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JULIE NELSON ARCAROLI
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YALOM'S THERAPEUTIC GROUP FACTORS IN WOMEN'S QUILTING GROUPS:
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BY

_____
Dr. Paula McWhirter, Chair

_____
Dr. Rockey Robbins

_____
Dr. Terry Pace

_____
Dr. Katherine Haring

_____
Dr. Luz-Eugenia Cox-Fuenzalida

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Abstract

Can participation in creative community based groups be therapeutic? The presence of Yalom's therapeutic group factors (Yalom,& Leszcz, 2005) is examined in women's small quilt-making groups. 50 quilt-makers and 5 small quilting groups participated in interviews and observations which were used to examine women's lived experience of the phenomenon of quilting together. Drawing on qualitative data, empirical analysis shows curative factors to be present in the quilting community. Results are discussed in the context of therapeutic group experience and accessible, cost effective mental health care for an aging population. Conclusions provide initial support for mental health care providers and community service personnel to discuss and encourage participation in creative community-based groups for individuals suffering from depression or seeking to improve life satisfaction, given demonstrated therapeutic factors and potential to advance specific therapeutic goals.

Introduction

Problem Statement

Mental Health care in the United States is currently facing a number of challenges. Certain populations (elderly, homebound, rural residents, minority populations) have limited access to mental health care (Meeks, 2007; Stacciarini et al., 2007). Those who do have access often have to navigate around the many treatment restrictions imposed by managed care and Third Party Payors. Meanwhile depression rates in the U.S. continue to be elevated especially for women (McBride & Bagby, 2006). Many individuals find medications too expensive and the side effects problematic. Some individuals refuse to take medication or find it ineffective; therefore alternatives to pharmacological treatments are often necessitated. To further complicate the picture our society has become increasingly prone to individual isolation exhibiting an overall lack of socially interactive community involvement (Collier, 2000). Could certain community groups offer an answer by providing an accessible environment for curative change?

Literature suggests that creative textile art activities and creative group pursuits may offer specific positive benefits toward relieving depressive symptoms (Cerny, Eicher & DeLong, 1993; Reynolds, 2003). Examples of therapeutic activities emerging from research indicate that art provides an avenue for self-expression, (Cerny, Eicher & DeLong, 1993; Reynolds, 2003) opportunities for meaningful relationships, sharing, communicating, and nurturing (Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001). Evidence suggests that creative endeavors increase: opportunities for leadership and learning (Dickie, 2003); mental/ emotional relaxation through distraction and escape (Reynolds, 2000); physical relaxation (Reynolds, 2000; Stalp, 2006); increase in self-esteem through mastery/

competence (Reynolds, 2000); enhanced perceived control (Reynolds, Vivat, & Prior, 2007; Shaw, 1994); and the provision of meaningful activity that leads to increased activity levels as well as energizing thoughts (Reynolds, 2000).

However, existing literature does not address specific therapeutic process and effects inherent in the context of increasingly popular women's small quilting groups. It is estimated that 27.7 million people, the majority of whom are women (99%), engage in the task of quilt-making in the United States, spending $3.3 billion dollars per year on quilting fabrics, notions and books (Quilting in America Survey, 2006). In 1986, *American Quilter* magazine ran a survey in which 69% of respondents indicated affiliations to regular quilt gatherings (Levie, 2004). In order to address this gap in the literature I will contribute to developing theories about therapeutic group process and to a growing but still limited understanding of curative community group dynamics. The focus of this dissertation will be on the curative factors present in the activity of quilt-making in general and quilt-making in groups in particular.

Significance and Purpose of Study

Meta-analytic reviews have demonstrated that group participation is an effective modality for treating a variety of mental health issues especially among older adults (Payne, 2008). The relevance of this research is highlighted by the rapid growth of the older adult population (55+) in America due to the aging of baby boomers, medical advances and increased life span. All of these together call for an increased need for psychological interventions that can serve this population effectively and economically (Payne, 2008). Five to ten percent of older adults are affected by depression associated with aging (APA, 2003) related to retirement, death of spouse, chronic pain, cognitive

decline, and diminishing social networks (Payne, 2008). Could regular participation in a small creative group activity combat some of these depressive affects by providing goals, learning opportunities, and increased social interaction opportunities to individuals who often feel lonely and isolated? If the results of this study demonstrate that creative, small group treatment of older adults is helpful and cost efficient; it will establish a rationale for incorporating these pursuits into the repetoires of health care and community service professionals.

Findings will be discussed in relation to the managed care requirements of demand for brevity and uniformly structured, time limited therapy. Results indicating the efficacy of therapeutic factors and thus potential to advance treatment outcomes for individuals with age related depression will make a significant contribution to the knowledge base. This will increase the liklihood that psychologists will consider prescribing participation in a creative social group (such as quilting) as a behavioral activation strategy. Involvement in quilt-making has been shown to be readily adaptive to special populations (such as people who are managing chronic illness, disability or incarceration) in ways that fit particular constraints and ability (Reynolds et al., 2003; Terichow, 2007).

Literature Review

This review of the related literature is organized to address three topical areas; the benefits of textile art activity, women's therapeutic groups, and therapeutically effective small group interactions. The subject matter informing these areas is taken from the discipline of psychology in general and group psychotherapy in particular. The review begins with a brief history of the development of quilt-making groups in the United

States and then attempts to answer the following questions: How do traditional and contemporary ideas about women's groups impact women's engagement in the activity of quilting together? What does the recent literature on women's group interaction, textile art activity and Yalom's therapeutic group factors contribute to our understanding of women's lived quilting group experience? What insights does the research on effective group therapy offer to our understanding of the dynamics of women's small quilt-making groups? This literature review leads to the following final research questions: Are Yalom's curative factors present in quilting communities? If so – which factors are present and pre-dominant? Do women's quilting groups provide an atmosphere for curative change processes to occur? Do themes (in addition to those described by Yalom's therapeutic group factors) emerge that inform us about therapeutic aspects of quilt-making?

A Brief History of Quilting Groups

Quilt-making in groups is considered a truly American phenomenon. To understand the spirit of this activity, one must look briefly at the history of its development and the ever-changing cultural context from which it springs. Many of the benefits of quilt-making in groups have remained constant over time and continue to be enjoyed across age, race, and culture.

Quilting (defined as two layers of fabric with padding between them and stitching through all thicknesses) has been around for many centuries. The word quilt is derived from the Latin word "culcita" which referred to a padded pallet on which Romans slept. In British medieval literature and household inventories, the culcita became "cowlte" and was used both as an underlay and a bed covering (Liddell et al., 1988). Some of the

oldest living examples of quilts date back to the 1300's, but earliest evidence of quilting of any kind was discovered in a 1924 Russian scientific expedition when a quilted rug was found on the floor of a Scythian chieftain's tomb located southwest of Lake Baikal in Russia. This ancient artifact is now in the collection of the Leningrad branch of the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences. The Russians date the rug's origin to sometime between 100 BC and AD 200 (Liddell et.al., 1988).

Although quilting is sometimes considered a uniquely American craft, it has origins in many times and places. References to quilting before the eleventh century are rare and difficult to interpret, but evidence of quilting became increasingly conspicuous in the needlecraft of nearly every country in Western Europe. Throughout the twelfth and thirteenth century, quilted material was utilized in bed furnishings, clothing and the armorial bearings of the crusaders. Thus, the first European women to arrive in America brought with them a rich legacy of needlework skills.

While the origins of quilt-making may be vast, the quilting group itself is considered "distinctively American in origin and scope" (Atkins, 1994, p.11). The exchange of labor was a daily part of life in the colonial period as neighbors helped each other build homes, raise barns and husk corn. Such activities were referred to as logging bees and husking bees by the men but it wasn't until the early 1800's that the communal quilt meetings were called "quilting bees" or "quilting frolics" (Atkins, 1994).

Participation in the needlework activity at quilting bees was primarily the women's domain but these activities were also attended by men and children. After a quilt was completed and the quilt frame was put away, a dance often followed with food, music and games. Group quilting affairs did serve a material need by helping to supply

neighbors with plenty of winter coverings; they also supplied important creative opportunities and social benefits. They provided one of the few social diversions available at the time where men and women could meet in a socially sanctioned (chaperoned) environment. It was an opportunity to exchange information and opinions as well as to interact with perspective partners.

In some ways quilting groups provided different things to the participants of the past, but there are also benefits that remain common across time. For women then as now, quilting groups provide an important support:

> "…the sociability of the event allowed women to deal with the very real problems and concerns of their daily lives in an acceptable manner, and issues of child care, housekeeping, marital relations, community service, births, weddings, deaths, politics and crises of every order could be brought into the open, reviewed, discussed, and decisions made with the support of a peer group. In a very real sense, bees may have served as the first women's consciousness-raising sessions." (Atkins, 1994, p. 15)

Quilting groups were a part of life that spanned across culture and economic status in the early 1800's. Although the specific food and entertainment varied, there was a common spirit of cooperation and support. Interviews from the WPA Federal Writers' Project in the 1930's tell about group quilting activities organized by black slaves. The "sprees" as they were called, paralleled other quilting bees in terms of food, dancing and games. As with other quilting group meetings, the women at quilting sprees were in control.

> "Men were invited; they might thread needles, hold candles, be around for dancing and games, escort women home, or keep the fire alive, but they were there on the women's sufferance." (Atkins, 1994, p. 16)

By the late 1800's, quilting bees became a single sex affair. More opportunities for socializing became available and exchange of labor became less of a necessity as a specialized market economy began to develop. Increases in personal wealth and urban population centers prompted the employment of outside domestic help, reducing reliance on communal labor efforts. Quilting bees became more formally organized and usually were associated with humanitarian purposes such as fundraising or to draw attention to a specific social or political concern. More personal quilting bees were also organized to make presentation gifts marking life events like marraiges or births.

In the early 1900's, the concept of restricting women's work to homemaking began to disappear. Women's sphere of work expanded as the Industrial Revolution brought about technological advances and a culture of consumption. Many things that once took hours to produce in the home were readily available for purchase. Group quilt-making activities began to decline in many areas of the United States (Atkins, 1994).

There were several periods in the history of the United States that marked a rise in quilt-making efforts. WWI brought a brief resurgence of quilt-making as women worked to provide Red Cross Quilts. During the Great Depression there was another increase as hardships forced many to return to the quilt-making skills of their ancestors. Although quilting groups still persisted primarily in rural areas, the 1940's, 50's and 60's were perhaps "the low point in quilt history" (Atkins, 1994, p. 7). Women found other ways to socialize. They increased their technological skills and joined the work force in increasing numbers. It wasn't until the 1970's, with the advent of the bicentennial celebration, that interest in quilt-making began to see a sharp increase and along with it a revival of another tradition – that of quilting together.

In the early 1970's quilters began to seek each other out often with the common goal of making a commemorative bicentennial quilt to display in their town. Participants began to share their quilted family heirlooms as well as their interests and skills, again quilting groups and guilds began to form.

> " These quilters formed support groups. In some groups, women could quietly sit and stitch together on individual projects or around a quilting frame. For women looking to assert their creativity, it was a chance to share information and constructive criticism, and to grow as artists. No matter how traditional or feminist the bent of the group, it provided an environment for venting worries about family members and personal problems, for finding acceptance, approval and advice. These rewards were often the most highly prized thing to come out of these quilting get-togethers. In a Sit-'n-Stitch, women felt validated and supported" (Levie, 2004, p.16).

By the mid 1980's, most quilters were members of some kind of quilting group. In 1986, *American Quilter* magazine ran a survey in which 69% of respondents indicated affiliations to regular quilt gatherings (Levie, 2004). Since then quilting has exploded in many directions, boasting a 3.3 billion dollar per year industry with approximately 27 million people (99% of whom are women) engaged in the task of quilt-making in the United States alone (Quilting in America Survey, 2006).

Early quilting bees served as social events around which communities were supported and nurtured. In disparate times, quilting communities have offered a unique opportunity for women to be together in ways that nurtured community as well as empowered them personally and socially. Currently, millions of women continue to be drawn to quilting together. Women gather to make quilts for some of the same reasons they always have – for personal creative pleasure, to help those in need, to draw attention to a specific cause, to raise money or to present a gift for a special event. And they still

speak and write about the friendship, sharing and support they receive. Helen Grigg, a quilter and designer and one of the organizers of the Northwest Quilters, says that what happens over quilts with a group of women is important: “There is great bonding. This is where they share their lives.” (Lasansky, 1991, p. 115).

Women’s Consciousness Raising Groups

Women’s quilting bees may have served long ago as the first consciousness raising groups for women by providing a place to share information, compare personal experience and offer and receive support. A resurgence of women’s quilting groups occurred around the time of the bicentennial celebration in 1976. This coincided with a growing awareness and unrest among women with many of their traditional sex role stereotypes. Consciousness raising groups began to emerge during this same time as a context in which to share and discuss common issues related to the feminist movement.

