't see stopping at all. In fact, I see it, it being something I'm gonna do until the last eye fails and the last needle is dull…I want to, I really want to."

Figure 4. The Last Butterfly by Mary Frances.

Jane. Jane, 65, dates her love of fabric to her childhood. Her older sister sewed and Jane would follow her around, picking up and saving the fabric scraps. Growing up, Jane sewed clothing and when she saw pictures of quilts in magazines in the 1970s, she

knew she wanted to make quilts. With no accessibility to teachers or quilt stores, Jane taught herself how to quilt by reading a book. She started with traditional materials and methods, using sheets for quilt backing and cardboard from cereal boxes for templates. Her first quilts were made from what she had on hand: scraps left over from sewing clothing. When she was a young mom in her early 20s, Jane saw someone her age quilting and she "was on her like bees on honey". The two quilters would pack their young children in the car and drive 45 minutes to a quilt store to purchase scrap bags of fabric, not being able to afford to purchase the yardage off the bolt for full price. Jane is currently serving in a position of leadership in her local quilt guild. She is inspired by older quilters, some of whom are still quilting daily into their 90s. She is not opposed to having unfinished quilts, but she lost all of hers when her house burned to the ground in the October wildfires. She had a dedicated sewing room in her previous home and plans to have one in her new home. Jane's other hobbies include gardening, reading, and walking through the vineyard with her husband. As for her quilting future, Jane said her quilting style may change, but "as long as the hands and the mind hold out, I'll be sewing until I die."

Setting and Procedures for Data Collection

Data collection was designed to occur during semistructured face to face interviews held in a conference room at the local junior college library, however, the library closed for semester break soon after I began recruitment and interviews. Two interviews were conducted at the junior college library, following this original protocol and two interviews were conducted in person at the quilters' homes, at the request of the

quilters and with the approval of the IRB at Walden. The remaining eight interviews were conducted over the phone from my home office. Interviews were conducted in December 2017 and January 2018. The interviews varied in length, lasting between 45 and 75 minutes, with the interviews that took place in the quilters' homes lasting the longest. In addition to choosing one quilt to share with me, these quilters took me around their sewing rooms and shared many quilts they had made and the stories behind the quilts. I took pictures of the quilts shared by the participants at the in-person interviews and for the telephone interviews the quilters emailed me pictures of the quilts they wished to share. All interviews were recorded with a handheld digital audio recorder. The face-to-face interviews were recorded by setting the audio recorder on the table during the interview sessions, and the phone interviews were conducted using a telephone pickup microphone so that they could be recorded with the same recording device.

At the close of each face-to-face interview, I gave the participant a small quilted item I had made. In the case of telephone interviews, I mailed the item to the participants within two days after the interview. The quilters expressed delight that I had created a quilted item for them. Each participant chose a pseudonym for confidentiality and I am the only one with access to the key linking pseudonyms to individual participants. This document is kept locked in the file cabinet in my home office. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants and the audio files were transferred from the digital recorder to my password protected computer immediately after each interview. Verbatim transcripts were professionally prepared and I audited each transcript while listening to the audio recording to affirm its content and correct any errors or missed

words. Printed copies of the transcripts are kept locked in the file in my home office, identified by pseudonym only.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is a recursive process, as opposed to linear, and movement between phases of analysis is to be expected (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). I familiarized myself with the data by conducting all of the interviews myself and listening to the recorded interviews while waiting for the professional transcripts to be completed. I reviewed each transcript for content and accuracy, making corrections where needed, while listening again to the audio recordings. After I audited the transcripts, I began developing data-driven codes (see DeCuir-Gunby, Marshall, & McCulloch, 2011), coding each interview line by line, using a Microsoft Word document set up with three columns (Table 2). The left-most column was labeled Text and I copied the interview transcription into this column. I used the center column for line by line coding and the right-hand column to identify emerging codes. I coded each transcript in this manner, generating initial codes.

Table 2

Example of Transcription Code Book

Text	Line by Line Coding	Focused Coding
Ruth: I'm not gonna keep my quilts in the closet. I'm gonna put them all on the walls because I live here by myself.	Likes to display her quilts on her walls.	QUILTS AS ART
Cathy: Uh huh.	Lives alone so she can do what she wants.	INDEPENDENCE
Ruth: And so, this was made many years ago and it's my memory of going down the peninsula during the depression time and seeing all the fruit stands.	Quilt was made to illustrate her memory of a trip taken many years ago.	COMMEMORATIVE QUILTS
Cathy: Mm-hmm (affirmative).		

I created a section titled "Memo" at the end of the coding table and in this section, I wrote my perceptions of the interview. After the memo was entered, I numbered and defined each code that was identified in the right column. To do this, I read through each transcript again and began defining the codes from the precise words of the participants. When finished, I had 218 separate focused codes.

I had so many lines of text from the interviews that I decided to transfer the coding to Microsoft Excel for grouping and sorting in order to identify themes. I created a spreadsheet, copying in all of the lines of text, line by line coding, focused coding, and code description, and added a column for the name of the participant to which the text and codes belonged. Next, I began searching for families of codes and grouped focused

codes together in terms of the similar code family (theme) each represented. I added a column for Code Family to the spreadsheet and assigned each focused code to a code family (Table 3). I then added a filter to the labeled top row of the data so that I could filter by name, focused code, or code family. I copied all of the code families into another worksheet and filtered out the duplicates. Twenty-one distinct code families remained. I then filtered all the data by code family and reviewed the families to see if any of the focused codes stood out as being in the wrong code family. If the focused code looked out of place in the code family, I went back to the transcript for the context and precise words of the participant to clarify the coding and make a change in the coding if needed. Once I was satisfied that the code families accurately represented the data, I defined the main themes.

Table 3

Example of Excel Coding Spreadsheet

Name	Focused Code	Code Family	Code Description
Phyllis	ACHIEVEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT	Quilt juried into international show in 2016
Phyllis	MASTERY	ACHIEVEMENT	Mastering new skills
Phyllis	CONFIDENCE	POSITIVE EMOTION	“feeling like my work is actually, uh, something that other people might care to look at.”
Phyllis	FUN	POSITIVE EMOTION	The challenge makes it fun for her

I revisited the printed transcripts again when writing the results section to ensure I had correctly used the words of the participants to support the data analysis. I highlighted portions of the participant's responses that I thought best illustrated the themes that had emerged in the analysis. Rereading the interview transcripts also reminded me of the attitudes and behaviors of the participants during the interviews and the context of each interview.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Evidence of trustworthiness of the data and analysis in this study is assured through the assessment of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability within this research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After a thorough literature review and the adoption of a conceptual framework, I developed a set of research questions to assist with data collection and data analysis. These procedures established the foundation for trustworthiness, along with the use of several specific procedures including: sample selection criteria; verbatim transcriptions of the interviews; data saturation; thick descriptive language; subjective reflexivity; and immersion in the data.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research corresponds to internal validity in quantitative research. The accuracy of the data was based on verbatim transcriptions of the recorded interviews. I used two data recording devices for each interview, insuring data was not lost by equipment failure. I transferred the digital audio files directly from the recorders to my computer and saved them as .wav files. I then sent the .wav files electronically to the professional transcription service. The .wav files were returned to me electronically

along with the verbatim transcription as a Microsoft Word file. I audited each transcript for accuracy while listening to the original .wav file, making corrections as necessary to assure accuracy of content and verbatim transcription.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity refers to the extent to which the study's findings can be applied to other situations (see Shenton, 2004). The use of rich, thick description in reference to the setting, the participants, and the findings of the study helps to ensure transferability. Direct quotes from the participants support the findings of this study. Narrative inquiry studies often involve small populations and the results will not necessarily generalize to the world at large. Results of this study may, however, generalize to other populations whose demographics are similar to those of the study participants.

Dependability

Dependability is the qualitative counterpart to reliability. The study's processes have been reported in detail, enabling future researchers to replicate the work (see Shenton, 2004). Dependability has been established through the use of audit trails, which involved a thorough collection of documentation for all aspects of this research (see Rodgers, 2008). This documentation includes interview recordings, verbatim transcripts, photos of quilts, and a journal where I recorded decisions and inferences made during the course of this study. Critical self-awareness and ongoing reflexivity were fostered by the use of the audit journal and comparing all forms of data.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the qualitative counterpart to objectivity. It refers to the degree to which the research results can be confirmed or corroborated by other researchers. Because of my experience with the subject matter (quilting), I may have biases that are hard for me to see. My dissertation committee consists of three non-quilters, who have reviewed this research at every juncture of data collection and data analysis.

Study Results

Three major themes and thirteen subthemes emerged from the data. The major themes discovered in the study were: creativity, relationships, and positive emotion. Table 4 illustrates the major themes and subthemes.

Table 4

Themes and Subthemes

Theme	Subtheme
Creativity	Creative expression Experimentation/discovery Challenge Design/fabric Expression of political views
Relationships	Generational Gifting quilts Connection Commemoration
Positive emotion	Fun Stress relief Mood change Altruism

Theme 1: Creativity

One of the themes that emerged from the interviews was creativity. The participants each expressed some of the ways quilting has allowed them to be creative. Various pieces of creativity were mentioned, including (a) creative expression, (b) experimentation/discovery, (c) challenge, (d) design/fabric, and (e) expression of political views.

