

MARYBETH C. STALP

Women, Quilting, and Cultural Production: The Preservation of Self in Everyday Life
(Under the Direction of LINDA GRANT and BARRY SCHWARTZ)

This research analyzes the meaning of quilting as a form of unpaid creative work among contemporary American women who make it an important part of their lives. Interviews and participant observation reveal that the quilting process immerses women in an often overlooked form of cultural production in the context of everyday life activities. Quilting is used in multiple ways as an extension of women's caretaking and tradition-maintaining activities. Quilts bookmark and commemorate important family events and, through gift exchange with friends and kin, solidify social ties. They leave visual, tactile records of women's daily lives and of their skills as artists and technicians, aspects of their lives that women hope will be remembered. Quilting can strengthen women's identities and heighten a sense of connection with the past, especially with women ancestors. It provides opportunities for true leisure, artistic expression, relaxation, and self-renewal for quilters.

Within-home and non-economic aspects of cultural production reveal the importance of woman-centered cultural activities, those that women engage in for personal reasons. Analysis of quilting sheds light on power dynamics in contemporary families, where activities that cannot be defined as either market work or direct family carework are validated less for women than for other family members. Many quilters face struggles within families to gain time, space, and other resources to continue their work. These conflicts signify the difficulties women face in many domains of contemporary life, where they are often expected to support and care for others at the expense of self-development and creative expression.

Quilting activities have various dimensions, presenting a complex portrait of women's cultural production. This research expands the sociology of culture, by analyzing processes of culture-creation in privatized, women-dominated sites that have rarely been analyzed before. It contributes to the sociology of gender by exploring how quilters simultaneously affirm and transform traditional women's roles through quilting. Finally, it makes contributions to research on the family by illuminating how family dynamics make home life a workplace for women and constrain their opportunities, relative to other family members, to experience home as a site of leisure and self-renewal.

INDEX WORDS: Cultural Production, Carework, Women's Creativity, Family Dynamics, Quilting, Qualitative Methods

WOMEN, QUILTING, AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION:
THE PRESERVATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE

by

MARYBETH C. STALP

B.A., Regis University, 1993

M.A., Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, 1996

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by

MARYBETH C. STALP

Approved:

Major Professors: Linda Grant
Barry Schwartz

Committee: Jim Dowd
Reuben May
Patricia Bell-Scott
Janice Simon

Electronic Version Approved:

Gordhan L. Patel
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
December 2001

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the women who have kept the art of quilting alive and well in the world. Specifically, I include those quilters in my life who have passed on and who have shaped my thinking about quilting and its importance in women's lives: Genevieve Meiergerd, Stacey Lynn Stalp, and Sharon Kreikemeier.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PRESENTATION OF SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Introduction

Quilting is a distinctively woman-centered form of cultural production in the United States. However, unlike other cultural production sites studied by sociologists (e.g., Becker 1982; Fine 1996; Griswold 1994; R. Peterson 1976), most women who quilt are not concerned with economic success in the marketplace. Although a few quilters market their wares, most women produce quilts for non-economic reasons, such as personal fulfillment, artistic creativity, and familial gift-giving. Such reasons for engaging in quilting have little to do with directly maintaining the home, indirectly contributing to social production, or contributing directly to the family economy as traditional sociologists of gender study women's paid or unpaid work.

American women have produced quilts for hundreds of years, combining the production of a functional object with creative expression. In the last thirty years, quilting has become popular with museum-goers and art connoisseurs, as museums and the general art world are beginning to consider quilts as forms of both craft and art. A national household survey finds that more than 15 million U.S. households participate in quilting (15.5%), and that 99% of all quilters are women. Quilting has increased by 52% in the past three years, now a 1.84 billion dollar international industry (Leman Publications 2000).