There is a seminal article written by Annette Brodsky (1973) that looked at *The consciousness-raising (C-R) group as a model for therapy with women*. Brodsky noted that though attrition rates for C-R groups was lower than for other voluntary therapy groups, the dropouts do occur early, “often due to conflict with male relationships that are threatened by changes in dependency behaviors” (Brodsky, 1973, p. 3). Quilting groups may have offered opportunities for women to enjoy some of the same advantages provided by C-R groups in the 70’s but with less threat to traditional relationship and family structures.

Because quilting is thought by many to be a harmless or even quaint feminized activity, it has been conceived of as unimportant and therefore non-threatening to traditional family life (Stalp, 2006). At this time quilting resembles leisure more than it

resembles work (Stalp, 2006). Shaw (1994) sees women's leisure as offering possibilities of resistance to restrictive social roles and the family institution. Leisure provides situations of choice, control and self determination (Shaw, 1994). "As a serious leisure activity, quilting highlights how women accept, resist and negotiate traditional notions of gender in families" as they carve out time to meet their individual creative needs (Stalp, 2006, p. 5). It is not uncommon to hear quilters explain how they can participate in the act of quilt-making, enjoy the freedom of making their own creative choices and still be present with and available to their family.

Though quilting groups may initially focus on the activity of quilt-making, eventually conversation veers toward personal and family issues where opportunities arise to give and receive personal support (Levie, 2004). Support is also offered by the group in an art related context as members participate in the popular "show and share" events associated with most quilting groups. "Show and Share" proceedings allow group members to display their work and tell about the thoughts and ideas that facilitated the construction of a particular project and the techniques that were used, while other group members offer their insights and support.

Quilting with others may offer an opportunity for exploration of personal identity through individual and unique creative expression as well as through interpersonal interaction. Quilt displays at the 2008 Houston International Quilt Festival supported disease eradication, political efforts, personal exploration and social change. The "Quilt Pink" project (that supports breast cancer research), "Alzheimer's Quilts", "Quilting for the Environment" and "Art Therapy" quilt displays are just a few of the exhibits that

represent the link between quilt makers and their consciousness of self exploration and the larger political and economical world.

"The C-R group works to give a sense of social as well as personal worth to the members…" (Brodsky, 1983, p. 4). Quilting groups can also give a sense of social and personal worth to its members as evidenced by a previous study that revealed *Altruism* to be a prevalent curative group factor in quilting groups. *Altruism* refers to the opportunity to be of benefit to others through the offering of support, reassurance, suggestions and insight within the group as they share similar experiences. An example of development of social and personal worth through participation in altruistic acts associated with one particular quilt group, is given in the following words of a participant, "We have one member of our small quilting group whose husband is desperately ill with cancer, and one lady whose mate died of cancer a few years ago. Hearing of their shared experiences, holding those members up in prayer, and doing small things to help them know how loved they are has been a valuable gift from us to them. We have provided food, recipes, pillows, prayers, extra phone calls, shoulders, information and resources….This has been especially helpful to me because I'm able to see love in action. It's great to be a part of her support." A sense of social and personal worth can also be fostered as quilt group members extend the benefits of their work to the community as illustrated by the words of this respondent, "It makes me feel great to be part of an organization that makes quilts for infants in crisis situations" (Arcaroli, McWhirter & Waldo, 2009, p. 14).

Although many women who participated in quilting groups during the seventies and some current quilters do not perceive themselves as feminist - membership in a group with shared interests, values, and expectations of consistent, reciprocal social

interactions can facilitate self awareness or empowerment. These characteristics embody foundational definitions in fiminist thought. Johnson (1976) attempted to integrate feminism and group psychotherapy. Her results indicated that the most helpful curative factors identified by group members included: Belonging to a group of people who understood them, and learning that one is not very different from others. It is argued in Johnson's study that feminist group psychotherapy can be valuable to non-feminist women in that it encourages overall autonomy and self-actualization (Johnson, 1976).

Overall, C-R groups and women's quilting groups show possibility for some distinct therapeutic commonalities. However, quilting groups may package these curative factors in a manner that is more acceptable and less threatening to individuals who identify with more traditional female roles and relationships. Current research on women's therapeutic groups addresses some of the same midlife issues that many quilters face in terms of gender identity, bodily changes and shifting role relationships common to "women of a certain age" (Alonso & Schermer, 2008, p. 23). This research area examines affects from groups that explore new strengths and possibilities in the individual's life and emphasizes interdependence rather than autonomous self-sufficiency as a mature ideal (Alonso & Schermer, 2008).

Yalom's Therapeutic Factors

Moving forward with a review of women's therapeutic groups, requires an introduction to Yalom's therapeutic group factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). A more detailed analysis of the group factors will be offered later in this text.

Group therapy is a highly effective form of psychotherapy. At minimum, its power equals individual psychotherapy in provision of meaningful benefit (Yalom &

Leszcz, 2005). Crucial aspects of the change process of occur through an intricate interplay of human experiences which Yalom refers to as "therapeutic factors". These factors include: an instillation of hope, universality, altruism and catharsis and existential factors. Yalom's techniques involve the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group, socializing, imitative behavior, interpersonal learning, and development of group cohesiveness. These curative factors can help guide the therapist's selection of strategies to shape the group experience and to maximize its potency with different clients in different settings (Yalom, 2005).

In a previous quantitative study that explored depression and life satisfaction among quilt group participants, some of the respondents describe their experience in terms that correspond with Yalom's therapeutic factors. They describe the hope and healing that they receive through their involvement in quilt-making and quilting groups, the information they share with each-other and a "family" of support. They reach out to the community in various ways and they quilt for social change (Arcaroli, McWhirter & Waldo, 2009). Overall, there is a certain feeling of belonging across contexts of age, race and socioeconomic status among quilters and an understanding that "regardless of what type of quilt you make or how you want to make it – there will be a place for you…." (Bresenbay, 1999).

Yalom states that "Psychotherapy has grown beyond its emphasis on eradicating the 'pathological' and now aims at increasing clients' breadth of positive emotions and cognitions" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. xv). A group therapy approach that encourages members to create and inhabit a powerful and caring environment is a potent approach to these contemporary goals. The task is to remove obstacles that block the process of

growth and change by creating a therapeutic atmosphere in the group with conditions of acceptance and understanding (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Yalom's work focuses on therapeutic groups that are assembled specifically to bring about a particular change. Existing literature does not address however, curative factors that occur naturally in community groups. Do Yalom's therapeutic factors exist in certain community based groups such as quilt-making groups? If so- can participation in these creative groups be utilized for specific health and healing purposes or to bring about therapeutic change?

Women's Therapeutic Groups

Considerable research indicates that women benefit more from group psychotherapy than men and that group psychotherapy is effective in general for treatment of older adults suffering from a variety of disorders (Payne, 2008). Various studies have been conducted on group therapy experience in relation to women's midlife challenges (Alonso & Schermer , 2008), depression (Laitinen et. al., 2007; Lara et. al., 2004; Stacciarini, O'Keefe & Mathews, 2007) anxiety (McLeod & Ryan, 1992), cancer survival (Cunningham, et.al., 1998; Wang & Ming, 2006), substance abuse (Ogilvie, Blair & Paul, 1995), disability (Seligman & Marshak, 2004) and divorce related issues (Oygard, 2001).

Different therapeutic group factors are found to be important for different therapeutic groups. For example, factors found to be helpful to patient's on an alcohol in-patient unit include *existential factors, self-understanding, cohesiveness and catharsis* (Ogilvie, Blair & Paul, 1995), while factors most important to one group of cancer patients were *instillation of hope, catharsis, imparting information, existential factors* and *group cohesiveness* (Wang & Ming, 2006). McLeod and Ryan (1992) studied the

therapeutic factors experienced by members of an out-patient therapy group for older women. They compared their results with four other studies and found that four studies listed *catharsis* and *self understanding* as helpful therapeutic factors. Three of the studies found *universality* and *group cohesiveness* to be most helpful. McLeod and Ryan's study results were unique in that their results alone found *existential awareness* to be one of the top five most helpful therapeutic factors in their out-patient therapy group. They attribute this in part to the psychological reality of aging, loss and death that may be present among their target population of older adult women (McLeod & Ryan, 1992).

The idea of women's support groups seems an important one to consider when discussing women's therapeutic groups. Cunningham et. al. (1998) found that a small subgroup of women with metastatic breast cancer who attended outside support groups survived significantly longer than those who did not. Oygard (2001) defines support group as a group of individuals who "meet for purposes of giving emotional support and information to persons with a common problem" (Oygard, 2001, p. 141). Do quilting groups fit the criteria for a support group?

One small quilt group member from this study reported "our group has gone through two deaths and three unexpected divorces." Oygard (2001) describes the therapeutic factors found to be important to members of a divorce support group. She found catharsis, universality and cohesiveness to be related to the impact upon adjustment to divorce among females. Participation in a group that serves as a support by offering an atmosphere of sharing, normalizing of experience and warm acceptance help to alleviate the feelings of isolation often experienced by divorcing individuals (Oygard, 2001). Quilt groups might offer such conditions along with a community of supportive

others who have had similar experiences. Such a community could serve as a stand-in family as the divorcee begins the process of disengagement from their spousal relationship.

Quilting groups that focus solely on the task of quilt-making may not meet the therapeutic requirements necessary for creating curative group effects - just as "Groups that focus on psycho-educational tasks only, fail to reap the full therapeutic harvest of group therapy "…..group therapy can be made more effective by incorporating a focus on interpersonal process" (Oygard, 2001, p. 144). In order to reach curative potential, it may be necessary for groups to move beyond the task of quilt-making into more varied inter-personal process experiences.

Another way that a quilting group may serve as an effective therapeutic group is by providing an opportunity for *behavioral activation* (Jacobson et.al., 1996). It may offer an atmosphere that is conducive to "doing pleasure" as opposed to "doing depression" (Laitinen, Ettorre & Sutton, 2007). Most contemporary American quilters pursue quilting voluntarily and intensely for individual creative pleasure. They quilt because it "helps them relax from paid work, unpaid household work, and other familial carework duties" (Stalp, 2006, p. 2). Engaging in a pleasurable activity leads to "healthy embodiment" which is defined as an ability to be connected to one's inner feelings as well as experience bodily competence and joy by engaging in more non-ruminative activities (Laitinen, Ettorre & Sutton, 2007, p. 210). Moving toward pleasure rather than toward depression with a focus on pleasurable non-ruminative activities may help women gain an important sense of *agency* which Laitenen and colleagues came to view as a contemporary group therapeutic effect in its own right (Laitinen, Ettorre & Sutton, 2007).

So then what is therapeutic about quilting groups? Is it the presence of therapeutic group dynamics alone, or is it the curative group atmosphere coupled with the creative activity of quilting itself that brings about healing change? Let's take a look at what the literature says about some of the benefits of textile art activity.

Benefits of Textile Art Activity

What continues to draw people in general and women in particular into the activity of quilt-making? Previous research in a variety of areas may offer indications. Quilt-making is an activity that provides a creative avenue for self expression. "As she works, the quilt-maker often incorporates references to her life experiences into the quilt" (Cerny, Eicher & DeLong, 1993, p.16). "Handcrafted textiles are symbolic of the maker and her relationships with other people. These objects are valued by their creators as symbols of self" (Johnson & Wilson, 2005, p.115). Quilt-making affords one the opportunity to express joy and grief (Reynolds, 2003), to voice their own story, to create their own image of the world and of self in the world, then to extend that image as a gift to others in a way that nurtures and preserves relationships.

Cutler Riddick (1993) contended that gender-role socialization orients women toward leisure activities that involve relationships, sharing, communicating, and nurturing. Perhaps because textile art (art produced from yarn, fabric or other woven materials) activity has been a predominantly female activity, these characteristics abound in textile hand craft guilds (groups of individuals who share similar interests and goals) (Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001). According to previous studies, these very types of leisure activities contribute overall to successful aging. Scholars have associated autonomy, self-worth, life-long learning, generativity and the development of the self

during social interactions as key components to successful aging (Fisher 1995). Textile art guilds in general have been shown to incorporate these components (Johnson & Wilson, 2005). Textile are guilds provide unique avenues for intergenerational interaction, structure, and participation in learning and teaching activities (Dickie, 2003), They foster a sense of purpose that contributes to women's successful aging (Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001). The leisure and activity component of the guild is also found to contribute to successful aging by "providing challenges and an enhanced sense of competence and worth through high investment activities…that involve relationships, communication, and caring" (Schofield-Tomschin & Littrell, 2001, p. 50).