Creative expression. Quilting provides an opportunity for creative expression, and provides a setting for the peak experience known as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Mary Frances described the creation of her butterfly quilt as "one of those perfect storms of creativity and time and materials and, um, construction working very well. It, it ... There's a good marriage of everything." When asked what part of quilting was the most meaningful to her, Lucille said:

> Well I'm gonna be selfish here I guess and say it-it's the peacefulness of the process and the ability to have an artistic expression, um, from myself and the freedom to-to do that, …this gives me peace of mind. I've been through a lot and, um, and it makes me laugh a lot. (laughter). So, I guess it fulfills the-the essence of my being. (Lucille)

Kate, a firm believer in work before play, voiced her belief that quilting elevates her mind, even when she is not physically quilting:

> …it's the escape from, you know, all of the other responsibilities of life (laughs). Um, it gives, it gives a, um, an outlet, a release from the other mundane stuff of our lives…And, you know, you can still think about

> whatever you want, and so when, w-, I found out when I'm in the middle of a project, a new project or thinking about a project or, um, you know, having to figure out a layout or design choice or color I find that I can think about that at any time, whenever I'm doing anything else and it, even if it might be a mundane, you know, some mundane thing I'm having to do I can escape to my creative stuff that's waiting for me…If there's something, something exciting or challenging or something going on that I'm excited about I will find that I still think about it. I carry it around with me in the mundane part of my world. (Kate)

Experimentation/discovery. Experimentation was mentioned by several quilters as their favorite part of the quilting process. They experimented with techniques that were new to them or fabrics that were not traditionally used for quilting, or the juxtaposition of colors or designs that they had not seen before. Experimentation could lead to the wonderful discovery of something previously unknown to them. Phyllis stated, "normally I try a new technique with every quilt that I make. Every quilt is like something different in some way or another." She elaborated, "I kinda try to do different things to keep me interested."

Lucille experimented when making the quilt she shared with me. She had a set of hexagons, traditionally used in a pattern called Grandmother's Flower Garden, that she wanted to use in a non-traditional way. In addition, she said "I've always wanted to do something big on point" and "the other thing I wanted to do was, get a long ladder and throw pieces down and sew them down where they would land (laughter). That's what I

did" (see Figure 5).

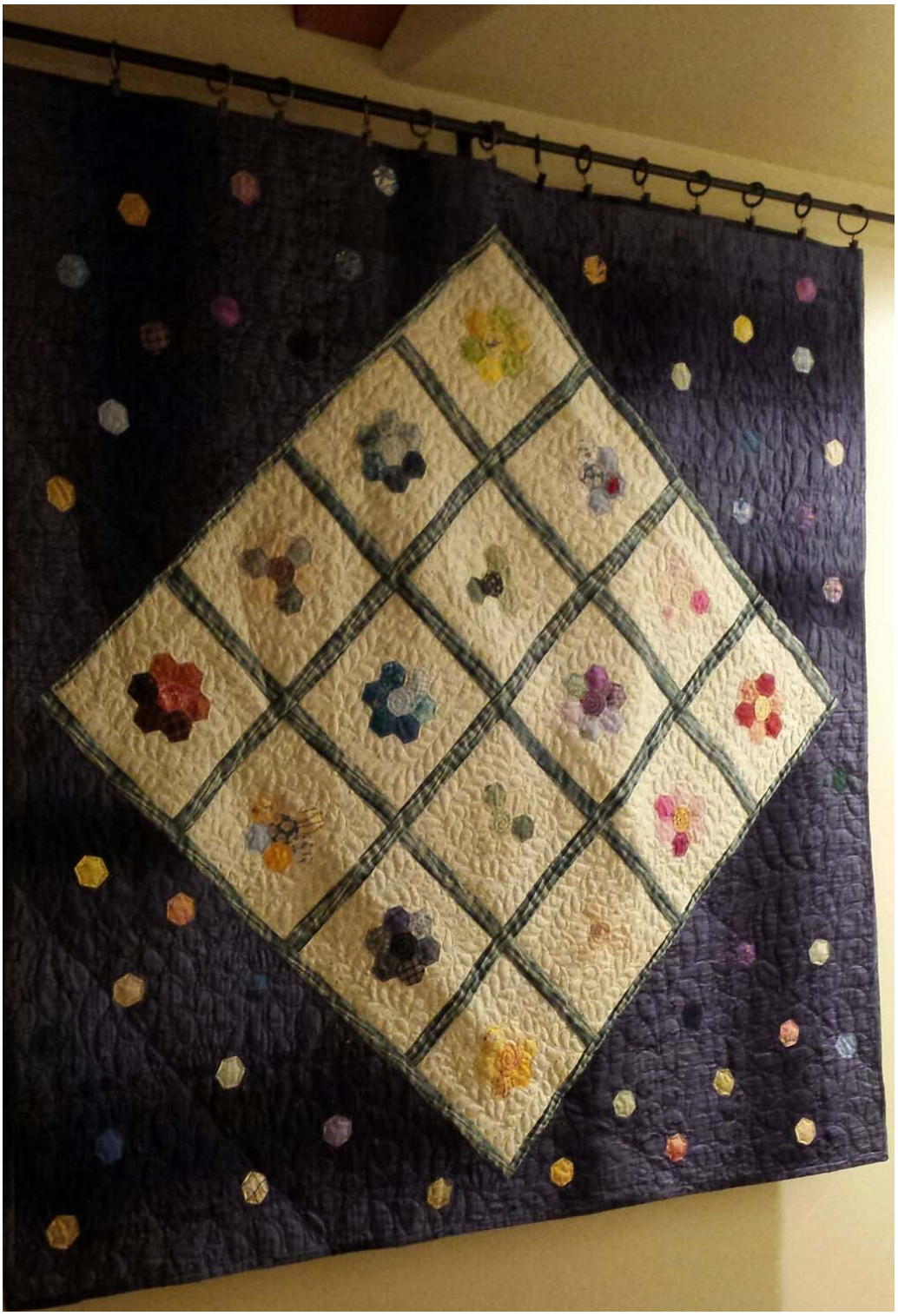

Figure 5. Hexagon quilt by Lucille.

Phyllis found experimenting and discovery to be the most meaningful parts of quilting as well as the parts where she was most comfortable. In the quilt she shared with me, the finished quilt represents an image she did not set out to represent (see Figure 6). She started out with fabric in warm and comforting colors that would go well in her bedroom, letting the design take shape as she worked. It was the quilting that brought out the representation.

> And then the shapes I chose to put two shapes in there, kind of like two people, um, and in a quilting pattern…kind of like portals coming around a central point. I'm calling it "Whispering in the Dark" because it's kind of like these mysterious shapes underneath the blanket. Um, with just kinda their outline shining through, and then sound waves swirling around like they're whispering to each other. (Phyllis)

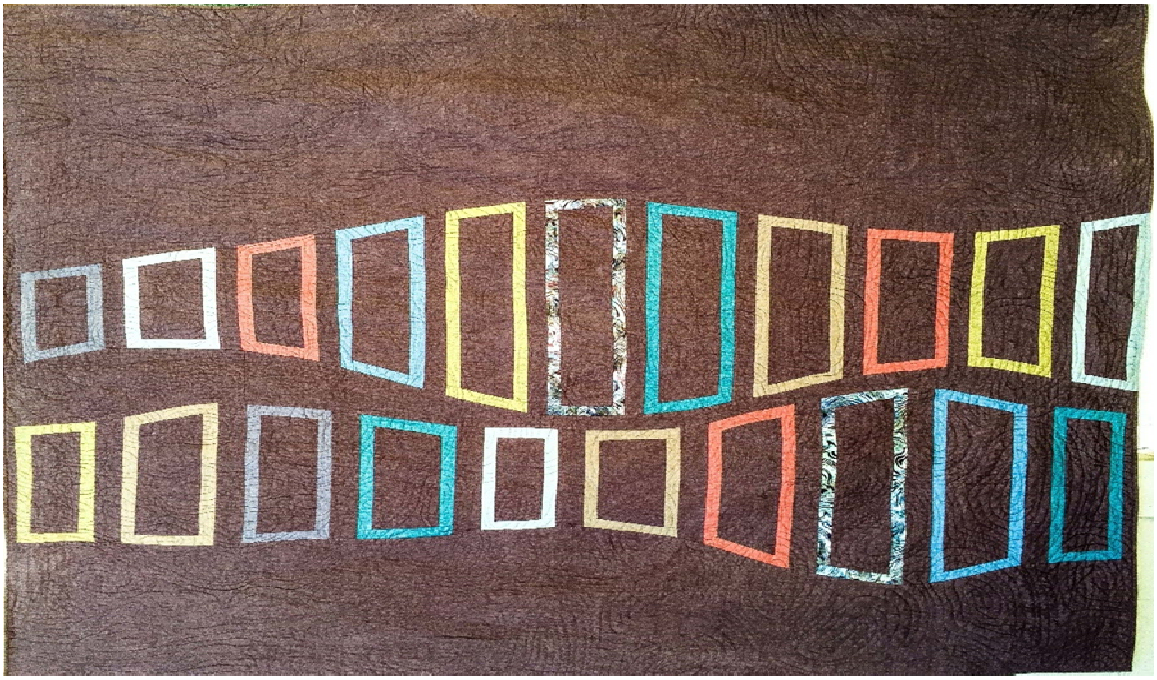

Figure 6. Whispering in the Dark by Phyllis.