In its most basic, traditional, and familiar form, a quilt is a three-layered fabric sandwich. It has a top, a filling, and a back. The quilt top is what people are most familiar with, for it displays the design (symbolic and actual). The filling layer falls in the middle. It varies in thickness, and offers warmth and texture, while the usually nondescript backing encases the filling and provides support to the fabric unit. These three layers, piled atop each other, make up the landscape upon which the actual quilting takes place. Stitches placed carefully in consideration of the quilt top, but penetrating through each layer of the sandwich an additional layer of design to the quilt, functionally keep the three layers secure, and ensure warmth. Finally, a strip of fabric called the binding is sewn around all the edges, completing the quilt.

In the past, a quilt was most often considered an item of utility, although women took great efforts to make aesthetically pleasing quilts. Most quilts made in the past also had personal or hidden meaning attached to them, just as contemporary quilts do. Often credited for being thrifty and making quilts out of clothing and household scraps, when financially able, U.S. women have historically bought and continue to buy new fabric for the purposes of quilting. Contemporary women of all ages make quilts using new, 100% cotton fabric that textile companies manufacture specifically for quilting. Currently quilts have multiple meanings and purposes. They continue to have utilitarian purposes and meaning for the women who make them. In addition, the general public is developing a sentimental and an artistic appreciation for quilts.

Although invisible to most viewers of quilts, there is a complex and meaningful cultural production process that happens long before the quilt becomes a finished product. In addition to being a means of gendered cultural production, quilting also serves as a non-economic personal-level creative outlet for women. Quilting provides a way for women to benefit from spending quality time alone with their creative selves, leaving them better able to fulfill their gendered societal roles: wife, mother, friend, paid and un-paid worker. Finally, quilting is used to mark the lives of women and to cement social ties through gift exchange. Through participant observation and intensive interviews with seventy self-identified quilters, I focus on the meaning making processes of quilting as they are intertwined with women's lives, and demonstrate that quilting is a site for transmission of a distinctively gendered local knowledge among women.

Quilting activities have various dimensions, presenting a complex portrait of women's cultural production. In viewing and analyzing quilting activities within a framework of both gender and culture, I problematize the existing theoretical frames of both these sociological subareas. This research expands theoretical frames in sociology of culture to better capture women's distinctive forms of non-economic cultural production. It expands theoretical frames in sociology of gender to embody forms of creative activities in the home and forms of carework by women that are not strongly linked to economic activities.

The Quilting Process and Identity Development

Since making quilts no longer is an essential task for family survival, most women who quilt nowadays do so as a leisure activity. Quilting is noticeably popular among women aged 40 to 60, as they are taking quilting classes in large numbers, yet women of all ages are learning

to quilt in increasing numbers (Leman Publications 2000). Although a few women make a livelihood as professional quilters or quilt instructors, most of the women who have fueled the contemporary surge in popularity of quilting engage in it as a leisure activity. However, it is a form of serious leisure with important consequences for self and society (Stebbins 1979).

In modern culture, women are often expected to perform the demanding and time consuming roles of paid worker and unpaid careworker (Hochschild 1989), leaving little time for women to participate in relaxing leisure activities (Wearing 1998). While most women manage successfully to combine paid work and family life, what they tend to give up in the process is time to pursue leisure or pleasurable activities, and time to spend with other women (Crosby 1991).

It is in these contexts that quilting becomes an important identity making activity for women. Although some women quilt on their own, many engage in quilting regularly or occasionally in groups of women such as small friendship networks, church groups, quilt guild events, or the modern twist on quilting bees, the stitch & bitch. Women learn skills as well as a way to connect in a meaningful way with other women in contemporary society. Women who have sustained involvement in quilting find that it is a context for doing important identity development work. Through quilting, women grapple with the complexities and contradictions of tradition and modernity. Within a culture that devalues the demanding but often invisible and unacknowledged work that women do to maintain families and communities, quilting allows women to develop meaningful subjective careers (Evetts 1996).

The Layering Process of Identity Development

In understanding the meaning of quilting in women's lives, the theories of Erving Goffman provide a useful frame. In his book *Asylums*, Goffman (1961) describes a sequential process of "identity stripping" and "deindividuation" that individuals go through in the process of losing distinctive identities and becoming parts of total institutions, such as mental hospitals, prisons, ships at sea and the like.