There is also evidence that involvement in needle craft activities might help women self-manage for depression. Research has consistently demonstrated that women are twice as likely as men to suffer from clinical depression (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). There have been many proposed reasons for this gender difference and no one explanation can fully account for it. Two of the constructs that have been linked to gender differences in depression include: ruminative cognitive style (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001) and maladaptive interpersonal dependency (neediness) versus healthy interpersonal dependency (connectedness) (McBride & Bagby, 2006). Involvement in needle craft activities may counter these constructs by occupying the mind in ways that decrease ruminative tendencies and by fostering relationships that can lead to a perceived increase in connectedness with others.

Some of the established benefits of participation in creative needlecraft activities include the provision of mental/ emotional relaxation through distraction and escape, along with physical relaxation. Engaging in needle work crafts can increase self-esteem

through mastery/ competence, self expression, and the experience of valued roles and status. Reports indicate that participation in creative needlecraft activities leads to enhanced perceived control and the provision of meaningful activity leading to increased activity levels as well as energizing thoughts. Increased social support is also fostered by "developing and maintaining friendships through sharing of craft interests" (Reynolds, 2000, p. 112).

Another way of looking at the effects of quilt-making on depression has to do with "flow theory" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Some quilters say that quilting offers an escape and a distraction from worrisome thoughts (Arcaroli, McWhirter & Waldo, 2009). Is it possible that during the process of quilt-making, some individuals enter into a flow state? The flow state is activated during participation in an enjoyable activity that induces a highly focused state characterized by an individual sense of control, heightened challenges, the presence of creativity, a perceived distortion of time and a lack of interest in the product after completion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

The intense focus of one's attention has been shown in some studies to decrease perceptions of stress (Dandeneau et al., 2007). A seemingly innocuous task that specifically directs one's attention away from perceived threat can help intercept the cascade of psychological and neuro-endocrinological stress response (Dandeneau et al., 2007). Quilt-making could clearly be employed as a response-focused coping strategy offering emotional suppression or escape. Could it also serve as an antecedent-focused cognitive strategy by offering a choice for situation selection or automatic attention deployment that could alter threat perception early in the primary appraisal stage before the stress response is triggered? Some studies have demonstrated that antecedent focused

strategies that preempt a stress response are associated with increased well-being and improved interpersonal functioning (Gross, 2002).

From a clinical perspective, it may be the behavioral activation alone – the activity of quilt-making along with sources of reinforcement and support – that would decrease depressive affect. Jacobson et al., (1996) found behavioral activation alone to be as effective as cognitive-behavioral techniques in the treatment of depression. Suzanne Meeks at the University of Louisville in Kentucky studies the effect of the implementation of behavioral activation and pleasant events on levels of depression in elderly nursing home residents. After ten weeks of an increase in *pleasant events* behaviors that included doing needlecrafts, 80% of participants showed improvement in depression levels compared with a control group (Meeks & Depp, 2003). These findings indicate that activity based treatments that can be found in the community might be helpful to individuals suffering from depression (Jacobson, et.al., 1996).

Textile art activity has been shown to offer a variety of benefits. However, there has been no investigation of the benefits of textile art activity in the context of the small group experience in terms of therapeutic group factors. In the next section I will explore the eleven therapeutic factors that bring about meaningful change in groups.

A Closer Look at Yalom's Therapeutic Factors in Relation to Women's Small Quilting Groups

A brief explanation of each factor as described in Yalom and Leszcz's *The Theory and Practice of Group Psychotherapy*, (2005) will be followed with a commentary about how this factor might relate to the small quilt-making group experience.

Instillation of hope. The instillation of hope involves positive expectations, the expectation that help is possible in therapy. Such expectations are highly correlated with positive therapy outcome (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Instillation of hope also involves a source of hope that is unique to the group format. Members observe the improvement of others as a result of group involvement and are inspired by it. A major therapeutic part of some groups (such as AA and Recovery, Inc.) involves the sharing of testimonials that indicate hope is reasonable. Hope is flexible and multifaceted and may involve a hope for comfort, for dignity, for connection with others, or for a reduction in discomfort. Inspiration instilled by peers results in substantial improvements in medical outcomes, reduces health care costs, promotes the individual's sense of self-efficacy, and often makes group interventions superior to individual therapies (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

How might the instillation of hope relate to the small quilt-making group community? Members may have positive expectations about joining a small quilt-making group. "Whether old or new…the motivation for joining these (quilt-making) groups has seemed to be much the same over the years – friendship, sharing, and support" (Ballard, 1990, p.10). Such expectations involve the anticipation of positive interactions with others. Some women join guilds with the hope that they will learn how to express themselves through the production of something beautiful, meaningful or useful. This hope is often coupled with the desire to connect with current members as well as past generations of quilt-makers through the stories of antique quilts (Cerny, et al., 1993).

Members are often inspired by the presentations and success stories of other members who bring a project to completion. A major part of many quilt meetings is

devoted to *show and share* which allows members to share their final projects, the particular techniques that were used and the various processes involved in completion (Dickie, 2003). Seeing an individual complete a project can lead other members to hope that they too can make something lasting and beautiful.

Another way that hope appears in the small quilt-making group involves the side conversations that occur during group gatherings. While meetings are centered on the task of quilt-making, conversations about other topics are ubiquitous. Members may receive help, guidance and inspiration from other group members on a range of topics from spousal and familial relationships and grief management, to shopping and cooking tips. There is space during needlework activity to share a full range of individual stories (Atkins, 1994) and experiences that might inspire one to hope for resiliency or for positive life experiences based on stories shared by others.

Universality. Universality refers to the experience of realizing that "we are all in the same boat." When a person realizes that they are not the only one who has ever felt a certain way or known a particular experience - this can be a powerful source of relief. Such relief can result in feelings of catharsis and an increased feeling of connection with others and acceptance by others (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

The experience of universality can occur in quilt-making groups. Members may realize that they are not the only one operating at a beginner level. They may realize that they can learn new skills and techniques like everyone else. They may see others struggle with particular tasks and feel less alone in their own striving.

The experience of universality might also extend beyond the quilt-making phenomenon into other areas that may be discussed during the quilt-making process. For

example, one of the volunteers who participated in a small quilting group that includes incarcerated women stated, “But the first time you meet the women, you realize they are just like us – they are mothers, sisters and daughters,” she said. “They care about their children. They are women who have made bad choices” (Terichow, 2007). Through the task of quilt-making, this volunteer realizes some commonalities that exist between herself and the incarcerated women as they work together to make quilts for those who live in war torn areas.

Imparting information. There are two ways that a therapeutic group imparts information: by offering direct education and by offering advice from other members. Direct psycho-education can be useful in providing some explanation, organization and structure to the group. However, it is best if the learning takes place in a context of partnership and collaboration rather than prescription and subordination. Advice-giving is indicative of members attempt to manage relationships rather than to connect but the process of giving the advice may be beneficial in that it may imply mutual interest and caring. Information is more effective when it is examined on a direct personal level, considering how events affect the members’ own life and relationships, rather than presented in an intellectualized and detached manner (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Information is imparted across various contexts in the small quilting group. Dickie (2003) identifies eight clusters of learning among quilt group members: learning how to make a specific quilt or any quilt, learning about tools and how to use them, learning about aesthetics and how to stretch oneself. Quilt group members also learn to identify as a quilt maker and about how to be part of the quilt making culture. Although most of this learning is directly related to the technical skill of making quilts, there may

be some generalizations to other areas of participants' lives, such as *learning to stretch oneself* in other areas of life experience.

One of the advantages to learning in the context of a quilting group is that the groups focus centers on an activity that is positively received and accepted across gender, age, race and cultural contexts. It is generally a very safe and inclusive learning environment (Atkins, 1994). This kind of environment offers a unique opportunity for learning experiences that occur via natural interpersonal interaction, beyond the bounds of quilt-making to other realms of shared experience.

Altruism. Group therapy is unique in that it is the only therapy that offers clients the opportunity to be of benefit to others. It also encourages role versatility, requiring clients to shift between roles of help receivers and help givers (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Altruism acknowledges that one profits intrinsically from the act of giving. They profit from feeling that they have something of value to offer. Group members offer support, reassurance, suggestions and insight as they share similar problems with one another. Such support is often better received from group members than from paid professionals. Acts of altruism can also bring relief to morbid self absorption and obsessive introspection that may be causing psychological discomfort (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Victor Frankl asserts that life meaning is always a derivative phenomenon that materializes when we have transcended ourselves, when we have forgotten ourselves and become absorbed in someone (or something) outside ourselves (Frankl, 1969).

Altruistic acts have long been a part of quilt-making. In fact, the object of the quilt itself intrinsically implies service – the service of giving warmth and comfort. Quilts have been and remain a source to encourage people, to celebrate a life or to mark

times of life transition such as adulthood, marriage, and birth. Quilts are also made to comfort others during illness, grief and death. Many quilts have historically and are currently sent overseas to active duty soldiers and to people who are experiencing the effects of war and natural disasters (Hatch, 2008).

Quilts are made to raise money for community projects as well as to encourage social change. The Hudson River Quilt was constructed in 1970 with the goal of raising money and awareness to keep the Hudson River clean and scenic. The completed piece received a flood of admiration and in 1972 fetched $23,100 at an auction to benefit the Hudson River cleanup (Levie, 2004). The AIDS Memorial quilt founded in 1987 is a poignant memorial and the largest ongoing community arts project in the world. Each "block" (or section) of The AIDS Memorial Quilt measures approximately twelve feet square. Virtually every one of the more than 40,000 colorful panels that make up the Quilt memorializes the life of a person lost to AIDS (The Names Project Foundation, n.d.).

The Quilt Pink project was launched more recently in order to help raise money and awareness for the fight against breast cancer. In September 2006, shops across the country held Quilt Pink events where approximately 100,000 quilters and non-quilters joined the fight against breast cancer. Quilt Pink 2007 culminated in May 2008 with an online auction of the donated quilts (QuiltPink, 2004).

In addition, it is a commonly established norm for quilters to assist other group members by offering encouragement, ideas and advice on a range of matters from quilt-making to personal problem solving. At times they may reach out and take action to help a group member. One small group member spoke of her surprise when an anonymous

fellow quilter paid her entrance fee for a quilting retreat at a time when she was unable financially to attend (Arcaroli, McWhirter & Waldo, 2009).

*The corrective recapitulation of the primary family group***.** A great majority of clients who enter therapy present with highly unsatisfactory experiences in their family of origin. The therapy group resembles a family in many respects, including the presence of authority figures, peer/sibling figures, and the possibility for expression of strong emotion and deep intimacy. Group members often interact with leaders and other members in ways reminiscent of the way they once interacted with parents and siblings. What is important is not only that early familial conflicts are re-lived but that they are re-lived correctively. Roles must be constantly explored and challenged, and ground rules that encourage the investigation of relationships and the testing of new behavior must be established. Groups offer an opportunity for members to work through unfinished business from long ago (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

It is possible for authority and peer relationships to exist in quilting groups. The presence of such relationships provides opportunities for corrective emotional experience (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Some small quilt-making groups have been together for an extended amount of time and have developed deep relationships that resemble familial ties. In these groups, members experience a variety of both positive intimate and hostile feelings and interactions. These interactions allow for corrective recapitulation of the primary family group. One quilter interviewed for this study remarked, “This is where I find the sisters and the mother I never had.”

*Development of Socializing Techniques***.** The development of social skills is a therapeutic factor that operates in all therapy groups, although the nature of the skills

taught and the explicitness of the process varies greatly depending on the type of group (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). There may be explicit emphasis on the development of social skills whereas in other groups, social learning is more indirect. Regardless of the emphasis placed on social learning, group interactions provide an opportunity for members to learn about discrepancies between their intention and their actual impact on others. It is possible for members to acquire highly sophisticated social skills through group interaction. They may learn how to be responsive to others, acquire methods of conflict resolution, and become less likely to be judgmental and more capable of experiencing and expressing accurate empathy. Such skills serve clients well in future social interactions (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Quilt-making groups offer many opportunities to develop social skills through direct interaction with others, participation in team oriented activities, as well as through teaching and learning activities that are directly related to quilt-making (Dickie, 2003). There are also opportunities to develop social skills at a more intimate level as group members travel together, attend quilting retreats and share personal stories and experiences.

Imitative Behavior. There is evidence that group therapists influence the communicational patterns in their groups through modeling (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Similarly, clients may also serve as behavioral role models to other group members (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). It is not uncommon for a member to benefit by observing the therapy of another member with similar problems in the context of group therapy. Imitative behavior may help to "unfreeze" the individual enough to experiment with new ways of life which can increase adaptive practices (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Since one of the goals of most quilting groups includes the act of learning new quilt-making techniques from each other (Dickie, 2003), imitative behavior is normative in quilting groups. This norm is generalized to imitation of social attitudes and behaviors offering a variety of personalities and behaviors for group members to "try on".