Learning new techniques is part of the discovery process for some quilters. Debbie usually starts a quilt by planning it out on graph paper, but she took a class with a professional quilt teacher and learned a technique that was new to her. She started off with a photograph of a favorite place and used fabric and various ribbons and yarns to create a fabric replica of the photograph. Her quilt is a representation of one of her favorite places, Lake Tahoe (see Figure 7).

Figure 7. **Lake Tahoe by Debbie.**

Challenge. Challenge can engender growth in an artist by forcing them to do things differently than they normally would. A challenge can be the parameters a quilter

sets for a specific quilt, such as using only black and white fabric, or using an old quilt pattern in a new way. For many of the participants, challenging themselves was one of the fun parts of quilting. Mary Frances challenged herself to use traditional materials in unconventional ways inspired by their original use. For example, she had created Asian-influenced designs out of repurposed (old) kimonos. The original purpose of the fabric influenced the design of the new piece. “I’m trying to honor and respect the past and continue to give their voice to their origin.” Considerable thought goes into what she uses and how she uses it. At one point in time she was inspired by a magazine article to give herself a different challenge:

> I started doing what I called six by eight by two. And it was [a quilt] six by eight inches in two hours. And I did that for ... Well, I have 13 of them so I did it for 13 weeks. And it was really, really a breakthrough for me to do that to limit the size and limit the time. At the end of the two hours it had to have the edging all around it and be done. That was it. And sometimes I get to the point where I could put kind of a fancy edging on it because I was done early. (laughing) Sometimes not. Other times it was like it’s very rough on the outside edges, you know, and then I’d finish it off later if I’d put it in a show. (Mary Frances)

Ruth said she loves the challenge of quilting. She belongs to an art quilting group where they regularly challenge themselves in inventive ways. One time they each got a paper bag with an item in it and they had to make a quilt inspired by the contents of the bag. The bag Ruth chose had a Japanese porcelain soup spoon in it and she created a

small quilt inspired by the spoon. The quilt she shared with me hangs on her living room wall and was created for a challenge at a quilt camp she attended. One of her quilting buddies named the quilt for her (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Blowing in the Wind by Ruth.

Design/fabric. It takes fabric and a design to create a quilt. Fabric stores now sell quilt kits in which the design and the fabrics are selected for the quilter. The quilter is not required to make any decisions regarding either design or fabric, which is a relief to some quilters, but the quilt will not be unique to them. Everyone who makes the quilt from the kit will have a quilt just like theirs. In contrast to having the design and fabric selected for

her, Helen reported that choosing a design and selecting fabrics are the most interesting stages of making a quilt, and talked about a shift she has seen taking place over time:

> What I'm also noticing is that within the quilting community I'm kind of seeing two kind of groups or cultures. Cultures who want to design their own unique work. Because, if you're trying to communicate a message, or you know, it's their desire to explore something aesthetically. And then there are people who really love, you know, give me the pattern. Tell me what colors to use. I do know some people who just are like, "Send me the kit, and I want to make exactly what I saw". That was kind of the only way quilting actually was being taught until the art quilt movement started. (Helen)

Some of the participants expressed their love of fabric—purchasing it, looking at it, and touching it. The quilters seemed to have a relationship with their fabrics. When asked about the most meaningful part of quilting, Debbie responded:

> Picking out the fabric. There's something about textiles. I, I don't know what it is. Deciding on the color, is a hard part, and once you've got the color decided, and where you're gonna go, what pattern you're gonna do, picking out the fabric ... Going to the store and picking out the fabric is almost as much fun, for me, as sewing it together. Um, I don't know how women buy fabric online, that's just not for me. I have to touch it. I have to go to the store and touch it. (Debbie)

When I asked M what types of fabric she liked, she said, “Mostly, I just like fabric.” For her, quilting is “a huge opportunity to play with fabric. I love to feel it.” She related a story of shopping for fabric for a particular pattern and walking into the local quilt store “and there was this batik fabric sitting there on the floor, waving to me.” Needless to say, a piece of that batik fabric went home with M.

Jody described:

> I would say, my very favorite part is feeling the fabric. Right now, I do only scrap quilting. I don’t spend a lot of money on fabric anymore. And I pick a lot of fabric up off the back tables. Uh, what people don’t want anymore, and I, I love going through all the scraps. Separating them by color, feeling them to see if they’re high quality cotton. Or 50/50 and then, my next favorite part is putting them together in some sort of pattern. And I try different patterns, and don’t follow a pattern much anymore, but my very favorite part is definitely feeling the fabric. (Jody)

“I love fabric. I love touching fabric…I’ve loved fabric since I was a little girl”, Jane related. As a long-time quilter, Jane said that prior to the wildfires “I had stacking bins of fabric under my cutting table- everywhere”. After losing her home (and all her fabric) in the fires, Jane said she is rethinking her fabric collecting strategy.

> A friend of mine emailed me and she said, “You know I don’t want for you to take this badly but isn’t there a little bit of relief at being relieved of the UFO’s you no longer liked, and really didn’t want to work on anymore, and some of the fabric you didn’t like anymore?” And I said,

> "Yes, there is." So, I'm going to be in my future life um, there's a William Morris quote where he says basically don't let anything into your life that you don't consider to be useful or beautiful. And I'm really working hard to live by those rules and not just collect fabric because it's there. (Jane)

Each of the participants in this study mentioned having a fabric stash. The fabric stash consists of fabrics the quilter has acquired, but not yet used. Theoretically, new quilts are made using fabrics from the quilter's fabric stash. Phyllis has a small amount of fabric in her fabric stash; she has not been quilting for very long. She likes to organize her fabric by color in rainbow order and said it helps her to see where the holes are in her fabric collection and keeps her from overbuying colors she already has. Over the years, quilters can build up quite a large fabric stash. Ruth has been giving away fabrics out of her fabric stash to other quilters because she does very little quilting at this point in her life and knows she will not be able to use all the fabric she has acquired. When I interviewed Jody, she was getting ready to use a piece of fabric she had purchased in Africa in the 1980s, saying, "I'm gonna cut it up, and I'm gonna use it (laughing)." She had kept the fabric in her stash until the right idea came along for using it. Similarly, the fabric in Mary Frances' butterfly quilt was from the 1970s and had been in her fabric stash for over 40 years.

Expression of political views. Quilts can be used to address social justice or other societal and political issues. The AIDS Quilt is an example of quilting being used in the service of social justice. Jane related the story of how she used quilting to creatively express her political opinions during the 1998 congressional hearings on Bill Clinton:

> I did a jar quilt during the Clinton hearings in Congress, because I was so mad over his impeachment trial that I made a bug jar [quilt] of Halloween fabrics and I manipulated photographs of eyes from pictures of Newt Gingrich. And then I put a label on the jar full of eyeballs that said, "Eyes of Newt." And then I took a picture of Ken Starr and put him in a jar and made "Starr in a Jar" because I was celebrating Halloween and feeling really political at the moment…I called it Dracula's Pantry.

Theme 2: Relationships

This theme holds all of the relational aspects to quilting that were mentioned by the quilters. Subthemes are generational, gifting quilts, connection, and commemoration.

Generational. Quilting is a handcraft that is often passed from generation to generation. The techniques and patterns are passed down, as is the love and appreciation for quilts. Marty said that making quilts for her grandchildren made her feel like her grandma, "keeping it going." Kate has started teaching her 4 and 6-year old granddaughters to make fabric postcards and use the sewing machine, saying "I hope to carry it [quilting] on forward…share the love." Debbie's daughter requested a quilt "tied like Grammy used to do", even though quilting is more sophisticated than tying a quilt. Helen expressed her pleasure at seeing the generational nature of quilting at quilt shows:

> I think one of the coolest things to watch at quilt shows and at, you know, the big shows, is the multi-generational thing. I've worked the doors, you know, at several of these kinds of things, and you always see, you know, multiple generations walking in together. Because, one of them wants to

> share what they've made, you know, or wants to share their love. And it's so cool, cuz you'll have little, you know, kids in strollers and back packs, and parents pushing, and the grandmother and sometimes, you know, the fourth generation. (Helen)

Kate shared blocks that are part of a Pineapple quilt in progress (see Figure 9). Many of the fabrics were given to Kate by her aunt and Kate plans to give the finished quilt to her aunt, bringing the quilt full circle between the two generations.