I suggest that the transformation that women go through when they become seriously involved in non-commercialized quilting can be conceptualized as the reverse of this identity-stripping process. Rather than lose elements of identity, women who quilt build layers of distinctive identities that become center points of their lives. Women who quilt in homes and communities, of course, are not the equivalent of members of total institutions and their lives are not so rigidly controlled. However, many aspects of contemporary social life can be thought of as stripping women's distinctive identities, and particularly the creative potential of women. In private lives, women's unwaged domestic and emotional labor—their carework—frequently is appropriated and undervalued within the family. The carework that women do in households (e.g., preparing meals, doing laundry, supervising children's homework, contributing to the comfort and well-being of family members) is rarely regarded or rewarded as "real" work. Doing this work has an element of depersonalization. Women who engage in this invisible work may feel trapped in a lose/lose situation: good and faithful performance is unrewarded but poor performance is stigmatized. Women are performing a type of alienated labor that can result in a diminishing of identity and one's sense of self.

In the paid labor market, women are over-represented in service-oriented jobs where work is routinized and carework is similarly appropriated but often unrewarded (Leidner 1993; Sokoloff 1980). The jobs that women occupy most frequently allow little latitude for creativity and individual expression. Inequitable divisions of domestic labor not only assign women a “second shift” of labor at home in comparison to men, but they also produce a “leisure gap” where men have, on the average, one month more of leisure per year in comparison to their wives (Hochschild 1989; Wearing 1998). Since leisure in contemporary life is a major mechanism through which people seek self-renewal that allows them to perform work in other social roles and opportunities to express a “true” or “genuine” self, women have fewer opportunities for this type of leisure experience than do men. Quilting, I will suggest, becomes a vehicle not only for women to seek expression of a genuine self through leisure activity, and one which gives women a voice as creators of culture. As a process, quilting provides a respite from demands of everyday lives of contemporary women, and it also provides a mechanism for women to see themselves as part of a larger culture, a community of culture creators with a past and a future.

Gender and the Sociology of Culture

Sociology of culture, as it has been developed over the past two decades, has tended to overlook women’s contributions to the production of culture. Research on culture usually focuses on public activities, those occurring in an economic or commercial sphere, and those that are male dominated. This type of research is related to art and artistic careers (Ardery 1998; Becker 1982; Lang and Lang 1993; 1990, 1988; Mishler 1999; K. Peterson 1999) musicians and the music industry (Curran 1996; Krenske and McKay 2000; R. Peterson 1997;

Stebbins 1996), and the publishing industry (Tuchman 1984; Tuchman and Fortin 1980). Women's cultural production more often takes place in privatized, non-economic spheres, through routine, everyday activities: cleaning, cooking, caring for children, and the like. Although these domains have been studied by a few feminist sociologists (Burman 1999; DeVault 1991; Hochschild 1989; Oakley 1974a, 1974b; Radway 1991), they largely have been ignored by sociologists of culture. As a result, women's contributions to culture through everyday life remains sociologically invisible. Where privatized domains or leisure activities have been studied as sites of cultural production, the emphasis has continued to be on male-dominated activities, or on women as supporters of their families' sports and leisure interests (Chafetz and Kotarba 1995; Thompson 1999). Hence, we have literary and sometimes also social scientific studies of activities such as fishing and hunting (Lyons 1999; Petersen 1996; Reiger 1992), and sports (Fine 1987, 1979; Schmitt and Leonard 1986), while there are far fewer portrayals of women-dominated leisure activities. Additionally, when women are studied as women, they are typically objects of media distortion (Barthel 1988; Goffman 1976; Lont 1995; Pipher 1994; Tuchman, Daniels and Benet 1978; Walters 1995) and are not often viewed as subjects or as cultural consumers and/or commentators (Bobo 1995; Simonds 1992; Weitz 2001). As individuals and as members of society, women lack a sense of themselves as subjects or producers of culture.