Interpersonal learning. Interpersonal learning is a broad and complex therapeutic factor. The mechanism of interpersonal learning as a therapeutic factor is based on the premise that psychological symptomatology emanates from disturbed interpersonal relationships. The goal is to help the client learn how to develop distortion –free, gratifying interpersonal relationships. Psychotherapy groups that are unhampered by severe structural restrictions, evolve into a social microcosm that represents each member's social universe. Group members can become aware of their interpersonal behavior through feedback from others and through self reflection and observation. Clients can become aware of their responsibility for the creation of their interpersonal world and also that they have the power to change it. Some of the things that affect the impact of change is the depth of emotional experience, the client's motivation for change, the client's involvement in the group (how much the group matters to the client), and the rigidity of the client's character structure. Once change occurs and the client realizes that their social fears were unfounded, they may eventually carry their adaptive social environment outside the group (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

The small quilt-making group affords opportunity for interpersonal learning. Although there may be a certain level of restriction as members abide by the rules of etiquette governing such social interactions - over time some small groups can begin to lift such restrictions as members feel more accepted and supported in the group.

Particular member personalities may lend themselves to a degree of social rigidity while others may be more open to communication and connection at levels not based solely on quilt-making. But all participants have the opportunity to learn about themselves through feedback from others. Group members who participate in the actual construction of a quilt experience the opportunity to create and the power to make decisions about change which are inherent in the act of quilt-making itself. The exercising of such personal power may in itself extend to the adaptive wielding of power in other areas such as the creation of their own unique interpersonal world.

Group Cohesiveness. In the realm of group therapy, group cohesiveness refers to relationships in the group. It refers to the individual's relationship to the therapist(s), other group members and to the group as a whole. Group cohesiveness is analogous to the therapeutic alliance in individual therapy and as in individual therapy; relationship plays a critical role in therapy outcome.

The presence of group cohesiveness is a prerequisite for the function of other therapeutic factors. Groups with a greater sense of solidarity value the group more highly and will have a higher rate of participation, attendance and mutual support. Group cohesiveness also refers to the individual members' sense of belongingness. "Members of a cohesive group feel warmth and comfort in the group and a sense of belongingness; they value the group and feel in turn that they are valued, accepted, and supported by other members." (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 55) Members of a group with a high level of cohesiveness will be more likely to engage in close risk taking relationships, deep personal exploration and the integration of undesirable parts of self. Self-esteem will be

affected as group members' acceptance of self and acceptance of others interact interdependently (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

It is certainly possible to feel a great sense of value and belonging in a quilting group as is evidenced by the bonds of friendship that are regularly formed in small groups (Atkins, 1994). Some of the consequences of group cohesiveness in small therapeutic groups that might also be evident in quilt group members include: An attempt to influence group members, an openness to influence by other group members, more acceptance of others and more willingness to listen to others, high levels of self disclosure, high levels of participation in the meetings, an experience of security and tension relief in the group and a desire to protect group norms.

Catharsis. Catharsis refers to the discharge of pent-up emotions in order to alleviate symptoms. In group therapy catharsis is important but by itself is not sufficient for positive outcome. It is necessary that some form of reflection and cognitive learning accompany the cathartic experience, such as learning how to identify and express feelings and communicate what is bothersome. Catharsis is part of an interpersonal process but is more therapeutic when it is accompanied by a true attempt to understand self and others (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, Greenberg, 2002).

Self-understanding plays an important role in the intellectual component of the group therapy process. Discovering and accepting previously unknown or unacceptable parts of self is a highly valued experience by therapy group members. Therapeutic groups provide an opportunity for individuals to discover positive aspects of self which can lead to an increase in a "sense of ownership of their personhood" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 92).

A quilting group may offer extended opportunity for catharsis and self understanding in several ways. First, there is the same opportunity for interpersonal interaction between quilting group members that exists in therapy groups; occasions to engage in meaningful conversation and express personal feelings, as well as the chance to take risks and learn how to express emotions, needs and preferences effectively. But there is also another way inherent in quilting groups (and perhaps other art centered groups) to purge emotions and gain fuller access to the self and that is through the actual creation of the art object. Yalom states that "one way that self-understanding promotes change is by encouraging individuals to recognize, integrate, and give free expression to previously obscured parts of themselves" (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005, p. 92). This statement is consonant with some of the general goals often listed for art therapy groups: to encourage communication through the use of art media and to increase awareness of self (emotions, feelings, images and thoughts) in relation to others; to facilitate exploration and discovery of the unconscious in a non-threatening way (Schnetz, 2005).

Existential factors. Existential factors are related to the human condition and the harsh facts of life that deal with mortality, the freedom to engage in authorship of our own life, isolation from others and meaninglessness. Therapy groups offer members the opportunity to address these aspects of humanity and realign priorities. In coming to terms with mortality, participants can reassess everyday life concerns and adjust their perspectives of the trivial. Participation in therapy groups can offer individuals an opportunity to find meaning outside themselves (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Participation in an art related activity itself has been shown to be helpful to women experiencing chronic illness and disability. Some of the existential factors

mentioned include: increasing personal choice and control that challenges their victim status, increasing mindfulness and awareness, and enabling the revising of priorities as well as increasing flow, spontaneity and joy (Reynolds, 2003). Quilt-making itself may offer the same opportunities. But quilt-making groups would have the potential to initiate the same benefits while also offering a social arena in which to share stories of life and death, isolation and self efficacy, to normalize these human experiences and realize that *we are all in the same boat.*

Summary

In summary, women's quilting groups have existed in the United States since colonial times. They have experienced changes in response to socio-cultural transitions but overall, women join quilting groups for much the same reasons as they always have: for social connection, learning and creative opportunities. Existing literature on women's therapeutic group experience has been examined. Both qualitative and quantitative studies reveal specific factors present among particular therapeutic women's groups but no studies were found that examined curative group factors in naturally occurring women's creative community based groups. The similarities between quilting groups and other women's groups (consciousness raising groups and various therapeutic groups) have been considered. The question that remains unanswered is this: Are Yalom's therapeutic group factors evident in women's small community quilting groups? And if so – which curative factors are present? Do women's quilting groups provide an

atmosphere in which curative change processes can occur? Besides Yalom's therapeutic factors, do other themes emerge that inform us about therapeutic aspects of quilt-making? Findings may demonstrate a rationale to recommend participation in a creative community group such as a quilting group as a plausible and economical mental health resource.

Methods

I have been involved in quilt-making since the 1970's but my literature review began in a formal sense during my doctoral studies in Counseling Psychology at The University of Oklahoma. I began by searching and accessing all journal articles related to quilt-making and other needle craft art. The few that I found were related to learning and/ or coping with illness and depression. I began examining the therapeutic factors related to quilt-making. This led me into an exploration of women's groups and considerations of what is therapeutic about groups in general and small quilt-making groups in particular. Finally, I began to contemplate Yalom's therapeutic group factors in depth and wondered how they may play out in the process of women quilting together. I began to look for evidence of curative group factors among the lived experience of quilt-makers.

Theoretical Framework

The way that a researcher views learning can affect research outcomes, thus it is important to identify one's views about how people come to know what they know. The epistemological stance that I most identify with in reference to this study is Constructivism. Constructivism points to the unique experience of each individual. It suggests that "each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of

respect as any other" (Crotty, 1998, p. 58). This epistemological stance tends to resist the critical spirit and the consideration of the hold that our culture has on us as far as the generation of meaning shaped by convention and social processes. Constructivism focuses instead on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind (Crotty, 1998).

Epistemological stance influences the way research is conducted. Because of my constuctivistic views, the form of social science that I most identify with at this point is Phenomenology. Phenomenology focuses on an individual's textual and structural description of a lived experience. It involves the researcher's attempt at describing what is given without being obstructed by pre-conceptions. I want to know what makes this object (phenomenon) what it is to the individuals who experience it.

Coming from a contructivistic, phenomenological point of view informs my research in several ways. Because reality is seen as subjective and multiple, I use quotes and themes associated with the words of participants and I seek to provide evidence of different perspectives. Because I believe that reality is constructed "in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42), I seek to lessen distance between myself and the participant's experience of the quilt-making phenomenon. I collaborate with participants as I seek to understand their unique experience.

I also strive to identify values that may shape my writing and interpretation and take responsibility for them by writing in a first person pronoun format as I seek to answer questions like "What does it mean to be a quilter?", "What draws you to quilt-making?", and "How does quilting connect you to others?". I make a sincere attempt to

be aware of my own bias so that "the other can present itself in all of its otherness and thus assert its own truth against my own fore-meanings" (Ezzy, 2002, p. 27).

Though I am looking for something in particular (Yalom's therapeutic factors in women's small quilting groups), I strive to be open to alternative meanings and explanations associated with observed phenomenon. Because I believe that the researcher is never finished exploring, searching, examining and theorizing and that new depths, complexities, subtleties and uncertainties are continuously uncovered (Ezzy, 2002), it is a qualitative exploration that corresponds most closely with my research purpose. It is my hope to develop and elaborate upon women's lived experience of quilting together in the context of small group interaction in a way that will suggest new understandings that might be utilized in therapeutic practice and guide future research.

Research Design

Because I wanted to investigate the presence of Yalom's Therapeutic Group factors in the context of the quilt-making group experience, I chose to conduct an inductive thematic analysis with a typological design (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Situated in the epistemological stance of constructivism, semi-structured interviews were transcribed then divided into groups or categories on the basis of some pre-determined canon. In this case the guiding theoretical framework for significant categories is provided by Yalom's eleven therapeutic group factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

The curative factors served as the initial units of analysis. Each interview was analyzed and sorted based on the presence of therapeutic group factors indicated by words and phrases that match Yalom's description of specific factors. For example, if a

respondent refered to “feelings of belonging to a group”, this statement was categorized under the factor *Group Cohesion*.

The three most prevalent therapeutic factors were determined according to frequency (enumeration) and declaration (items present or significant according to participants) (LeCompte, 2000). Data was further analyzed by comparing, contrasting, aggregating and sorting phrases to determine overall themes present in the data. Abductive reasoning was used to identify linkages and relationships among categories and themes. From these relationships inferences were made about findings.

Finally, I listed specific references to the presence of Yalom’s therapeutic factors and triangulated findings with professionals as well as participants. After data analysis, I provided a description of the curative group factors associated with the phenomenon of quilt-making and expanded upon these findings in terms of additional themes based on empirical analysis of the qualitative data.

Participants

There are many ways to choose study participants. Several purposeful sampling procedures were utilized concurrently for this study: criterion, intensity and snowball (Creswell, 2007). Each respondent had to meet the criterion of identifying herself as an active quilt-maker. Intensity sampling was utilized when I chose interviewees who were open, willing and capable of providing information-rich discussions about the quilting phenomenon. Snowball sampling occurred when specific quilt-makers introduced me to other people they knew who were able to provide information about quilt-making or quilt-making in groups.

A total of thirty-seven individuals participated in twenty-one interviews that were conducted over a total period of 362 minutes. Twenty-nine participants completed written interviews. Fifty-three women were present during five observations conducted over a period of nine hours. The sixth observation lasting eight hours occurred at the 2008 Houston International Quilt Festival in Houston Texas. According to the International Association of Professional Quilters, the final attendance for that show was 52,542 with attendees representing 32 different countries. Thus it is impossible to include the exact number or demographics of individuals observed in Houston.

All participants were females who ranged in age from 38-81. The average reported income ranged from $16,000 to $300,000 per year. All but two participants reported membership in a quilting group that met regularly and the amount of individual quilting experience ranged from 2 to75 years. Interviewees represented several states in the U.S. including: Oklahoma, Texas, Montana, Pennsylvania, Arkansas, Louisiana and New York. There was one respondent each from Australia, Jordan and Scotland.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview protocol was employed in an attempt to answer the research questions: Are Yalom's curative factors present in quilting communities? If so – which factors are present and pre-dominant? Do women's quilting groups provide an atmosphere for curative change processes to occur? Do themes (in addition to those described by Yalom's therapeutic group factors) emerge that inform us about therapeutic aspects of quilt-making?

Sample interview questions include: What does it mean to be a quilter? What draws you to quilting? What draws you to quilting with others? How is quilting related to

learning? Would you describe quilting as a therapeutic activity? If so, in what ways is it therapeutic? Tell me a story about how quilting helps or has helped you cope. How does quilting connect you to others? What one event, incident or interaction ever occurred in your quilting group that was most helpful to you? Describe what happened, the feelings you experienced and how the event was helpful to you.