> My first sewing machine was a hand-me-down from her, so I credit her with also getting me into sewing, but, um, she has decided that she's not quilting anymore…and so she gave me like a huge box of fabric…so the majority of the fabrics in the pineapple are from her box. And my thought was, you know, eventually she's probably going to end up, um, you know, she's near 90 and so I'm thinking this could be a quilt for her, um, and that maybe she'd recognize a lot of the fabrics in it. Um, some of 'em come out of my own stash. Um, but I was trying to go with the old-fashioned, primarily an old-fashioned look. (Kate)

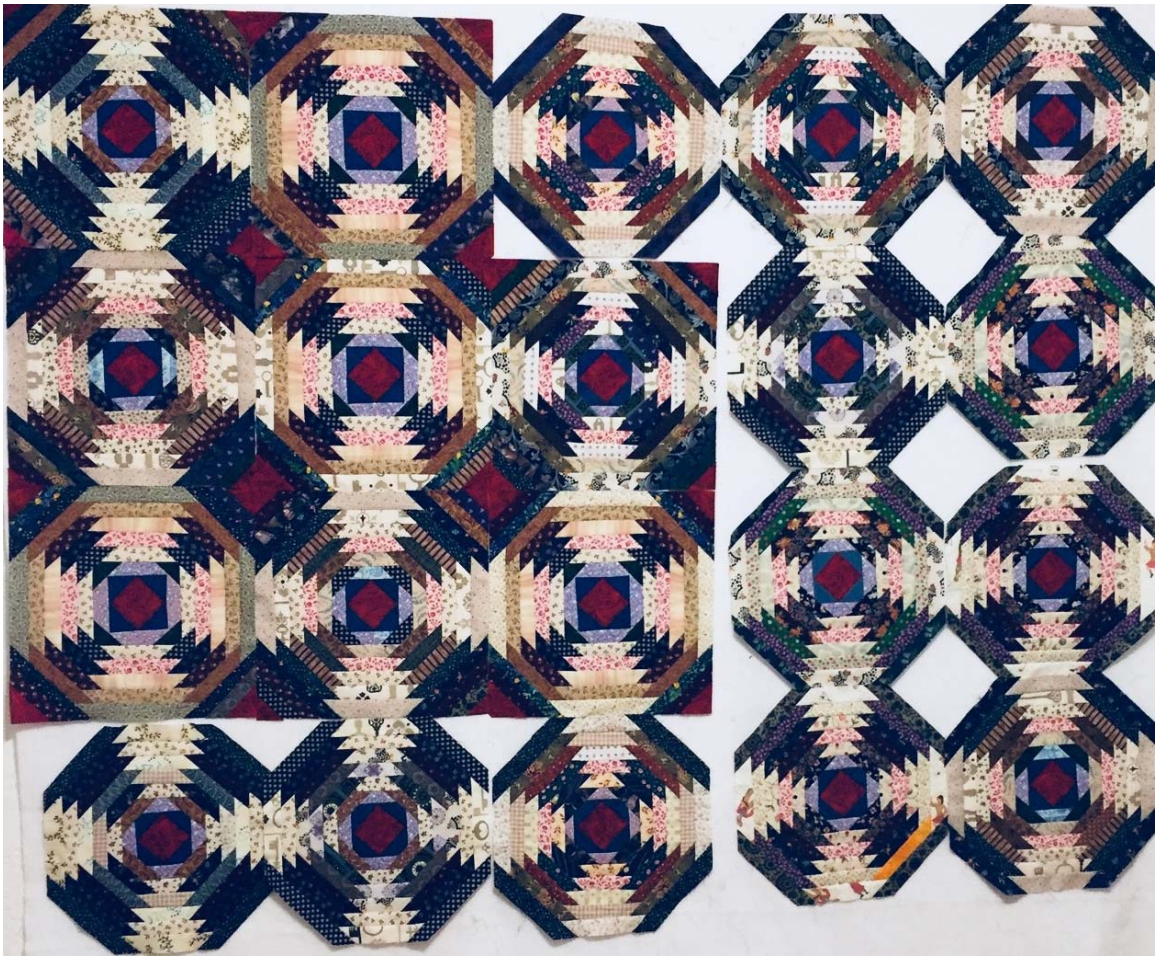

Figure 9. Pineapple blocks by Kate

Gifting quilts. Many quilters make quilts specifically to give as gifts to friends and loved ones. Quilts are also handed down as a family legacy and many people have a quilt at home that was made by their grandmother. Helen gives away most of the quilts she makes, as does Ranger, who said: “My family all have probably two quilts for every bed in their house”. Debbie is known for making and giving away baby quilts and said “if you invite me to your shower, you know you’re gonna get a baby quilt from me. And even the young moms nowadays, they still like that old-fashioned quilt.” Marty related that giving a quilt to somebody is the most meaningful part of quilting for her and while

she's making the quilt she thinks about how the person will feel about receiving it and hopes "they keep it forever".

Jody gives most of her quilts away and described making quilts for anyone who admires one of her quilts:

> If, if someone walks into my house and says, "Oh, you're a quilter. Oh, that's so beautiful." That person is going to get a quilt. And they will get it definitely. And I don't care if it's a workman who comes in here. And I had one that came in and said, "Oh, you know my mom, my grandma used to make quilts. They're so pretty." He gets a quilt, so. Oh, they're overwhelmed, overwhelmed. (Jody)

Jane said that one of her passions is making "I Spy" quilts for children (see Figure 10). "I Spy" quilts are made with novelty fabric that is printed with pictures of familiar items and can be used to play a game of "I Spy" with the child. The first fabric Jane replaced after losing her fabric stash in the fire was her "I Spy" fabric. She told me she was down two quilts already and said, "I'm going to restock my 'I Spy' armamentarium." She talked of their popularity:

> "I Spy" quilts are quilts that are active and they use them, and they may not be appropriate for the newborn, but the ones that I've given to toddlers ... Um, my friend… I made one for her grandson and he won't let go of it. I made one for the grandson of another friend, and they use it every time the kids are at their house, they keep it there and it's the story-time thing. (Jane)

Figure 10: "I Spy" by Jane.

Connection. Quilters form a connection with other quilters. They speak a common language and have a common interest and they support each other. All of the participants in this study were members of their local quilt guilds or smaller quilting groups. These groups gather on a regular basis regarding some aspect of quilting. Sometimes they sew at these meetings and sometimes they eat and talk about quilting, with no sewing involved. Debbie said that when she was undergoing chemotherapy, she

did not know what she would have done without quilting and the friendships she had made through the quilt guild.

> That, that was an unexpected part of it for me. Because I'm, I don't make friends easily. Uh, but the, the guild has, I mean, they made sure I had chemo caps when I lost my hair, they've made sure I've had uh, rides to the meetings when I couldn't drive, they made sure I had meals when I couldn't cook, it's been wonderful. So, it's not just the sewing part, it's the friendship part too. And I didn't expect that part. I didn't expect it to happen so quickly. (Debbie)

Kate expressed appreciation for her quilt guild community:

> We had our first meeting of the year, um, earlier this week and that, it was wonderful to go back to the meeting and be surrounded by people with the same interests and having quilts hanging on the wall. I mean it just really kinda helped spark that again. It's like, "Oh, yeah, I love doing this" (laughs). (Kate)

Ruth expressed a deep caring for other quilters, regularly referring to other quilters as her "buddies". She travelled to Japan with 20 other quilters and years later the staff of a Japanese quilting magazine stayed at her home when they came to photograph her quilts. She talked fondly about her quilt teachers and about them staying in her home when they taught locally:

> Well Michael was my first teacher there. Didn't realize I was having an art teacher like that. Oh, he's wonderful. Yeah, he stayed with me. So, I'm

> really, uh, very fond of him. He's like my son, you know? The age of my son. (Ruth)

Ruth was a founding member of a local quilt guild in a different county. When she left that area, she was presented with 119 fabric leaves (leaf-shaped pieces), each one signed by a member of that guild. Ruth incorporated the leaves into a quilt she proudly hangs on her sewing room wall and told me "I really value that quilt… All my buddies."

Jody said that the only negative thing she had to say about quilting was "you don't fit in with every group". She described her search for a small group to quilt with:

> …it took me three tries before I found a group that I really felt comfortable with. Uh, the other two groups, they just, I-I don't know how to express it. I just didn't feel comfortable. I didn't feel like I could sit and chat with them across the table. Uh, they weren't, a lot of the, sometimes the women aren't forthcoming talking about their families and all that. And, uh, uh, I usually can exchange conversation with most people, but I had trouble fitting into the first two groups. This particular group I'm in, I just love it. It's, I'm very comfortable with, uh, with the people in it. (Jody)

I suspected the data might show a strong connection between quilters, but I was surprised when some of the quilters took the opportunity of the interview to express the strong connections they have with their non-quilting spouses. Jane and her husband lost their home in the recent wildfires. She said she will have a dedicated sewing room when they rebuild their home, but her husband has asked that she put her sewing machine in the

office where his computer is so they can spend time together in the same room. M had not gotten back to quilting after the wildfires in part because her husband needed her support in the aftermath of the devastation. Marty talked about her husband being her greatest supporter, and the quilt she shared with me was a project she and her husband planned together. On one of their first road trips as a couple, they stopped at a quilt store along the way and they saw a quilt on display they loved, and purchased the pattern, but the store was out of the fabric. On another trip a few months later, they stopped at a quilt store and her husband found the perfect fabric. Marty has completed the quilt top and once the quilt is finished, it will hang on the wall above their bed (see Figure 11).

Figure 11. Mexican Stars by Marty.

Commemoration. Quilters make quilts to commemorate and celebrate special occasions, like anniversaries and births. They also make quilts commemorating special people in their lives. M created a quilt for her father-in-law commemorating important aspects of his life.

> It was all finished but the binding, I think, and I finished the binding on the airplane on the way to his memorial service. So, he never got to see it. But, but that one I am very proud of and it…He, he was quite a character, but they hung it in the church where he was living and was the interim minister…And then it hung in the alumni office of his university for about a year and also in the church that he retired from, for about a year…Um, there was one block that I tried to make look like the church in Litchfield, Connecticut where he was interim minister and where they were living. And all of the blocks either had a somewhat biblical name, like Steps to the Altar…And then it also had a Martini with four olives…that he was famous for (laughs). Oh, and the colors were all red and black for the university, Wesleyan University, that he was very active in. (M)

Theme 3: Positive Emotion

The theme of Positive Emotion includes relief of negative emotions such as stress or anxiety, as well as an increase in positive emotions. Subthemes are fun/whimsy, stress relief, mood change, and altruism.