In this study I argue that women who engage in quilting as a serious form of leisure use the activity as a mechanism to challenge the identity-stripping characteristics of many facets of contemporary life. Women use quilting to nourish a creative identity that is difficult if not impossible to attain through their paid labor market and unpaid domestic work. As they

continue quilting, women develop a sense of themselves as subjects and producers of culture. I suggest that in doing this identity work, women draw upon elements of traditional and modern conceptualization of women's roles. For example, quilting is an activity that in U.S. collective history is strongly connected to Colonial times. For many women, quilting highlights their sense of linkage to women ancestors in their own families. Conversely, serious commitments to quilting and the time and resources it demands challenges gendered divisions of leisure that make men's activities more important than women's, especially at-home leisure. For some, quilting can be a means to reconcile these contradictory forces of tradition and modernism through quilting.

Quilting as Process

In this work, I conceptualize quilting as a process. Unlike some other forms of serious leisure engaged in by women, quilting produces a tangible, and potentially long-lasting product. Research on the sociology of culture has tended to focus on products and the ways in which they are responded to in a public, often commercialized, arena—for example, exploring how paintings or photographs become recognized as works of art (K. Peterson 1999), how certain products become evaluated as “art” rather than “craft” (Becker 1982) and the like. To women who quilt seriously, both process and product are important and are, in fact, inextricably linked. As a means to connect with other women who quilt, to celebrate and appreciate connections with women who quilted in the past, and to experience tension relief and self-renewal, quilting process is central to resistance to the identity-stripping elements of contemporary life. Quilts as products are also important, as they become vehicles for displaying and commemorating aspects of their creators' lives that otherwise are invisible, or might be rendered invisible with

the passage of time: their skills as designers and needlewomen; their memories and recollections of their lives as these are stitched into the quilts; their expressions of care and connection elaborated through gift exchanges involving quilts. Quilts can be interpreted by others—even beyond the life of the maker—so that aspects of her life and history become visible to others.

Quilting and quilts, I will argue, become the means for women to challenge and reformulate gender arrangements in contemporary society. Women use an historically venerated, distinctively woman-dominated activity to create meaningful new identities for themselves that simultaneously preserve and challenge traditional meanings of women's work in the home. More than just a hobby, quilting becomes a means for reconfiguring lives and challenging power relationships that deny women rights to meaningful leisure activities and rights to coherent subjective careers on a par with men and visibility in the process of cultural production.¹

My Experience with Quilting

This dissertation stems from both personal and academic experiences. I have been a sewer for twenty-two years and a quilter for ten years. Growing up the second oldest in a family of six girls on a farm in rural Nebraska, I was encouraged along with my sisters to learn traditional feminized skills such as sewing and quilting.

My mother taught me to sew when I was six years old. Soon after, I joined a 4-H club and competed successfully in clothing construction at the county, regional, and state levels. I began taking sewing lessons from my neighbor when I was in junior high. My five sisters and I all took sewing lessons from her. I remember fondly the time I spent sewing with my mother,

neighbor, and sisters. We discussed many non-sewing topics, including our lives as women and girls.

My dad's sister, Aunt Jenny, taught me how to quilt when I was a college junior. I thought my extensive sewing skills would transfer easily to quilting. I assumed incorrectly that quilting was a rather unsophisticated way of putting fabric together, especially in comparison to the complicated tailored clothing I could assemble by then. I learned that quilting requires precise sewing, design, and color theory skills. In addition, quilting encourages creativity and patience, and an appreciation of history. Through this creative learning process, I started and finished my first quilt, which I still use and of which I am proud.

I learned much more than quilting techniques from my Aunt Jenny. We learned a lot about each other and formed a closer relationship by quilting together. I have been able to replicate this process, this woman-centered creative culture with others in similar situations. When I travel to see my sisters, go to my parents' house, or entertain family in my home, we typically carve out some time for what we term crafting. Crafting as my sisters and I define it includes quilting, sewing, cooking, and educating each other about new creative projects, most recently knitting and weaving. This creative work becomes the social glue that helps regenerate family social ties. Through engaging in creative work in shared spaces, we recreate the supportive environment in which we first learned to sew. This time for us is relaxing, educational, emotionally satisfying, and regenerating of our energy for our multiple life tasks.