A total of thirty-seven individuals participated in oral interviews that were audio digitally recorded with the consent of each participant and transcribed into text data. Twenty-nine respondents completed written interviews that included the same core interview questions. Observations are also considered to be an important source of information for triangulation purposes. Five participant-observer observations of different quilting groups were conducted within the mid-western region of the U.S. and one observation was conducted at the 2008 Houston International Quilt Festival. Data was collected in the form of minute by minute field notes that were transformed within seventy-two hours into an expanded textual account of the group experience. Unidentifying photos were also taken of group activities, quilts and of displayed narratives written about particular quilts by the quilt artist.

Data Analysis

All data from interviews was audio digitally recorded and then transcribed word for word into a text document with line item numbers for reference purposes. Each interview document was then printed onto a particular color of paper that distinguished it from other interview texts. For example, the text from interview one was printed on light yellow paper while the text from interview two was printed on bright green paper so that

individual statements that were sorted under a particular category could be easily associated with the appropriate respondent.

Each phrase in the interview texts was analyzed in terms of the guiding theoretical framework which is in this case consisted of Yalom's eleven therapeutic group factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). If a particular interview response contained references to feelings of belonging, then that phrase was filed under the therapeutic group factor of *group cohesiveness*. If a respondent referred to quiltmaking or participation in quilting groups as a way to discharge pent up emotions, then this phrase was filed under *catharis*. When a particular response or phrase did not fit with one of the therapeutic group factors, then it was placed in a separate category that was titled *additional themes*.

Thematic grouping and analysis was triangulated by comparing results among research team committee members as well as by comparing results of interview data with observation data. Differences and similarities between respondent's personal description of the quiltmaking phenomenon and investigator observation of participants as they engaged in the activity of quilting was considered and noted. Participants were also consulted in order to verify the intended meanings of their interview responses.

Findings

Evidence of all eleven therapeutic group factors was found in the interview text. Three therapeutic group factors were prominent in the textual data in terms of frequency and participant declaration: *group cohesiveness*, *altruism*, and *imparting information*.

Group Cohesiveness

Group cohesiveness refers to individual member's sense of belongingness. "Members of a cohesive group feel warmth and comfort in the group…they value the

group and in turn feel that they are valued, accepted and supported by other members" (Yalom and Leszez, 2005, p.55). References to a sense of value and belongingness associated with the quilting group were more prevalent in the textual data than references to any other therapeutic group factor. 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. The quilt group was considered by participants to be a place of fellowship.

Group cohesion has to have a beginning. Quilting groups offer a place to meet people and socialize. Quilting groups create the conditions for breaking through personal boundaries to participate in a unitary experience with others. Quilters have opportunities to join with others by participating in the work of others. There is shared experience and shared meaning between quilt makers that increases connection and decreases the anxiety of meaninglessness.

The following excerpts from the textual data illustrate the presence of group cohesiveness shared among quilt group members. Angela, a middle aged quilter from Oklahoma was asked "What does it mean to be a quilter?" She replied, "*It means belonging to a society of mostly women who are expressing themselves in a creative way. It's a social group. It's about hanging out with the gals.*" Cara, a young mother of two children shared "*I needed a group of people who understood what I was thinking and I could bounce ideas off of and have fun. And I didn't have that before I quilted. I love*

getting together with them. I don't know what I would do if I couldn't get together with them."

Freida and Emma, both active quilters and quilt group members from Oklahoma, discuss the closeness and support they experience within the quilting group. Freida relates, "*So you know much more about each others' lives. You know the good things that happened in people's lives and the bad things that happen in people's lives. I think I am drawn to that… to have someone who's known me long enough to know my history and my chilren's history*." Emma states, "*They* (quilt group members) *are just so open to helping you. I may cry just thinking about it. They're just there for you and you KNOW they are there for you*." A participant from Australia talks about her online quilting group. "*Everyone gives everyone support whether it's in their personal life or quilting you know… 'Ican't do this. I need help with that'*".

Some quilt group members talk about the friendship and acceptance that they receive from quilt group interaction. One woman from Texas, when asked "What draws you to participate in a small quilting group?" replied, "*The interaction. We have something in common. We can ooo and ahh over each others' work and just the support of a small group.*" Gina has been quilting for more than twenty years and has been part of the same small quilt group for the past 15 years. Gina enjoys the fact that "*we just get to be ourselves and have a good time*." Finally, a Scottish member of a culturally diverse quilting group that meets in Amman, Jordan explains, "*All our friends are so welcoming and friendly. It* (the quilting group) *was an introduction, it was a social life, a love of sewing and quilting and friendship and I think…it opens up, you know, sort of a new life for all of us.*"

There was also evidence of *group cohesion* during quilt group observation sessions. Members of all five small groups observed were welcoming toward each other and displayed friendly inviting attitudes. Each group shared food and drink. Laughter was almost constant throughout each group interaction. Expanded observation field notes recorded in reference to a seventeen member quilt group in Oklahoma reads, "Ladies were attuned to each other. Members were empathic and supportive as they listened and reponded to eachother's stories about a variety of topics including: surgeries, moving out of state, relationships with spouses and children, illnesses, aging, new accomplishments and goals, frustration associated with learning new tasks and excitement about future plans.

One group of thirteen members described themselves as a "closed" group in that they rarely accept new members. "*We don't let anyone in unless someone drops out or dies*" explained one group member. Another group member made reference to the closeness felt between group members due to shared experience when she stated "*We have been through two deaths and three unexpected divorces."*

Each group hosted a formal show of support in the form of a "show and share" session where each member took a turn displaying and explaining a current quilting project. During show and share, members became alive and animated in a way that seemed contagious. Members were inspired by the work of others in the group. Members took this opportunity to admire and approve of each other's efforts and at times offered new ideas or suggestions.

Altruism

Altruism in group therapy refers to the opportunity to be of benefit to others and to shift between the roles of help receivers and help givers (Yalom and Leszez, 2005). Altruism acknowledges that one profits intrinsically from the act of giving. They profit from feeling they have something of value to offer. Group members offer support, reassurance, suggestions and insight as they share with one another. Acts of altruism can also bring relief to morbid self absorption and obsessive introspection that may be causing psychological discomfort (Yalom and Leszez, 2005). The interview data is rich with references to the creating and giving of quilts to others. Respondents spoke of making quilts for friends, family members and for community outreach. Quilters also talked of being recipients of altruistic acts that are extended to them from other quilt group members.

Quilt making offers a unique avenue for giving that incorporates a kinesthetic quality. The physical dimension of touch is typically viewed as less important and superficial in our society. The computer age takes us more and more into our heads where we run the risk of forgetting that it is our physical involvement in the world that initiates experience. William Blake eloquently reminds us that "all wisdom originates from touch". Touch is the beginning of all connection and if we leave that part out we tend to be detached and unfulfilled. But quilters leave nothing out in their attainment of real connection with others. They incorporate the physical, the emotional, the mental and the spiritual as they create quilts in the service of others.

Angela explains, *"I've given a lot of them* (quilts) *away. I make them for somebody. You know quilts for me - and I think for everybody evoke comfort. If it's not*

your own comfort you're making it for somebody else's comfort. For a community project quilt, you just have this imagination that some child gets that quilt and it just makes their day." Beth, who is a retired grandmother and active quilter, states that she has made quilts for her children, her grandchildren, her neighbors and members of her church. She shares, "*When I give a baby quilt, I always think it's fine to give it to someone to hold their baby with. Or with donation quilts, I think about the children who receive those. Especially I think of the abused children. I really think that's a very important thing*." One participant, an African American living in Houston says that she likes "*giving them to somebody. I love that part of it because the one I give it to – they enjoys it*." A middle aged quilter from Australia who is a member of an on-line quilting group states, "*I make quilts for all my friends. I make house warming gifts that are quilts for all my neighbors. You know, little quilts, big quilts, I make them for my grandchildren – they love quilts. It's a way for me to show them love.*" Beatrice, a nineteen year veteran quilter from Montana describes a quilt as "*a tangible thing of love. When you receive one, you know someone took a lot of time to make it for you and you feel special. We all feel special when we receive the gift of a quilt.*" And Kathy, a fifty-eight year old quilter from Texas claims that a quilt is "*a project of love for someone else*."

The altruistic act of creating and giving away a quilt takes on new meaning as we consider respondents' discussion of the investment of time, money and thought involved. Emma states, "*But of course quilts as you know, are an investment. Oh it's a huge investment. The one I made my brother took two years to do and I think that quilt once it was done and quilted ran close to a thousand dollars*." Angela explains it this way, "*So*

every stitch you put in there, if you're making it for your little niece you know, she's in college…it's one of my quilts that was in the quilt show. I made it for my niece so I picked the fabric out with her in mind. Every stitch had her in mind. It was kind of like little prayers or blessings sent her way. So there's a lot of love." Rachel is a fifty-four year old quilter from Oklahoma who has been quilting for thirty-five years. She also addresses the investment of thought involved that brings about a feeling of connection with others when she states, "*When I'm making a quilt for someone – I feel connected and aware of them as I make their quilt*."

Even though the creation of a quilt involves considerable investment, participants spoke about how they "let go" of the product in order to give it away. Emma says, "*I have one quilt and several wall hangings that I made after fifteen years* (as a quilter). *And the rest of them are gone. And I haven't kept track of where they've gone. I wonder why that isn't important to me*?" One quilter from Houston states, "*I don't care about the product. I don't keep what I make, I give it away. I enjoy making it. It doesn't matter – I can give it to a stranger, I can give it to a family member, it doesn't matter who gets it – I'm done with it. I've gotten my good out of it and let somebody else enjoy it*."

It is clear that quilters give of their time, energy and material and creative resources to friends, family and the community when they make a quilt and give it away. They also tell stories about another aspect of altruism that occurs when they give and receive help to each other within the quilting community. One participant, a world reknown quilter shares, "*The quilters rallied. When I needed them I had friends who came and helped me. They picked things up from my house, they did shows for me because I was in the hospital with him* (her husband). *They always asked me how he was*

doing…tons of support." Gina describes her small quilting group by saying, "*We're good to each other you know. One girl, her dad passed away and we kept calling and checking in on her and things like that and making sure she was all right.*" Freida relates the following story about how an anonymous quilting group member came to her aid. "*I told a lady in the group I was not going on the quilting retreat because our budget was just really tight and I wasn't going to go. And she came to me a month or so later and she said that someone in our group had paid for my retreat. And I was just like wow. And I never even knew who it was.*" Through her tears, Cara shares about how the members of her small group help eachother, "*When my friend died, I went to pieces…and they were there for me. It's like one of us had a son who was going through a hard time and so we kind of banded around her to help her, you know, to be there…phone calls or whatever… suggestions… what do you want us to help you with*?"

Small group interaction gathered during direct observation of quilt group meetings was replete with altruistic acts. Support, reassurance and suggestions were offered in the area of quilting project construction as well as in response to shared stories of illness and surgeries. The most notable story of altruism extended between quilt group members was related at the end of one small group meeting when only about four members were left. One member talked in detail about how the quilt group members helped her cope with the experience of cancer. Through tears she relayed how quilt group members reached out to her and supported her physically and emotionally.

From the interview data, it is evident that members of quilting groups do participate in various altruistic acts. They make quilts for people in a way that connects them to the recipient and they make quilts to help strangers in the community. Quilt

group members also give and receive acts of support and reassurance to each other within their quilting community.

Imparting Information

The third prominent therapeutic group factor evident within the textual data of this study is *imparting of information*. The therapeutic group imparts information in two ways; by offering direct education and by offering advice from others. In order to be optimally therapeutic, is best if learning takes place in a context of partnership and collaboration and is examined on a direct personal level about how events affect the member's own life rather than presented in an intellectualized and detached manner (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Participants spoke most frequently about learning how to use new techniques and new quilt making tools. They learned from other quilt group members as well as from taking special classes. Louda is a seventy-nine year old quilter from Oklahoma who has been quilting for 20 years. She shares that "*The process of quilting keeps your mind active and your creative juices flowing. You take classes to learn new techniques and how to use new tools to make the process go faster so you can make more quilts*." Some quilters talked about how quilting helped them hone their math skills. Sandy a fifty-one year old quilter from Texas relates, "*I have learned a bit of math while learning to quilt. How big to make blocks that will be cut in half for a finished size quilt, for example. I have been quilting for over 20 years and I am always learning something new*."