Fun/whimsy. Many of the quilters interviewed mentioned that quilting was fun for them. They laughed when sharing their quilting experiences and some likened

quilting to playing. Lucille said about making the quilt she shared: “Oh, that was fun. I was laughing my whole way through it.” She also described one particular quilt challenge in which she participated:

> you had a choice of doing a canyon or, uh, a mudflat or a greasy roasting pan. (laughter) So I did one of each. But the one I liked the best and I look at every morning because it makes me laugh is the greasy looking piece. (laughter). (Lucille)

She garnered validation to be whimsical in her quilts when she took a class from a well-known quilt teacher, who invited Lucille to go up close and see her quilts.

> and you could see that she quilted in this one, it was a traditional quilt but she ... to me she showed the freedom of ... she had little raccoons and little animals-... that she had quilted in, in this very staid and important quilt and every so often you’d see this little-little ... she said, “I just love them so ... “ (laughter). (Lucille)

Kate has been making quilts the size of postcards and said, “I’ve been having a lot of fun with fabric postcards (laughs)…I’m making ‘em up, you know, as I go along. It’s just more fun, it just makes me smile when I’m working on ‘em.”

Stress relief. Some quilters attributed stress relief to the physical aspects of sewing and doing the quilting, while others attributed stress relief to thinking about quilting. Jane described quilting as soothing, saying it keeps her hands busy and relieves anxiety. She emphasized the importance of quilting for her:

God I've been doing it for so long, I mean quilting has seen me through two divorces, the births of both my children. Um, the death of both my parents. Uh, three cross country moves, it's just an anchor in my life at this point, I can't imagine not doing it, in some way, shape, or form. Um, because it just is soothing to me, I- I cannot stand to just sit and have my hands be idle. I can't sit and watch TV, I'm one of those twiddlers, I-A little anxiety-The whole ADD-Yeah, folding up-The paper-from the straw. So, for me I guess it's an anxiety reliever, because I just-I need to be doing something and fidget spinners are a waste of energy. And I knit too-But I don't knit for myself because I'm not very good, so I knit hats for the homeless and I'm good at that, but um, I just need to keep my hands going.

Well, when I was-A little tiny child, I had a blankie that I-rubbed. And no coincidence it was a blankie, and so I- That's just it for me, calming, it calms me. It was good, it was real good [rubs fingers together simulating rubbing the satin binding on baby blanket]. The last of my blankie was about this big. [makes 8" square with hands] (Jane)

Jody described how she feels more stress as she gets older and quilting relaxes her:

I would say that probably the most meaningful thing is that it is a stress reducer. Because anytime, and as I get older I'm feeling stress m-, small things stress me more. That if I just sit down at the sewing machine, I

> usually turn on the TV. I just put it on Law and Order. And then, I will sew for about 20 minutes and it's usually, uh, it's not anything complicated. Just straight sewing, and uh, that relaxes me. That does it for me…It's therapeutic. After the quilt is finished, uh, I don't care what happens to it. It can go away. Give away, but it's the actually sitting down and, and sewing. And creating, and, uh, I don't know why, but it's just, it's soothing. (Jody)

Lucille related that quilting has soothed her soul during the difficult days of caregiving and the loss of her husband.

> One summer, my mother had a new baby in the house and so she taught my sister and I some embroidery stitches and, to keep us quiet I guess, um, and so I always turned to a needle in my hand during such ... at times of stress or at times of happiness that, you know, it just, uh, it is kind of a component of-of life of the ... you know, uh, of all aspects I guess. And I'm so glad she did that. (Lucille)

Mood change. Asked if they turned to quilting to change their mood when they were mad, sad, or upset, the quilters in this study primarily reported not turning to quilting when they were in a bad mood. Some even expressed a belief that their bad mood would go into the quilt and forever be with that quilt. Kate reported she does not use quilting for mood change, but she admitted encouraging a friend to sew when the friend was depressed, the idea being that sewing might put her in a better frame of mind. Jody does not quilt when she is angry, saying she has learned other ways to deal with

anger. Helen related a time she was feeling upset and turned to quilting (see Figure 12):

> But after the fire, I, we were in conflict with a neighbor over a fence um, and having ... it was so ironic, you know, to be surrounded by all these people who lost everything, and we had this really rotten neighbor behind us who's just a mean, nasty, little old lady. And so, we were in conflict with her. We had people who had lost everything. And one day, I just didn't know what to do with my anxiety. It was so, it was so strong. And I, so I went to the closet and I just pulled out those two [fabrics]. And I started sewing them in long strips. And then started cutting them in random widths…And so, I think, for about, for about two or three days, I just played with different kinds of arrangements until I found that one… so that was strictly something that I needed to do to, to stay sane, you know? Instead of spinning off into anxiety. It's like, okay, well let's create something. Cause there's no um, there's no real initial plan. It was just, first of all sewing the strips together, because that was just mechanical and kept my hands busy. So that was strictly, that was very, very therapeutic. I felt a lot calmer, and it, and it represented something, you know? The butter [yellow fabric], to me, is, you know, a luscious, fat kind of wonderful things that life can give you. And the fire [red fabric] comes through and, you know, takes bits and chunks out of our lives.

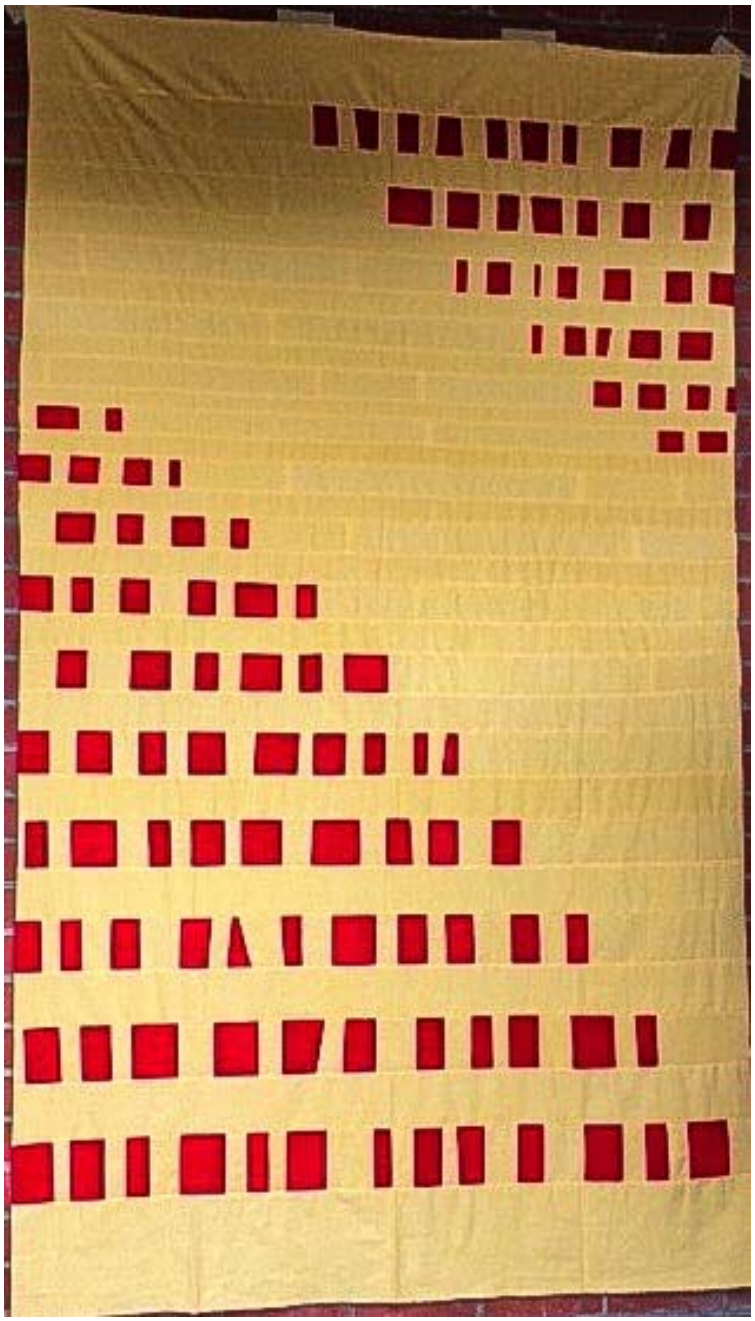

Figure 12. After the Fire quilt by Helen.

Lucille described how quilting helped her move from feelings of loss to fulfillment and happiness as she neared the first anniversary of her husband's death:

> So, um, I like to be able to go back to the quilting room when I'm frazzled, yeah. And, um, think of him and transition from that, you know, loss to, um, seeing the fulfillment and happiness of-of our time together. So…you know I think it does keep me going.

Altruism. Altruism refers to an act of selflessness and generosity towards others, but can also describe the feeling one gets from helping others. Many of the participants in this study talked about making quilts to be donated through their quilt guilds to specific organizations. Ranger lives in Arizona part of each year and she makes baby quilts for a non-profit charity in her area. The charity supports women during their pregnancies and the quilts are part of layettes given to these women. Debbie enjoyed making a baby quilt when there was a need for quilts in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) of the hospital where she used to work.