Self, Space and Sanity

While obtaining my master's degree in sociology, I lived alone in a small one bedroom apartment. My computer was in my bedroom. Waking up to the computer every morning was

not an encouraging way for me to begin my day, especially when faced with composing and revising my master's thesis. I vowed if possible in living spaces after this one to only have my bed in the bedroom. At that point in my life, I was focused solely on taking classes and writing my thesis. Wanting to succeed in graduate school, I was an earnest and compliant student, with my nose to the grindstone and little time for activities beyond the necessary reading and writing related to my thesis.

After my youngest sister, Stacey, was killed in a car accident in spring 1996 I had a difficult time managing my grief while simultaneously trying to complete my thesis. Her death at sixteen was certainly unexpected, definitely a tragedy, and something that I will never get over. At the time, many people advised me to get involved in new activities, taking an art class, even learning how to kickbox. All of these recommendations were good ideas, certainly, but they were not familiar to me. Familiarity was something that I desperately craved in my lonely path of learning to live without my sister.

One day I dragged my sewing machine from the closet and unpacked it. I had been carrying it with me ever since my mom gave it to me when I began college in 1989. I shared apartments and houses with others while in college, and there was never enough room to have a sewing machine sitting out. I did not have room in this apartment either to set up my machine, but I decided to forfeit the kitchen table to provide a permanent space for my sewing machine.

When I got back into sewing, I was not interested in making anything specifically. I just needed to have a creative outlet like sewing because in the past it had been a comforting activity for me. I knew I enjoyed doing it, and I also knew that I was good at it. Spending time at this creative outlet was exactly what I needed, and I began sewing furiously. I made clothes

and gifts for my friends and their children and started making clothes for myself again. Having the sewing machine up permanently proved useful and necessary to me at that point in my life. I especially found peace in doing something that I enjoyed, and I found pleasure in giving gifts to those meaningful in my life that I had made myself. Others around me commented that my actions did not make sense to them. In my immediate grieving period they felt that I should be seeking comfort in other ways, such as taking it easy, taking care of myself, and letting people take care of me and do nice things for me. I did enjoy it when people did take care of me, and did nice things for me, but it was not enough. I needed to do something proactive, to take care of myself in my own way, so that I could endure this particularly tough period in my life. I needed the emotional benefits from engaging in something creatively challenging, and something that I could do with my hands. It made me feel like I was doing something positive for myself, and I was. In making gifts for others, I felt that I was reaffirming important relationships with other people in my life.

While engaged in this research, I realized the importance of a permanent sewing space. I had seen other women's quilting spaces via my research pursuits, and thought that I would benefit on many levels from having a specific and permanent space for my sewing equipment. Making a sewing room for myself has definitely made a positive difference in my life.

Marking this creative space has given me a way to make much needed personal time for myself. I have always enjoyed making gifts for other people, and the processes of sewing and quilting. With the permanent space, though, I am able to have more than one project going on at any given time. In addition to the small quilts that I make for friends' children, in the last few years I have also finished two bed sized quilts for myself. This is something that I have

been wanting to do for a long time, but it has been difficult to find the time to do this. With the room already set up, the quilt-in-progress is ready when I am. I simply walk into the room and get creatively engaged immediately. Having the room does not dictate that I spend all of my creative time in it, though. I use the rest of the house as it suits me: I work in the sewing room when sewing or dealing directly with fabric, I cut fabric at the kitchen table, and do hand sewing in the evenings in front of the television or while listening to music.