Four respondents talk about how quilt making has helped them learn to use the computer. They learned to research and print patterns, get support from on-line quilters and print photos onto fabric. Quilters report learning in other areas not related to quilting

during their quilt group interactions. Cara says "*It's about companionship, someone to talk to about anything. We talk about families and we talk about whatever project we're working on. And if someone has a question, usually one of us will have an idea or we will have done something similar to whatever it is she's doing. And we'll say 'do that' or 'try this'*." Sandy relates that "*We ask for advice when we are having difficulty making a decision on patterns or fabric. And then there is all the personal sharing we do while quilting together*." Gwen from Texas has been quilting for 11 years. She shares, "*I learn from these ladies everyday … not just quilting but about how they deal with life's challenges. Thus, it prepares you for death of a parent, children's proms, children's first, second and third tattoos, grandchildren, recommendations for dentist, gynecologist, and hairdresser. Mainly these ladies are my extended family and I love them all*". Emma talks about learning about cooking and new recipes and states with a laugh that "*you might come in and learn a surgical procedure….you just never know*".

Learning about how to be a teacher was also discussed by some of the quilting study participants. Gina shares about learning and teaching in her small quilting group, "*We teach each other a lot of new things. You know one of the ladies works in the quilt store. She's the one we taught to stitch period. She didn't know how to stitch anything and she now teaches all of us*." Liz, a sixty-nine year old quilter from Oklahoma tells us about her experience of the relationship between quilt making and learning. She reiterates a common idea expressed by other quilters; that quilting and the learning that occurs through quilting keeps the mind active and alive. "*As long as I've been quilting there is always something to be learned. If we stop learning we are probably dead or near it!! Quilting is a progressive education – starting with designing by placing simple*

shapes and colors together until you can fine tune the craft and create an award winning design. Not all reach this level – but at whatever level you find yourself, you can take pleasure in the skills you've learned. And we have many opportunities to continue learning with guilds, retreats, workshops, quilt shows and publications. Today I teach a class for beginning and more advanced quilters at our church. We try new techniques and create quilts for charity. I take pride in my students who have continued, become teachers and win ribbons at quilt shows. They are my 'quilting children'! I smile on them."

Quilt group observations support the fact that learning across a variety of subjects occurs during group interaction. One group, with eleven members in attendance, had one member walking around patiently showing whoever was interested how to make a braided scissor holder out of ribbon. This activity was occurring at the same time that a discussion about how to make potato salad and turn or replace an old mattress was taking place. Another group with ten ladies in attendance demonstrated the best ways to sew a "drunkard's path" block while they informed each other about the risks related to brushing one's teeth too hard and discussed which current movies were worth seeing. The discussion moved to how certain movies related to certain points of life that you may be in and then to personal stories about family members and early family experiences of those present. The stories were of such a personal and sensitive nature that it was obvious that they were not to be shared outside of the group.

The interview data reflects that learning does occur in the quilting community and during quilt group interaction. Interviewees spoke mostly about the advice received about quilting related activities and information received about new techniques and

quilting tools. Learning beyond the realm of quilt making was also apparent during the interviews. And the data gathered during direct observation of quilting group interaction was rich with constant sharing of information beyond the bounds of quilt making and into the realm of a rich variety of personal and interpersonal experience.

Additional Themes

As interviews were transcribed and analyzed, additional prominent themes that were not directly related to Yalom's therapeutic group factors began to emerge from the textual data. These themes reflect the therapeutic value of the act of quilt making in general that may or may not always involve the presence of other quilters. The themes were titled *coping, identity* and *self expression*.

Coping. The most salient additional theme involved the use of quilt making as a means to cope with problems such as illness, loneliness, stress and depression. Involvement in quilt making reportedly helps by offering a distraction from problems, a quiet private place to go, and a way to relax and have fun. Study participants also talked about how quilting can offer a sense of purpose, direction and accomplishment. Quilt making was described as an activity that can help a person reach out to interact with others bringing relief from self absorption and depression. Finally, quilting is described as serving as a medium through which one can communicate thoughts and feelings in a cathartic way.

A majority of respondents pronounced that quilt making served as a distraction from problems, loss and loneliness. Hanna, an active leader among her fellow quilters, explains how quilting helped her cope with illness: "*I felt real bad… so bad that I would sit there and just about feel like I couldn't go on. I would go out and get sewing… and*

you just forget how bad you hurt. It gets your mind somewhere else." Alva has been quilting for forty of her eighty years and shares, "*I used the process of planning the making of a quilt when my daughter was in a trauma unit for some time. The thoughts of cutting and placing the fabrics in a pattern allowed me to stop thinking of her recovery, if there was to be one, and therby I fell asleep. The quilt I planned was finished and given to her daughter*."

Participants often refer to the act of quilt making as a "place" to go to get away from daily stressors. Emma explains, "*If there is something bothering you and you don't really want to think about what you have to do tomorrow, you can think about 'I have to cut this four and a half by four and a half. And 'I have to cut this two and a half by two and a half'. So you can kind of lose yourself. You get in the sewing roon and it's another world. It's just your place to get away*." Angela expresses it this way, "*But quilting was a place for me to go to kind of work out some of the angst and trauma of losing a job. So I went to quilting for, you know, a harbor amongst unsteady waters… a safe place. It's very, very peaceful*." Sandy, a quilter from Texas tells about how quilting helped her get through a difficult time. "*My husband was diagnosed with cancer. It was a very difficult time for him and me and I actually created a quilt during the whole process. It gave me an outlet and a place to go. I worked on it while he was in the hospital, while he was going through chemo treatment and when he was sick in bed. It was just a place to go where I didn't have to think about everything that was going on in our lives. So it really gave me a place to go to help me get through that*."

Participants communicated about how quilt making helped them find relief from the experience of difficult feelings. Expressing oneself can validate individual

experience and assist in the tasks of making meaning of one's experience. Through emotional expression an individual can change and develop as they shift off center then move into another place of understanding and then rebuild or reconstruct one's story or interpretation of life events.

Louda says, "*I have a recurring problem with depression. Getting involved in creating a quilt can help me get outside myself and frees my mind to escape from myself and if I run into a problem for which I need help, I am forced to call and talk with a quilt group member, because the quilt is important enough to reach outside myself to others. This has been a life saver to me more than once*." Elaine is a quilt artist from New York. Like many quilters she assigns a title to her quilts that conveys the deeper meaning behind the creative work. *"A 'Sliver of Hope' is about forgiving myself, rising above and no longer being a victim. My quilt 'An Inner/ Outer Body Experience' was done when I was waiting for cancer results and my quilt 'Trapped' was done during a particularly difficult time in my marriage*." Cara, a quilter and mother of two children shares how quilting helps her cope with anger. *"If I'm really angry, I get my machine out and I find something that needs, you know, that has a lot of thread work – I mean just killer thread work and I just go to town on it. That's all I'm focused on. And that just makes it so I'm not thinking about whatever pissed me off. And usually by the time I get done doing some portion of it, then I'm calmed down inough to thing about what it was and think more rationally about it*".

In terms of coping, quilters allege that quilt making serves as a way to relax. It serves as a safe, quiet, creative place that is all their own. "*It is my time to unwind, relax and let my thoughts flow*," says a quilter from Texas. Rena from Oklahoma says, "*I can*

escape my routine and enter a place where my creativity can be allowed to flourish. The process is like getting away." Quilt making offers an enjoyable activity that is very satisfying. "*It gives me a purpose and something to look forward to*," explains a quilter from Arkansas. Two Oklahoma quilters share, "*I enjoy the activity*." "*I get into that 'flow'state. It's very satisfying*." And the activity of quilt making is very portable. It can be taken to dance class and soccer games, hospitals and waiting rooms. The safe quiet place that offers a harbor from the storm and a distraction from trouble can be easily carried and transported into a variety of situations and settings.

Identity. Another theme that emerged from the data reflects the relationship between quilt making and personal identity. Participants describe feelings of pride related to their accomplishments and a sense of personal power as they make creative choices. They teach and hold positions of leadership among the quilting community. Quilters tell about the connections that are heightened and reinforced between themselves and previous as well as future generations as they ponder quilts from the past and leave personal quilted legacies for future generations. Finally, participants talk about the various identity roles that are facilitated by participation in the quilting community.

Quilters assert that they feel pride associated with their quilt making talents and abilities as well as with the accomplishment of creating something tangible, beautiful and even useful. Quilt making is a place to be successful. One participant who has been quilting for fifteen years explains how she feels ineffective in many areas of her life. The housework is never done and the kids always need something. But quilting is some thing she can do and finish and be good at. It is something that is hers, something for which she can't be criticized. Beatrice, a quilter from Montana says that what draws her to

quilting is "*knowing that whatever I make would be what I made with my own hands and the end result is a beautiful project*". Caley, a forty year old quilter from Oklahoma who has been quilting for twenty years shares, "*I take pride in what I can do in my quilts. When it's finished it's better than I expected. That really makes me feel good about what I can do*".

Some participants proudly refer to their quilts as "children". Rena, a veteran quilter from Oklahoma voices this idea beautifully when she explains that "*creating a quilt for me is a lot like a birthing process. A design is concieved, developed, tuned and ultimately brought into being. Not unlike my children, it is rarely what I thought it would be at the outset, sometimes frustrating, but always well worth the experience*".

The second most predominant idea that was expressed in terms of personal identity involved issues of personal power. Women are often defined in terms of their relationships and what they do for others. In quilting, they don't abandon their connection with others and their value in terms of relationships but they transform the meaning and the experience into something they can own themselves. The quilter makes the experience a self nurturing and an autonomous act that flows through her own uniqueness and needs and yet still nourishes those around her. Caley explains that what draws her to quilt making is "*the ability to make my own rules about everything. I get to choose what project I want to work on, how I want to do it, when I complete it, and who it ends up going to. I can follow a pattern, I can mimic a design, and I can choose a technique. It's all up to me. As a mother of five young kids, there is often much that is out of my control and there's a lot in my life that I have to do instead of wanting to do*

such as laundry, meals and housework for eight people. When I quilt it's a small oasis of control. It has given me a feeling of self worth".

Quilt making is a leisure activity that is negotiated with family time. One of seven sisters comprising their own quilting group stated that she sometimes "*feels guilty because she needs to be cooking supper or something else*". Andi who is a fifty-eight year old quilter from Oklahoma explains that there are other "*demands on my time – chores, husband, pets, etc.*" But generally the activity of quilt making can be accomplished in a way that preserves family connection. It is an activity that is generally an accepted in society which may explain why quilt making can provide a socially acceptable personal outlet in a patriarchal family structure. According to Hanna, "*I can sit and do handwork in my chair and still be part of the family*."

The quilting community offers a place for women to be recognized. One respondent, a member of the Mennonite community, shared how much fun it was for her when she "won best of show in Kansas City" recently. Hanna has won many ribbons and contests and has been both the president and the vice-president of a large quilt guild. She acknowledges these offices as a positions of influence when she asserts that the "*leader sets the tone*" of the group.

Another way that quilt making influences a quilter's personal identity is by facilitating enhanced connections between themselves and previous generations of quilters and by leaving one's legacy in the form of a finished quilt. Angela from Oklahoma articulates that what draws her to quilting is "*the making of something that is potentially lasting. Women can't necessarily leave children to carry on their last name because the children they have will carry on their husband's last name. So quilting is I*

think, a way for a woman to leave her name in some kind of historical way". Elaine from New York explains that quilting affects her sense of self worth because "*I finally felt like I was creating a legacy – something beautiful to leave with the world*". Two quilters from Texas pronounce that being a quilter means "*connection to my grandmother*" and "*carrying on my past family tradition*". Rena from Oklahoma describes quilt making as "*a heritage that is passed on through generations in my family*". Lily, a quilter from Texas states, "*I feel a connection to the long line of quilters before me*."

This awareness of heritage and connection with what came before them, affords an opportunity for quilters to expand beyond their own particular time period and honor those who came before. The act of leaving a legacy shows an awareness that one's personal actions have an impact on others in the future. Thus quilt making offers an opportunity for some quilters to see beyond themselves and reach out and affect others across generations.

Quilters have the opportunity to try on many roles in the course of their involvement in the quilting community. Gwen from Texas communicates that being a quilter means "*being a friend, sister, daughter, mother, student, teacher, guest, hostess, travel coordinator, chef, administrator and volunteer*". Thus, overall it is possible for quilters to explore issues of personal identity related to self worth, generational connection and personal power. In addition, they can explore a variety of identity roles in a potentially cohesive environment that offers acceptance, encouragement and support.

Self Expression. The third additional predominant emergent theme is related to self expression. Quilting is a way to communicate. Angela states that "*quilts have messages. It's your mother's love. It's your grandmothers love in that quilt – all that*

time and effort. But quilts have also been political. They have the Aides quilt and they had abolition quilts and suffrage quilts. Various (quilt) *patterns have always been politically minded. And then there are religious quilts… just lots of messages that come through a quilt with no spoken words.*" One quilter from Australia says, "*I like the fact that* (quilting) *is a creative release. It's just a creative way for me to express myself… to express love and friendship*". To Lily from Texas, being a quilter means having a "*creative avenue for expression*". A seventy year old quilter from Texas who has been quilting for forty-five years explains that when you create a quilt "*you put a piece of yourself in it*".