> Well the whole time I was doing this baby boy quilt. I did one in blue and white, um, it was so satisfying because all I kept thinking about was, this is going to comfort a little one, in uh, in an incubator. And most of all, it's going to comfort the mom. And I thought, I have to do my best work, because, and I, I mean I'd never said this out loud, but if the baby doesn't live, the child may be buried with this. So, I wanted it to be my absolute best work. Um, that was very satisfying, I, I thought of nothing else but that quilt while I was sewing it. And I was going through chemo at the time. It, it, it really took my mind off everything else, except the quilt. And someone else's worries besides mine. Definitely. And when I uh,

> when I finished it, I took it to a meeting and we have uh, sections called show and tell where you get up on stage and you show your latest project. And um, I got up on stage and showed it, and I told this was for uh, community quilts, for uh, the NICU babies, and it just thrilled me to give it. I had never done that before, and I'm hooked. (Debbie)

Negative Case Analysis

During the interview process, I discovered that one of the participants was a professional artist who was also a quilter. Although professional quilters were eliminated from participating in the study during the selection process, there was nothing in the criteria to block out professional artists who happened to quilt and sell their quilt art. I set the criteria from what I read in the literature and from my own experience as a quilter, and my operational definition of professional quilter was more traditional in nature than what the current quilting environment embraces. A professional quilter was defined as a quilter who worked in the quilting industry or sold her quilts. This participant was an artist who quilted and sold her quilt-inspired art. The interview from this participant was included in the analysis to provide a more thorough exploration, although the interview had a different tone than the others.

Addressing Research Questions

The first research question was, "What are the lived experiences of adult women who quilt as a leisure activity?" The demographics and participant descriptions provided the sought-after picture of the lived experiences of the participants, answering Research Question 1.

The second research question was “How do adult women who quilt as a leisure activity relate participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and to building flourishing?” The three major themes of creativity, relationships, and positive emotion detailed the ways the participants related quilting to their well-being and building flourishing, answering Research Question 2.

Summary

Chapter four describes the context of the study, the data collection methods, the coding and data analysis procedures used to develop the emergent themes from the interviews, evidence of trustworthiness, the results of the data analysis, and the handling of a discrepant case. Semistructured interviews with 12 participants who met the study criteria were conducted either in person or on the phone and were audio-recorded, following IRB approved procedures. I mailed the hand-made pin keeps to the participants within 2 days of interviewing them. Interviews were professionally transcribed verbatim, proofread, manually coded, and organized into categories. I used Microsoft Word and Excel to sort the resultant codes and categories, keeping the codes with the original text from the participant. Throughout this process, I worked back and forth between the documents to condense and focus the coding to more accurately reflect the interview data. When I thought a code did not seem quite right, I went back to the transcript to read again the exact words of the participant to determine the correct code.

Three main themes emerged from the data analysis: creativity, relationships, and positive emotion. These three main themes comprised thirteen subthemes. Findings from this study suggest the many ways women perceive quilting as contributing to their well-

being and flourishing. Quilting provides a challenge in using fabric and design for creative expression. It is an opportunity for experimentation, discovery, and textile interpretation of personal or political views. Quilting is generational; not only are techniques and patterns passed from one generation to another, but so is the love and appreciation of quilts. Quilters will make quilts to commemorate a person or a special occasion, and they make some quilts specifically to give away. There is a connection between quilters that creates a bond between them. Quilters have fun quilting and some quilters are able to express this sense of whimsy in their creations. Others turn to quilting for stress relief or to improve their moods. Quilters are altruistic, supporting their larger communities by making quilts for NICU babies, veterans, and children removed from their homes.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Foundational literature exploring the lived experience of quilting has been primarily limited to quilt history books and popular quilting publications. These sources serve mostly as teaching instruments, and include patterns and directions. Fictional books about quilters address the passion women have for quilting and the support they receive from the quilting community, but these sources fall outside the realm of scholarly literature.

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to explore the lived experiences of women quilters aged 18 and older as it pertains to quilting and well-being. By conducting a thorough review of the existing literature on the intersection of quilting and well-being, I found that there was a need for further investigation into the unique experiences of adult women who quilt as a leisure activity (see Collier & Karolyi, 2014; Conner & Silvia, 2015; Dickie, 2011; Kelly et al., 2012; Le et al., 2015; Seligman, 2011). From this gap in the literature, I developed this study to explore quilters' perceptions of the relationship between quilting and their own well-being and flourishing. Although many men have their own unique quilting experiences, I was especially interested in the experiences of women who quilt, expressly those women who chose to quilt as a leisure activity and not for income. To uncover these experiences, a qualitative narrative analysis with a photo elicitation component was chosen as the research design.

Three themes emerged from the data analysis. First, creativity and the creative process were a dominant part of the quilting experience. Second, relationships were of critical importance to women in the activity of quilting. Third, positive emotions during

participation in quilting were described by each of the participants. In this chapter, I interpret these findings as they relate to the existing literature on the topic of quilting and flourishing. I also describe limitations and recommendations for further study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The common shared experiences surrounding quilting and well-being were described by the participants during the semistructured interviews. I identified and extracted three major themes from the transcripts. The themes and corresponding subthemes embodied the essence of the quilters' shared experiences and confirm or augment findings from earlier studies. I identified future directions for research and practice by comparing the findings from this study to the foundational understanding of quilting and well-being,

Theme 1: Creativity

There is growing recognition in psychology that creativity is associated with emotional functioning and flourishing (Forgeard & Eichner, 2014; Lomas, 2016). Creativity has been linked to flow states, which have positive effects on subsequent flourishing and happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow occurs when someone is actively doing a favorite activity that requires skill and effort, such as dancing, painting, or playing a challenging musical piece. Creativity has recently been viewed as supporting meaning in life (Kaufman, 2018), a critical component of well-being and one of Seligman's (2011) PERMA elements: positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment.

Creative expression. The participants in this study expressed that quilting provided them with a means of creative expression, which they perceived contributed to their well-being and flourishing. Previous research has suggested that creative expression has a positive influence on well-being in the elderly and in individuals with physical illnesses (Reynolds, 2010; Reynolds et al., 2008, 2011; Reynolds & Lim, 2007; Reynolds & Prior, 2003, 2011). In general population participants, community-based art groups were found to have dramatic mental health benefits, with participants becoming more outgoing, worrying less, and having greater self-efficacy (Abbots & Spence, 2013). Thus, findings from this current study echo the existing research showing benefits of creative expression on well-being.

Experimentation/discovery. Experimentation and discovery were cited by several participants as the best part of quilting. Previous researchers positively linked creativity and openness to experience, with people more open to experience reporting more creative goals, higher creative self-efficacy, and more creative accomplishments (Conner, DeYoung, & Silvia, 2016; Kaufman et al., 2016). The finding in the current study of openness to experimentation concurs with findings from the literature on creativity. However, openness to experimentation and discovery with design and fabric were not mentioned in previous studies on quilting and well-being.

Challenge. Quilters reported loving the challenge quilting presents to them. One of the components of flow is that the activity is challenging; activities that lead to flow stretch the skills of the participant (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Flow is an element of engagement in Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory of well-being. Challenge as a

component of quilters' experience fits with previous studies on quilting and well-being (Burt & Atkinson, 2012; Grace et al., 2009).

Design/fabric. Fabric was the medium chosen by quilters for their designs, and fabric is to the quilter what paint is to the painter. The participants loved their fabric, which was frequently imbued with more than surface color and design, but also with the context surrounding the acquisition of that particular piece of fabric. Louise spoke of saving the fabric she and her sister dyed prior to her sister's illness until she could make it into a quilt. Several other participants had kept fabric over 40 years, waiting for just the right quilt for it. One of the draws to fabric was the tactile feel of the fabric itself. Debbie stated: "I like to try to get in to my sewing room every day. Even if it's just to stroke my fabric." This finding parallels previous research on women acquiring a fabric stash (Stalp, 2006c) and suggesting that the colors and feel of the fabric in quilting were key creative stimuli (Burt & Atkinson, 2012; Gabbert, 2000; Grace et al., 2009). Stalker, writing about her experience in creating fabric protest art, noted, "I love using fabric, touching it, manipulating it and honouring it" (Graham & Stalker, 2007, p. 45).

Expression of political views. Some quilters in this study utilized quilting to express their political views. Images on a quilt were created to illustrate the quilter's opinion of current political events.. Previous research bears out this finding. For centuries, a common way for women to express their patriotism or partisan views has been through motifs in their handwork (Graham & Stalker, 2007, Powell, 2000). The AIDS quilt was a premier example of utilizing quilting to address the political zeitgeist surrounding AIDS at that time (Jones, 2007; Yep, 2007). Contemporary quilt activism,

falling under the category “craftivism,” shares many qualities with quiltmaking for political or social causes. Closely related are the social justice quilts being created by youth at the Social Justice Sewing Academy (SJSA) in the San Francisco Bay area. The SJSA combines social justice education and textile art (quilts) in “community in a 21st century sewing circle” (Mission Statement).

Creativity was mentioned by the participants as one of three central themes of their quilting activity. Quilting provided a space to express themselves creatively and to play, experimenting with design and fabric to create something unique. In their quilting, they discovered new ways to use textiles or to put them together, to challenge their quilting skills, and to express their political viewpoints. In addition to creativity, another commonality was the centrality of relationships to their quilting.

Theme 2: Relationships

Relationships with others was the second main theme found in this study. As part of their practice of quilting, quilters tend to do most of their actual sewing alone, but get together with other quilters for quilt guild meetings, to share knowledge and works-in-progress, to attend quilt shows and classes, to eat, and to shop for fabric. This finding corresponds to previous studies showing the emphasis quilters place on the social side of quilting: friendship, support, and sharing (Burt & Atkinson, 2012; Creative Crafts Group, 2014; Piercy & Cheek, 2004; Pöllänen & Voutilainen, 2017; Wall & Stasz, 2010).