Having the room set up the way that I was has been quite useful. When I am particularly stressed or upset, I sew or quilt to get my mind off of whatever is bothering me. Before I taught my first course at the University of Georgia, I was worried about how to assemble the readings and lectures, experiencing first-time jitters. To calm myself down and to think more clearly about what was upsetting me in particular about teaching for the first time, I decided to start a quilt project—that summer I worked on the quilt when I was nervous or upset about teaching my own courses.

I am able to sew and quilt whenever I feel like it, which also happens when I am happy. Making gifts for others gives me great pleasure, for I think about them and our relationship as I work on the item. Sewing and quilting have provided me activities with which I feel completely confident and comfortable doing. It can certainly be frustrating and challenging, but just like academia, it provides me with an acceptable mix of challenge and satisfaction. I have been sewing for over twenty years, and it is one of the longest running constant events in my life.

Piecing Together My Personal and Professional Selves

Through my experiences in sewing and quilting, I realized the wealth of knowledge and support present within women's spaces, specifically women's creative spaces. Sewing and

quilting have been important anchor points in my life, and they are activities that I turn to repeatedly as a relaxing escape, to spend time with others interested in sewing and quilting, and more simply for leisure purposes. Nevertheless, it has been only relatively recently that I have realized the importance of quilting as a topic for sociological analysis.

I was introduced to a feminist perspective as an undergraduate student and continually took courses and wrote papers about issues pertinent to women. Along with this, I developed an interest in the sociology of culture. Initially, I had difficulty finding research in sociology that combined my interest in gender and culture. Early during my graduate studies, I began to retreat regularly into sewing sessions alone, with other quilters, and, when I had the opportunity, with my sisters. I soon realized that women's everyday and creative activities in the home are a neglected area of study within sociology, even within feminist sociology. I then began to see how my involvement in quilting could be brought under the lens of sociological analysis. Why did this activity—which was so central in the lives of my mother, her daughters, and my female friends and relatives—have no sociological visibility?²

As a scholar interested in both gender and culture, I believe that encouraging a dialogue between the sociology of gender and sociology of culture is critical to my work as an academic sociologist. As a feminist scholar, I question the ways in which culture theorists conceptualize structure and culture and their failure to fully incorporate gender in their analyses. Likewise, as a culture theorist I have questioned the sometimes narrow conceptualizations of feminist sociology that have tended to concentrate on male-dominated structures and spaces such as workplaces. Everyday privatized activities of women in non-public spaces are an important part of social and cultural life, yet they are too little studied.

Organization of Dissertation

In Chapter Two, I review relevant theoretical literatures for this study, drawing from research in sociology of culture, sociology of gender, sociology of the family, and leisure studies. I discuss research methods, including sites, participants, field work role, evidence and analytical strategies in Chapter Three. (For those readers who are either less familiar with, or more interested in quilt history, I include a brief examination of the shift in meaning of quilting activities from the Colonial era to the present in Appendix A.) Chapter Four examines the gendered processes of quilting, including women's ways of learning to quilt, and how quilts bookmark important events in women's lives. In Chapter Five, I discuss the development of an identity of a quilter, highlighting individual and societal influences, as well as patterns of giving quilts as gifts. Chapter Six focuses on the negotiating that women do to find appropriate time and space for quilting while balancing family and work issues. Chapter Seven concludes the study and discusses the implications of this work to sociology generally.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Quilting has rarely been studied by sociologists, but an analysis of quilting from the perspective of women who engage in it seriously bears on a number of lines of sociological research and theorizing, among them studies of identity formation and development, studies of family dynamics and power, studies of stratification of leisure, and research on cultural production and transmission. Although these are very diverse strands of research, all are relevant to understanding the meaning of quilting in the lives of contemporary women through a sociological lens.