The textual data related to this study contained fifty-nine references to quilt making as a way to express one's own creativity and unique personality. Gina from Oklahoma explains "*I like designing. I make sure mine is different from everybody else's… because I CAN you know. It has to be unique. It has to be my own thing*". Andi, a quilter from Oklahoma explains "*I never do a project exactly like it's designed, or I'll use a design as a starting point and end up with something very different. It's an evolution, with decisions along the way to improve on the design according to my own sense of aesthetics*". Quilter's refer to quilt making as a way to express beauty in the form of a work of art. Leona from Oklahoma has been quilting for twelve years. She is drawn to quilting by "*the desire to create something of beauty*" and by the desire to "*express myself artistically*". Caley asserts that as a quilter she gets "*to express myself, try new ideas, learn new techniques and make something that's beautiful and useful*".

Quilt making is an activity that offers a variety of techniques and mediums for self expression. There exists a wide range of specific activities associated with quilt

making. Some quilters just piece together quilt tops because that is what they enjoy. Others prefer the repetitive time consuming motion of hand quilting after the piecing and layering of the quilt is complete. Certain quilters make traditional quilts while others are inclined to produce non-traditional art quilts. Quilters can use machines to piece the quilt top and a machine to quilt the layers together, while many elect to do a portion or even everything by hand. Certain quilt artists engage in the process of embellishing quilts with beads, sequins, paint, ribbon, knitting, netting or other unique products. While some quilters embroider additional designs into a quilt or perhaps specialize in making a particular type of quilt. The possibilites and combinations seem endless. Renee from Arkansas says, "*You can do so much with quilting and in so many ways. There's so much diversity there's something for everyone who wants to quilt*".

Angie says, "*I have found my medium as far as quilting. You know there is hand quilting, there's hand applique, there's piecing and so I finally found what worked for me and that's when I fell in love with it*". Renee shares "*I'm now getting into a lot of mixed media stuff and beading and getting out of the box so to speak*". Andi from Oklahoma describes the many decision opportunities that make quilt making diverse and complex when she shares "*Quilting, whether you're making a small wall-hanging or a large bed cover, whether it's a traditional patchwork geometric design or a more free form applique design, involves making many decisions – use of color, contrast, scale, working out measurements and geometric relationships, and so forth. There is also a lot of hand eye coordination involved whether you're sewing by hand or machine. It's a pretty multi-layered (no pun intended) complex activity*".

Exceptions

The subjectivity statement presented in appendix A reveals my initial personal assumption that quilting and quilting in groups are therapeutic activities. In an effort to avoid presenting a biased view, all textual data was scanned looking only for exceptions to this assumption. Six possible areas that could foster a non-therapeutic climate were recognized. There is sometimes division between groups of quilters as well as conflict between individuals who quilt. Sometimes opinions and advice are offered in a way that is perceived as harsh by the recipient. There is also some evidence of exclusion despite the many reports of group cohesiveness. There is a possibility that some groups may be less diverse than others and thus insular and growth limiting. And finally, though quilt making can offer a healthy diversion, it is possible to engage excessively in the task in a manner that leads to over spending, over extension of self and/ or avoidance of daily life activities.

There are many different ways to quilt and thus many different kinds of quilting groups. Some groups focus on applique, some on art and embellishment and some on traditional piecing and quilting. Angela shares her thoughts about division between groups. "*There is some snootiness in the quilting community. I don't find it to be related to money but more of some of the experienced over the inexperienced. You know, there's some chasm there. But often I find it's the art quilter versus the traditional quilter. Because you might insult an art quilter if you ask 'are you an art quilter?', 'No, I'm a fiber artist.' I think so. And the art quilt ladies are like 'Oh, you're just a traditional quilter. You can't think beyond um, you know templates and rulers.'*" Frieda acknowledges this difference between groups but indicates that they can co-exist

successfully when she says, "*The group I've belonged to for a long time, since 1995, we're going on retreat for four days. We stay at the lodge and just sew and visit and talk and eat and take walks. It's a real diverse group in the type of quilting they do. Some people are very traditional and some are very artsy*".

Just as there are differences between quilting groups, there are also significant differences between individual quilters. Angela expresses her thoughts on the composition of the quilting community, "*Just because we're women it doesn't mean it's any different than if you were in the corporate world. You have people with all different kinds of personalities. You have conservatives and liberals and people in all different stages of life doing all kinds of things. There's a big assortment. It's probably a nice little slice of the American life*".

There is sometimes conflict between individual quilters and the textual data supports this. Frieda talks about conflict in her quilting group, "*You know, I've griped to somebody about somebody else. And somebody has griped to me about somebody else. But there's never really been a time where anybody got into a direct conflict with each other. And then it just blows over like what happens in families you know*".

Statements that were made by respondents about individual conflicts over differences are followed by statements describing the process of reaching a deeper understanding and a higher level of empathy toward the other person. Angela shares, "*There's a particular lady whom I find to be quite abrupt and kind of brassy. And later I found out that she really had a heck of a life. Well I see her in a different light because I know more about that. I can at least understand her*." It is this process of understanding and empathy that turns potentially neagtive conflict into a therapeutic factor. The group

therapeutic factor of *development of socializing techniques* refers to the development of social skills that involve an opportunity for members to learn how to be responsive to others, acquire methods of conflict resolution and become less likely to be judgemental and more capable of experiencing and expressing accurate empathy (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

Gina from Oklahoma talks about how one individual difference is handled in her group, "*We are really close because we have known each other for so long. And you know we have one girl who is really messy (laughing) and it tickles us because she's just messy and throws her stuff everywhere. And we have a lot of fun with that because the other three of us are real nice and neat and everything has to be all stacked in a row*". Though the messiness may cause a potential for group conflict, the fact that the messy member is still accepted and valued makes the dynamics of the group amid differences a growth inducing and therapeutic environment.

Quilting groups seem to differ in the amount of *group cohesion* they experience. Some groups may focus more exclusively on the activity of learning about quilt making and thus may not experience the same depth of emotional experience as groups who share information across contexts. One respondent, Cara explains "*Not all groups are as close as ours. My friend is in two or three small groups and they only meet once or twice a month. They're not really that close*."

The data from this study has indicated that the group therapeutic factor of *imparting information* is prevalent among the quilting community in general and small quilting groups in particular. Yalom (2005) states that advice giving often occurs and may be indicative of member's attempt to manage relationships rather than to connect,

however, the process of giving advice may be beneficial in that it may imply mutual interest and caring. The textual data gleaned from this study attests to the fact that sometimes advice giving can be harsh and possibly destructive. Frieda tells about the people in her quilting group "*Over the years we've gotten so that 'if you don't want an opinion don't ask because you're going to get it'* (laughter). *People look at each other's work and go, 'Oh yeah, if you like that kind of thing'* (laughter). *But it's a group that is used to each other. Anybody knows that whoever comes to that group has to have a thick skin. It can be critical because it's a very talented group but diverse and so people have very strong diverse opinions about what looks good*".

At times it appears that opinions can be harsh and advice giving unwelcome. But in other instances, *interpersonal learning* and the development of *socializing techniques* can also occur. Frieda continues by saying "*At the same time … you know when you have crossed a line. I think that I kind of learned about myself that sometimes you make the comments and even though people are tough skinned there is also a time that you have to let it lie and realize it's enough. I know how I feel like sometimes it's okay when someone tells you* (their opinion) *but then you just feel like the whole world is all over it, because this can be a tough group… it can be a very tough group (laughing).*" Gina says that she has learned from interacting with her quilting group. *"I learned maybe how to get along with people more, yeah because sometimes you have to hold your tongue (laughing) and not always but you try not to hurt people's feelings and you don't want yours hurt and that type of stuff*".

Group cohesiveness is a predominant therapeutic group factor in the textual data collected for this study. Quilt group members clearly value, accept and support each

other. But there is also some evidence of exclusion. Emma explains that "*there was one person in the group I really liked and that person was a great help to me. And I think I was the only one in the group that liked her. But it was obvious when she would show up they were closed minded*". Another respondent shares what happened when a man came to a quilt group meeting. "*And there were women who said they'd actually say the group was closed if he came. You know they wanted no men. But I think it might have just been his contolling personality. Because I think if a quiet guy came, like a guy who seemed to go along with the flow – it would be O.K. He was just gently told it was a closed group*".

It is a concern that some quilting groups, especially some of the groups that are closed to new membership over a period of time, could become insular. Lower levels of diversity of thought could lead to lower levels of potential growth among individual group members. Even though group members may see themselves as diverse in terms of quilting tastes and preference for techniques, group members may in fact come from very similar socio-economic, regional and cultural backgrounds and share similar belief systems. Though closed groups may have a higher risk of promoting restricted or narrow views, they also offer a stable bulwark against the tragedies of life. They may offer a place they can go to and feel protected during the most difficult times in life.

Evidently some quilting groups can be quite diverse. One quilt group that was interviewed for this study meets regularly in Amman, Jordan and Kuwait. The members are citizens of Amman, Kuwait, Scotland and several states in America (Virginia and Oklahoma). The member from Scotland asserts "*We are all multi cultural. Every one of us has a love of quilting and we have friendships that will last forever. We always have food and we learn eachother's cuisine*". One participant from Australia explains that she

is part of a diverse online quilting group comprised of twelve people from all over the world. "*Everyone gives support and whether it's in their personal life or quilting you know…'I can't do this, I need help with that.' Or 'Where will I find this or how do I do this?' Someone will know the answer. And that's how we met. It was online. And we both have been chatting for about five years. And over the years we've just developed a friendship and finally we got to meet each other for the first time this year. I flew to her home in Texas and the main purpose was to come to the quilt show together*".

Finally, another potential non-nurturing aspect of quilt making involves the potential for excess. Quilters share that they collect sometimes large amounts of fabric, many sewing machines and a variety of gadgets. Respondents also talk about large amounts of time spent quilting alone and with others attending large guild meetings, small group meetings, classes, retreats, quilt shows and leadership meetings. While there is a friendly acceptance of all of this as part of the quilting experience, it follows that there *could* be potential for unhealthy excess for some individuals. One participant says "*We have our meeting on one day and class on another day and sometimes two meetings and class on Friday*". Another shares, "*We took a class and got all the supplies. We got all the special pencils and markers. I'm not sure I'll ever use it all but I got it all. Every time you go to a class or workshop you get more*". Finally, a quilter from Texas explains that "*Quilting is MY time! And sometimes he says 'how much longer are you going to be in there?' and I say, 'Well I'm not done yet!'*" Although there was evidence for the potential for unhealthy excess, no participants admitted individual problematic discomfort in any of these areas.

Summary

In summary, the textual data collected during this study is replete with references that support the therapeutic nature of quilting and quilting in groups. All eleven group therapeutic factors are represented in the data with three emerging as predominant: *group cohesion, altruism and imparting information*. Quilt group members feel a sense of acceptance and belonging associated with their group. They give of themselves to each other as well as to the community and they share information with each other in terms of quilt making and also in areas not related to quilt making. Other themes that became evident were related to individual *coping, identity* and *self expression*. These themes were associated with the act of quilting in general as well as with quilting in groups. Quilters experience quilt making as a way to get one's mind off of problems, a way to leave a proud legacy and a way to express one's own uniqueness. The experience of quilt making as a therapeutic activity was the predominant communication expressed by participants; however, some evidence of non therapeutic experience also exists. Interaction between various groups and individuals create potential for conflict. But there was also a facilitation of growth, understanding and increased empathy amid conflict which can turn the experience into a therapeutic one under Yalom's (2005) description of *family reinactment, learning of socializing techniques* and *interpersonal learning*.

Discussion

Women's quilting groups have existed in the United States since colonial times offering a place for women to gather and share interests and ideas across many contexts. Such groups serve as a venue for connection that is considered safe, acceptable and without stigma. Although quilting groups have endured through disparate times, they

have gone virtually unnoticed by those not directly involved. The benefits that such groups offer are all but unknown to non-participants. In a predominately individualistic society where many lack opportunity for social interaction and community, quilting groups may offer a place for women to connect in ways that promote personal growth and healing.

This study illuminates the presence of therapeutic group factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) in small quilt-making groups. The three predominant factors include *group cohesion, altruism* and *imparting information.* The presence of these therapeutic group factors indicates that quilting groups may offer a place for women to experience significant growth and change. The presence of *group cohesion* attests to an atmosphere of belonging, acceptance and support that is necessary for other therapeutic factors to occur. *Altruism* offers the quilt group participants an opportunity to be of benefit to others by allowing them a variety of ways to extend their own gifts and talents in a tangible way. Quilting groups also offer an environment that is rich with learning opportunities that can keep one's mind active and interested. Learning experiences occur through direct education as well as through natural interpersonal interaction that crosses the bounds of quilt making into other realms of shared experience.