Generational. The quilters in the current study spoke of the generational nature of quilting. Several of the participants were taught to sew by their mothers or aunts. Others treasured quilts that had been made by their grandmothers and had been given to

them. Still others attempt to keep the craft of quilting alive by passing on the knowledge, skills, and love of quilts to their grandchildren. Other researchers have also identified the intergenerational connection among craft-makers (Adams-Price & Steinman, 2007; Grace et al., 2009; Johnson & Wilson, 2005). The familial base of craft making provides a pattern of continuity through generations.

Gifting quilts. Some of the participants in the current study began quilting because they wanted to make a gift for a friend or loved one. Almost all mentioned giving quilts they made to friends, relatives, and philanthropic endeavors. For Marty, the most meaningful part of quilting was, "when it's finished and I'm giving it to somebody. And I think, as, as I'm doing it, you know, how the person will feel about it. And hoping they keep it forever." In previous research, young mothers involved in craft making spoke similarly of the significance of making and giving handmade gifts as a way of connecting and contributing to others. Handmade gifts were seen as an expression of love and care, as well as a source of pride (Grace et al., 2009; Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Pollanen & Voutilainen, 2017).

Connection. The quilters in the current study reported feeling a connection with other quilters. Debbie expressed surprise at how quickly friendships formed with other quilters and how other quilters encouraged her and helped her during her illness. Previous studies found that the common interest smoothed over early stages of establishing friendships and the comfort and pleasure of connection was cherished by women craft makers (Burt & Atkinson, 2012; Grace et al. 2009; Piercy & Cheek, 2004; Wall & Stasz, 2010).

Commemorative quilts. Quilters in the current study created commemorative quilts to celebrate and honor loved ones and special occasions. A commemorative quilt is made to mark a personal, family, or institutional event or situation. The commemorative quilt can be made from commemorative fabrics: T-shirts, clothes from a deceased loved one, a wedding dress, or baby clothes, for example. A bereavement quilt is a type of commemorative quilt made to honor the life and legacy of a loved one. Participant M's quilt commemorating her father-in-law depicted images from different parts of his life and things family and friends would recognize about him. He was an active university supporter and the quilt was created in red and black, the colors of the university. Previous researchers noted that memories contained within a commemorative quilt are extremely meaningful to either the maker or the receiver or both (Carlson, 2003; Krone & Horner, 1993). Quilts "are repositories for our most profound emotions and experiences" (Knauer, 2017, para. 6).

Theme 3: Positive Emotion

Enjoyable leisure activities have been associated with psychological and physical well-being (Pressman & Cohen, 2005). Enjoyable activities enhanced well-being by acting as breathers, restorers, and stress buffers, providing a unique pathway through which positive mood can influence well-being (Collier & Karolyi, 2014).

Fun. The quilters in the current study expressed how much fun they have quilting, and interviews with them were accompanied by much laughter. Choosing fabrics and creating a design were likened to "playing," and the quilting motifs were described as "whimsical." Previous research covering the concept of women having fun is limited.

Stalp (2015) noted that “leisure activities with an inactive or sedentary nature to them, or those marked with a feminine or domestic stigma (like sewing, quilting, or knitting) are not often seen as leisure pursuits” (p. 266). What women experience as fun may not be viewed by outsiders as an enjoyable activity. However, in qualitative research addressing women’s lived experience of the phenomenon of quilting together, Arcaroli et al. (2011) found curative factors to be present in the community-based quilting group process. One of the curative factors was group cohesiveness, which refers to an individual’s sense of belongingness:

> Respondents repeatedly referred to the quilting group as a place to belong, a place to receive positive affirmation and encouragement, and a place to feel known, understood and accepted. Many participants shared that they value the time spent together and that they look forward to the meetings. Respondents expressed that the quilt group meetings served as a place to share and a place to laugh and have fun in a community of friends. (Arcaroli et al., 2011, p. 1)

The current study contributes to the body of research on women and quilting in that the participants found discovery and experimentation to be play when they were creating alone in their quilting studios. Quilting was considered fun, even in the absence of a quilting group.

Stress relief. The quilters in the current study reported turning to quilting to manage their stress. Quilting may have been the physical activity of keeping their hands busy that kept stress at bay, or quilting may have been the engagement of their minds in

the pursuit of a creative and challenging activity. Previous researchers found that alleviation of perceived stress was a factor in increasing well-being and flourishing (Gander, Proyer, Ruch, & Wyss, 2013; Niemiec, 2017).

Mood change. Quilters in the current study specifically reported that they did not quilt when they were angry. Some quilters noted they had learned other methods to deal with their anger, while others mentioned not wanting the negative energy of anger to be sewn into the quilt on which they were working and would be giving away. Participants did, however, turn to quilting when they were feeling anxious. The challenge and comfort of working on a quilt could transform an anxious mood. Collier and Karolyi (2014) found that when women who considered themselves textile handcrafters (quilters, knitters, or weavers) turned to their handcraft when they were angry, sad, or upset; working on their craft was the best way for them to effect mood change.

Altruism. The quilters in the current study gave away as many or more quilts than they kept for themselves. Participants made quilts for newborns in the NICU, children who had been removed from their homes by Child Protective Services, American military veterans, women and children in domestic violence shelters, women with a cancer diagnosis, and families who lost their homes to wildfires or floods. Participants donated quilts that could be sold at auction to support Alzheimer's or breast cancer research, or benefit local fire departments. Previous research has shown that giving money or time boosts happiness and psychological well-being (Dunn, Aknin, & Morton, 2008; Kahana, Bhatta, Lovegreen, Kahana, & Midlarsky, 2013; Mogilner, 2010), and that the benefits of giving extend across the life span from toddlers (Aknin, Hamlin,

& Dunn, 2012) to high school students (Crocker, Canevello, Breines, & Flynn, 2010) to the elderly (Sarid, Melzer, Kurz, Shahar, & Ruch, 2010). Making a quilt to give away involves giving both time and money: the time to make the quilt and the funds to purchase the materials.

Theoretical Framework

A positive psychology well-being model formed the theoretical framework of this study. Positive psychology was chosen because positive psychologists seek to discover things people are already doing that contribute to their well-being (Sheldon & King, 2001). The participants in this study were already quilters when I interviewed them. Quilting is an activity in which they participated prior to and during this research. In his PERMA theory of well-being, Seligman (2011) defined five essential elements for experiencing well-being and building flourishing: Positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. The data from this study were consistent with this theory, and all participants reported experiencing positive emotions in the course of their quilting activity. Positive emotions included pleasure, joy, happiness, excitement, pride, altruism, gratitude, and love. The participants reported experiencing flow in the process of creating and sewing the quilts, enjoying the motion of cutting, sewing, quilting, and not really having to think about it, being so fully engaged in the process that they did not notice the passage of time. Many of the participants have quilters in their family history and for some of them, the most meaningful part of quilting was relationships. They talked about the social side of quilting, making friends easily with other quilters and recalling in the interviews how they liked to get together for

classes, retreats, fabric acquisition road trips, and quilt guild meetings. Participants expressed appreciation of the support provided by fellow quilters during times of personal travail, be it a medical condition, a relocation, or the total loss of their homes. Quilting brought added meaning to their lives through the quilts they made and gave to others and by giving them a place where they experienced belonging. From teaching themselves to quilt by reading a book, to taking classes from world-renowned quilt teachers, to dying their own fabric and designing their own quilts, the participants reported a great sense of accomplishment.

Limitations

There are some notable limitations of this study that can be used to inform future research projects on the intersection of quilting and flourishing. First and foremost, this study was intended to capture the experiences of a sample of adult women quilters who quilt as a leisure activity. Given this intention, the transferability of this study's findings is limited. For example, the results of this study may not transfer to male quilters. Textile handcrafts tend to be female-dominated and, because I was specifically interested in women, I did not include men in my sample. Future researchers may wish to consider whether there are gender differences in perceptions of well-being associated with participation in quilting as a leisure activity.

In addition to the gender limitation, certain other qualities of the participants lacked diversity. All but one of the participants were over the age of 57, with the majority in the 62-75 range. Two participants fell into the range of oldest-old, at 85 and 93. Most had been quilting 20 years or longer and most lived within the same county in California.

Greater geographical diversity and research on younger quilters and those with less than 20 years quilting experience may be warranted.

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study was expected to be limited geographically given the fact that face-to-face interviews were planned. This limitation could have been alleviated after phone interviews were introduced as a method of data collection. Quilters from several communities and states expressed a desire to be interviewed, but I chose to limit participants to those living here when the wildfires struck. As devastating as they were, the wildfires had a galvanizing effect on the community at large, and on the quilting community as well. Life in this county has been demarcated as “before the fires” and “after the fires”, and I was hesitant to include those who had not gone through this experience.

Many quilters were eager to speak to me. Recruitment took only two weeks and interviews were conducted over a two-month span. Most interviews were held the two weeks prior to Christmas and this may have limited the participants to those who had fewer holiday or family obligations than others. Recruitment at a different time of year may have yielded a different group of participants with possibly different results.

Finally, I expected that potential for personal bias might be a limitation of this study. As a quilter for the last 35 years, I have experienced the positive mental health benefits of quilting and I have observed these benefits at a distance in other quilters. These are the reasons I was attracted to this study. I wanted to know what it was other quilters were experiencing, instead of interpreting their quilts through my own experiences and assuming I knew how they felt. Time and again during data analysis, I

went back to the transcripts and recordings to ensure I was using the exact words of the participants and not my interpretation of what they had said. In this manner, I could make meaning based solely on the participants' testimonies for this project. I also kept an audit journal with notes of my thought processes so that I could check myself for potential bias that would influence the study's findings.

Recommendations

More research needs to be done about quilting and well-being in populations other than the middle-aged female quilter. Research has just begun on the phenomenon of the contemporary male quilter, but the research is still in its infancy. The 2017 Quilting in America Survey estimates there are 7-10 million quilters in the U.S. While the average dedicated quilter is female and 63 years old, quilters of either gender under age 45 are classified as the "up and coming dedicated quilters" (QIA Survey, 2017). The Modern Quilt Movement has captured both male and female quilters with a younger esthetic, bringing bolder and more graphic designs to the quilt world. Research on these modern quilters could be compared and contrasted with current research featuring middle- and old-aged female quilters.

In an effort to examine emotions as they occur in real time, research could look at a quilter's emotional levels while he or she is participating in a quilting activity. Real-time data capture could alleviate potential limitations of self-reported historical accounts. It would also provide an opportunity to gather objective data such as blood pressure, heart rate, and cortisol levels, all markers of physiological health and well-being.

Another avenue for future research involves the emergence of online quilting websites and quilting groups. According to the QIA 2017 survey, dedicated quilters spend almost eight hours weekly on the internet browsing, visiting, or interacting with quilting-related sites. Among the under-45 quilters, quilt-related websites and online videos play an even stronger role for information and inspiration. Quilters who may or may not belong to quilt groups in their communities may belong to online quilt groups, for example Facebook groups. A study might explore the lived experience of quilters who belong only to online quilting groups to see how the findings compare to quilters who belong only to quilting groups that meet in person.

Interview responses in this study barely touched on the liminal space quilting can present in the life of a quilter. Transformation occurs as one journeys through a liminal space, such as that formed during songwriting or other creative activity (Beech, 2015; Riley, 2008; Turner, 1974). Future research might look at the experience of transformation that takes place in the quilter as he or she works within the liminal space offered through quilting.

Implications

Quilting can be considered a hobby for the affluent (Creative Crafts Group, 2014). Quilters make quite the financial investment to acquire sewing machines and the necessary fabric, tools, and instruction to become proficient at quilting. Quilters who have quilted as long as the women in this study have undoubtedly collected more machines and fabric than they can use in their lifetimes. “I can’t die because I will never be done” (Marty). Social change could occur if quilters teach other women to quilt. From

this study we know that most quilters were taught to sew by an older female relative, that quilting is generational and relational, and that quilters are altruistic and like to teach their grandchildren to quilt. Quilters could take this concept beyond family and create quilting communities among women who are not as privileged, such as women who are incarcerated, from impoverished communities, or isolated from family and friends. Quilters might contribute some of their extra sewing machines, tools, and fabric, along with their expertise. The new quilters might enjoy the benefits to well-being and flourishing that the women in this study experienced.

The findings from this study, if replicated more generally, could inform practices in art therapy. If a client is already a quilter, the art therapist's treatment plan could draw on that activity. Quilting could be a vehicle for well-being for women who lack support of friends and family. Quilting might also be recommended by therapists as a leisure activity for clients who would benefit from positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011).

Craftivism is a term coined by combining the words craft and activism. Quilting can be combined with activism for social change. In the same manner the AIDS Quilt raised societal awareness of the issue of AIDS and those dying from it, quilters can raise awareness of social justice issues currently facing our country. The Social Justice Sewing Academy, founded in 2017 in the San Francisco Bay area, holds workshops for youth to make quilt blocks that explore issues such as gender discrimination, mass incarceration, gun violence, and gentrification (Social Justice Sewing Academy, n.d.). Volunteers sew the quilt blocks together; the quilts are then displayed in museums, galleries, and quilt

shows across the country. We know from this study that quilters express their political views in their quilts. They can engender change by incorporating social justice issues in their quilts on display.

Finally, the theoretical support for this study was confirmed to be an effective lens through which to view the topics of quilting and flourishing. The PERMA theory of well-being not only aligned with the purpose of this research, but also aligned with the findings. Given the successful application of this concept to this project, the PERMA well-being theory might effectively be applied in future studies of leisure activity and flourishing.

Reflections of the Researcher

I wanted to conduct this research study to discover what other women quilters experienced when they quilted. After years of quilting and attending quilt shows, reading quilters' statements about the meaning behind their quilts, one experience of my own prompted me to undertake this study. I created a quilt from a published pattern, not my own design, but my own use of fabrics, threads, beads, and other elements (see Figure 13). When I looked at the quilt as a whole, I could see my life depicted in the quilt. I had not set out to create a depiction of my life; it was simply a design I liked and fabrics I chose to complement the pattern.

In creating this quilt, I expressed emotions I had no words for until I saw them depicted in the water under the bridge, reflecting years of my life gone by. Objects in the stream included a watch face, a black and blue heart-shaped bead, and a piece of vintage lace. The watch face and workings signified the years spent raising my daughters, the end

of my childbearing years, and the sheer number of days never to be reclaimed. The dark heart-shaped bead represented the end of love, and as I sewed a piece of my wedding veil into the water, I mourned the loss of my own innocence. The bridge came to signify the liminal space I occupied as I transitioned from the person I used to be and events gone by to the person I am becoming and events yet to come. The spring green color of the tree leaves reflected newness and fresh growth. Almost hidden within the leaves is another heart-shaped bead, spring green like new growth (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Liminality – The Space In-between.

Creating this quilt helped me process things that were happening in my life at the time. I was in my early fifties, my children were becoming adults and leaving home, and

my marriage was failing. I had spent the greater part of my years as a wife and mother and I did not know what the future held or what roles I might occupy for the remainder of my days. I had not consciously acknowledged to myself that my marriage had failed and as I sewed a piece of my wedding veil into the quilt, I cried, grieving the loss of my dream of "happily ever after." Despite this, I felt hope for the future and signified that with the spring green heart-shaped bead.

Viewing this quilt as a whole helped me bring closure to this part of my life. I experienced greater well-being as I realized my life was not over and I had hope for the future. I was able to move on and move forward, like the part of the stream that continuously flows toward the horizon. I experienced healing as I gave up the dream of "happily ever after" and began to build a more genuine relationship with my husband. I was able to celebrate with my children as they gained their independence and left the nest. I learned that I am a person in my own regard, separate from the roles I play as wife and mother.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of 12 women who quilt and discover their perceptions of quilting and well-being. The participants expressed that they enjoyed talking about quilts and the interviews were punctuated by laughter. One of the quilters who lost her home, despite being inundated with insurance paperwork at the time of her interview, said, "I could talk about quilting for days on end" (M). The women I interviewed perceived quilting to intersect with their well-being in 3 specific

arenas: Creativity, relationships, and positive emotion. This concurs with previous research on quilting, creativity, positive psychology, well-being, and flourishing.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

RQ_1: What are the lived experiences of women who quilt?

Interview Questions:

1. Tell me how you got started quilting.
2. What do you enjoy most about quilting?
3. What is most meaningful to you about your quilting?
4. What do you see as the benefits of quilting for you?
5. How often do you quilt or participate in quilt-related activities?

RQ_2: How do adult women who quilt relate their participation in quilting to their emotional well-being and to building flourishing?

Interview Questions:

6. Tell me about the quilt you brought.
    a. What were the circumstances surrounding the decision to make this particular quilt? What prompted you to make this quilt? How did you feel prior to making this quilt?
    b. How did you feel during the process of making it? (Physically, emotionally)
    c. How did you feel after it was completed? How was this different than before making the quilt? How long did these feelings last?
    d. If you shared this quilt with others, how did you feel then?
7. How do you feel when you quilt?

Probe: How is this different than how you feel when you engage in other activities?

8. How would you describe your mood when you turn to quilting?

   Probe: Do you turn to quilting when you feel good, sad, angry, or upset? What other activities do you engage in to help improve your mood?

9. How do you feel when you finish a quilt? How would you describe your mood when you complete a quilt?
10. How do you feel when you don't finish a quilt? Does having unfinished projects diminish the meaning of quilting for you?
11. How do you see quilting in your future, if at all?
12. Is there anything I didn't ask about that you'd like to tell me?

Appendix B: Study Participant Recruitment Flyer

Quilting and Flourishing

Creating Your Best Life

Volunteers *Wanted!*

- Join me in a conversation on how you create your best life.
- Looking for quilters to interview about their quilting experience.
- This is for my Doctoral-level research on the relationship between quilting and flourishing.*
- Your name will not be used in any publications.

For more information,
please contact

Cathy Ferrarese

530-351-4607

**This study has been approved by the Walden University Institutional Review Board.*

Appendix C: Demographic Data Sheet

1. What is your age?
2. How many years have you been quilting?
3. Do you do most of your quilting alone or in a group setting?
4. When do you quilt?
5. Approximately how much time per week do you spend quilting?
6. Are you a member of a quilt guild or any other quilting-related organizations?
7. What types of quilts or quilted things do you make?
8. Where do you do most of your quilting? If at home, do you have a room or space dedicated to quilting?