Results of this study reveal that women who engage in quilting and quilting in groups find the activities therapeutic. One respondent from Texas states "*Quilting in my groups is almost like group therapy. We share our joys and sorrows. We are very good friends*". Another participant explains that "*Quilting is better than psychotherapy. It IS my psychotherapy*".

Community quilting groups engage in complex activities that may offer some advantages over traditional group therapy. Community quilting groups tap into aspects of relating that traditional counseling does not always facilitate. The focus on participants' creativity, uniqueness, traits and gifts allows for less restricted connections and opens up certain forms of interaction and healing that is impossible in traditional psychotherapy groups.

The opportunity for shared play serves as one example of a part of the complex activities that makes quilting groups uniquely therapeutic. Fun, play and laughter are clearly a part of the experience of quilting together. Play occurs in a way that diminishes hierarchies, diminishes calculating reason and promotes the emotional and intuitive connections between people. They members of a quilting group can have fun and be playful but then grow so close that they sense when people need closer proximity and more intimate connection. Cara describes one way that her group plays. *"I like being able to call up one of my girls and go okay what are you guys doing this weekend? You know it's like once a year we have a three day weekend over at Donna's house. Her family is gone for three days and it's like, 'O.K. everybody come over'. It's like a big old slumber party (laughter). So we get out sewing machines. We get out whatever pattern ideas we're working on and we just sew to our little heart's content*".

Cara relates the activity of quilting to something a person does when they are little. This provides a unique opportunity for healing. Instead of reliving trauma in a group format, the group activities sometimes take the members back to a time of innocence where they can experience a way of life that existed before traumas occurred –

a time before they became so involved in a troublesome world that demanded a focus on protection.

The activity of quilt making itself, whether engaged in individually or in groups, creates an opportunity to experience a number of stress reducing and depression relieving states such as flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975), intense focus (Dandeneau et al., 2007), behavioral activation (Jacobson et al., 1996) and experience of pleasant events (Meeks & Depp ,2003). Thus quilt making provides a variety of opportunities for therapeutic intervention through the specific activity of quilt making as well as the complex dynamic interaction among small quilt group members and large quilting communities.

Limitations

There are several limitations inherent in this study which should be taken into account when considering the results. Subjective responses may be affected by the response style or the cognitive style of the participant. Also, some experiences may not be available to subjective awareness and thus not available for cognitive evaluation.

Furthermore, salient themes and predominant therapeutic group factors were selected primarily based on enumeration. Other therapeutic factors were present and though they were not mentioned as often there was an intensity and depth of experience that was not addressed. *Family Re-enactment,* for example was not considered a predominant response; however, when it was present, its impact was considered to be profound as illustrated by the following statement, "*It is definitly like family. We pretty much know each other's kids and husbands and everybody's moms and that sort of stuff. We know everyone very well. We all went on a trip to Europe and my husband couldn't*

go. They all took care of me and everybody made sure I was comfortable. I was as comfortable as I could be".

Quilting groups can provide an avenue to work through unresolved emotional conflicts that existed in their families in a meaningful way. They have an opportunity to recreate their ideal family. A participant from the Midwest shares, "*I am looking for sisters I didn't have and – in a way… the kind of relationship that I didn't…that I don't have with my mother*".

In addition, this sample included women from a variety of regions yet the longest and most thorough interview data was collected from the Midwestern United States and therefore may not represent the entire population of women who participate in quilting and quilting in small groups. Other individuals who participate in groups situated in different contexts and cultures may respond differently if given the same extended length of time to respond in a semi structured interview.

Future research

Trends identified in this study suggest that further research on therapeutic factors present in other naturally existing community groups may be warranted. Exploration of curative factors present in traditional therapy groups might be compared and contrasted with naturally occurring groups present in the community. It may be possible to utilize curative aspects of these naturally occurring community groups to further specific individual counseling goals associated with group curative factors, for example, increasing social learning or facilitating feelings of belonging and hope. Additionally, since quilting is popular across ethnicity and culture, research focusing on specific populations of quilt-makers may be beneficial in the facilitation of curative factors that

can translate easily in multicultural settings. Finally, it may prove advantageous to examine each therapeutic factor separately to learn more about how each is created and fostered in various community groups. Insights may help therapeutic group leaders facilitate specific therapeutic factors when warranted.

Implications

In sum, findings provide a rationale to health care professionals and community service personnel to discuss and encourage creative lifestyle pursuits, such as quilting, particularly for individuals suffering from depression or seeking to improve self esteem and increase social interaction. Involvement in small group quilt-making is readily adaptive to special populations (such as clients who are managing chronic illness, disability or incarceration) in ways that fit particular constraints and ability (Reynolds et al., 2003; Terichow, 2007). Quilting groups are responsive to the needs of managed care's quest for brevity and uniformly structured time-limited therapy. The benefits of quilting revealed in this study may promote greater involvement in creative, community-based, social activities, such as a small group quilting. Quilt making can provide a sound structure and an integral ingredient for healthy living. As Renee, a quilter from Arkansas states, "*Quilting gives me something to concentrate on besides myself. It gives me something to DO to occupy my time and it gives me something to look forward to every day… it gives me purpose*".

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Appendix A

Subjectivity Statement

I am interested in exploring what it means to be a quilter. I would like to understand more about why women quilt together. I am also wondering if there are any psychosocial benefits associated with involvement in quilt-making and the quilt-making culture. This study explores the presence of Yalom's therapeutic group factors (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) in the context of small quilt-making groups by studying women's lived experience of the quilt-making phenomenon.

I began making quilts when I was thirteen years old. I was introduced to fabric one summer while visiting my paternal grand-parents in Temple, Oklahoma. My grand-mother worked on a satin quilt with painted flowers that summer. She showed me how to paint the flowers on each individual quilt block and she allowed me to paint one of the blocks myself. At the end of the summer she gave the quilt to me. She also kept me very busy that summer making crocheted rugs and yo-yos (round pieces of fabric gathered into circles that were eventually connected and sewn into quilts) out of the left over fabric scraps.

I remember enjoying the touch and the texture of the fabrics. I often sat in a little room that she had piled high with remnants. I climbed to the top of the huge piles and touched all the bright colors with little awareness at that time of the possibilities they held. Sometimes I would just lie back in the middle of them content to blend into the soft kaleidoscope.

A few years later, I began work on a small crazy quilt that incorporated snippets from my 15 years. It had pieces of some of my favorite clothes, my hospital volunteer

badges and pieces of lace. In the center of the quilt is a large embroidered turtle that was stitched by my brother when he was a young boy. I still have this fabric scrapbook that I sometimes stop and caress fondly.

It was at the age of twenty-four that I became intractably involved in quilt-making. I was invited to participate in the construction of a quilt for a local museum in Ft. Leavenworth Kansas. I sat around a large quilt frame with seven other ladies and made careful stitches onto a beautiful blue and white quilt that was painstakingly drafted and designed by one of the members who was an architect and a draftswoman. It was perfect. Week after week I attended this event and casually learned about the quilting culture. I also gleaned important information from the group about relationships, shopping and childrearing. Mostly – it was fun. It was rewarding and exciting to be part of a benevolent, creative and supportive group. I moved from that group to another, to another and still another. As I traveled to different parts of the world over the next twenty years, I maintained a rewarding involvement in quilt-making and a variety of quilt-making groups.

These experiences have shaped my assumptions associated with involvement in quilt-making and quilt-making groups. Millions of people are involved in the construction of quilts for reasons other than necessity. I think they are involved because there are real therapeutic benefits associated with quilting. I have seen quilt-making used as a means of mourning loss, espousing religious and political views, facilitating community outreach, and initiating and maintaining social connections. I think that participation in quilt-making and participation in the quilt-making culture can be curative and beneficial. It is my goal to explore how others perceive their quilt-making

experience especially as they interact in small quilt-making groups. I would like to discover patterns of shared psychosocial experience that may be deemed relevant to individual and community health promotion.

Appendix B

Demographics Questionnaire

Please feel free to skip any questions that you do not want to answer

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your gender? _____

3. Please circle the race with which you most closely identify?

   Caucasian Hispanic African American Asian Other_____

4. In what state do you reside? _____

5. What is your approximate total annual household income? _____

6. What is your marital status? (please circle one)

   Married Single Divorced Widowed Other

7. Number of children _____

8. Number of grandchildren _____

9. About how many **hours per week** do you interact with people? (Including immediate family, friends, co-workers, extended family, etc….)
   _____

10. How many years have you been involved in quilting? _____

11. About how many **hours per week** do you spend on quilting related tasks?
    _____

12. Are you a member of any LARGE (guild or 16+ member group) groups that are related to quilting? _____

13. How many hours **per month** do you spend participating in LARGE (guild or 16+ member group) quilting related group activities? _____

14. Do you participate regularly in any quilting related **SMALL** group (4-16 members) meetings or "get-to-gathers"?

    Yes No

15. How many members are in your small art/hobby/quilting related group(s)? _____

16. How often does your small group meet? _____

17. How long does your group meeting last? _____

18. Please put a check mark beside all activities that you have participated in as part of your small group meeting:

____ Teaching/ learning new skills and techniques

____ Sharing of food or a meal

____ Working on your own individual projects

____ Working together on one large shared project

____ Travel/ planned outings

____ Sharing of personal stories and events that are not art/craft/hobby related

____ Other activities include:

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you for your time and willingness to participate. As you know, I am interested in exploring what it means to be involved in quilt-making. Particularly, I am trying to understand any possible psychosocial benefits involved in quilt-making. If the questions are general and abstract, you may volunteer any detail you wish. You also have the option of declining to answer – passing - on any of the questions. Do you have any questions before we start?

Interview Questions

1. What does it mean to be a quilter?
2. What draws you to quilting?
3. Describe your favorite part of the quilting process.
4. How do you find an outlet for self expression in your quilting?
5. What does it mean to create a quilt?
6. How is quilting related to learning?
7. How would you say that quilting affects your sense of self worth?
8. Would you describe quilting as a therapeutic activity? In what ways is it therapeutic?
9. Tell me a story about how quilting helps or has helped you cope.
10. How does quilting connect you to others?
11. How do you feel when you interact with your small quilting group?
12. What one event, incident or interaction ever occurred in your quilting group that was most helpful to you?
13. Describe what happened, the feelings you experienced and how the event was helpful.

Based on the specific answers to these questions, I will ask related probing questions throughout the interview process.

Appendix D

DATA INVENTORY

Yalom's therapeutic group factors in women's quilting groups: A qualitative study

Facilitating Documents

IRB application and approval:	hardcopy in black file, electronic copy on hard drive
Consent forms:	hardcopy in black file, electronic copy on hard drive
Interview protocol:	hardcopy in black file, electronic copy on hard drive
Grant proposal and acceptance letter	hardcopy in black file, electronic copy on hard drive

Data Inventory

29 written interviews	hardcopy in black notebook

Eight Individual Interviews:

Name	date	length	# photos	audio	transc	stored
Anna	101908	44:52	0	yes	yes	hard drive
Beth	123008	42:15	24	yes	yes	hard drive
Cara	010309	46:40	5	yes	yes	hard drive
Donna	010609	30:00	9	no	yes	hard drive
Emma	010709	33:31	0	yes	yes	hard drive
Frieda	011409	35:51	1	yes	yes	hard drive
Gina	011409	24:17	11	yes	yes	hard drive
Hanna	011509	39:47	8	yes	yes	hard drive

Thirteen Houston International Quilt Festival Interviews:

ID#	date	time	audio	transc	stored
25	103108	7:23	yes	yes	hard drive
26	103108	3:01	yes	yes	hard drive

27	103108	2:39	yes	yes	hard drive
28	103108	2:35	yes	yes	hard drive
29	103108	2:21	yes	yes	hard drive
30	103108	4:04	yes	yes	hard drive
31	103108	6:29	yes	yes	hard drive
32	103108	4:25	yes	yes	hard drive
33	103108	7:21	yes	yes	hard drive
34	103108	6:36	yes	yes	hard drive
35	103108	6:26	yes	yes	hard drive
36	103108	10:20	yes	yes	hard drive
37	103108	2:18	yes	yes	hard drive

Six Observations:

ID#	date	time	photos	artifacts	field notes	storage
1	101508	3 hr	0	0	yes	file/hdr
2	101608	2 hr	15	2	yes	file
3	103008	8 hr	319	20	yes	file
4	110308	1 hr	0	0	yes	file
5	110508	2 hr	0	2	yes	file
6	101308	1 hr	0	0	yes	file