Identity Formation and Development

Why do women quilt? Why and how does it become important identity work? In his work, *Asylums*, Erving Goffman (1961) examines the process of mortification that inmates endure when succumbing to total institutions, such as prison, the military, or an asylum. As inmates transfer from persons on the outside into members of the total institution, they seemingly give up all outside existence and identity, complying with necessary requirements to succeed inside the asylum. Inmates lose their sense of who they are through this stripping process. It ardently removes layers of identity and individuality. Inmates experience loss of privacy and individuality as they are strip searched, forced to use communal showers and open toilets, and

wear uniforms. Patients are forbidden to possess any personal items, especially those which allow the inmate to claim an identity distinguishing her/him from others. This multilevel and degrading process slowly transforms patients from unique mentally affected individuals into homogenous members of total institutions. In writing about the extreme mortification processes present in such total institutions, Goffman (1961:14) claims that “analysis of these processes can help us to see the arrangements that ordinary establishments must guarantee if members are to preserve their civilian selves.”

Certainly, women are not inmates of their families or of society, and they do not endure the same processes of mortification that inmates experience.³ Yet, women in contemporary society are subject to patriarchal influences which render them as second rate to men, at best. Therefore, for many women, struggling with everyday patriarchy in society as well as in their families, the family can be conceptualized as a “greedy institution,” one which demands greatly from women’s lives (Coser 1974). I will suggest in this research that quilting offers women who pursue it seriously as a means to reverse this identity-stripping process. Instead of losing elements of self by conforming to externally-imposed demands, women discover and elaborate an identity that is distinctively their own.

Quilting Identity and Subjective Careers

Individuals often develop subjective careers, or coherent lines of activity that are important to identity but are self-defined and not always visible to outsiders. Evetts (1996:3) finds the concept of a subjective career to be particularly valuable in understanding the experiences of women:

The subjective career focused on individuals' experiences, how they saw the constraints and opportunities, how constraints and opportunities were negotiated and managed, how individuals perceived the problem and the possibilities, the influences, the turning points, the key events and decisions.

A subjective career may be unrelated to paid work and its content and contours shared with only a few people. Nevertheless, it represents a coherent line of activity closely linked to identity and self-worth that provides an anchor in a person's life. Such subjective careers anchor women's creative identities in a complex and rapidly changing world. I will show in this study how quilting can become a subjective career for women.

Family Dynamics and Power

How does serious quilting fit with family activities? How does quilting become a means to transform family roles? Despite their ever-increasing participation in the paid workforce, women are still responsible for the majority of household duties. As women have steadily entered the paid workforce steadily since the 1970s, family life has not accommodated to such changes (Arrighi and Maume 2000; Crittendon 2001; Crosby 1987; Greenstein 1996; Hochschild 1989; Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert 1997; Stier and Lewin-Epstein 2000). Women engage in paid work outside the home, but they are also responsible for most of the non-paid domestic work within the home. Hochschild (1989) labels this the "second shift" which can include housework, childcare, and transporting children to their numerous extracurricular events. Whereas men can frequently draw crisp boundaries between work and family activities, women have fluid boundaries between public and private duties and the boundaries often blur or spillover (Bailey 2000; Grzywacz and Marks 2000; Nippert-Eng

1996). Women juggle multiple tasks in both spheres simultaneously and because of the various roles they are fulfilling, they have less control over their time and over their pace of life (Shaw 1998; Sirianni and Negrey 2000; Turner and Greico 2000). Delineating time for oneself in this type of family and life situation proves to be difficult for women.

Given their multiple, gendered roles in both public and non-public spaces, women spend a great deal of time tending to and satisfying others' needs in both frontstage areas such as the workplace and backstage areas like the home (Goffman 1959). In paid work, women are located in certain jobs (e.g., pink collar ghettos) and roles within workplaces that require emotional labor (e.g., "mother" of the office staff) (Cancian and Oliker 2000; Howard and Hollander 1997; Kennelly 1999). At home, women often work when others are relaxing (e.g., preparing and cleaning up from holiday meals) while other family members rest (Deem 1996, 1982; Wearing 1998). As workers, women often perform "mother work"—entertaining office guests, tidying up the boss's desk, smoothing over disputes among coworkers—that are essential to the smooth operation of work-places but are nevertheless not always recognized and valued as real work (Hochschild 1983; Sokoloff 1980). They often produce more relaxed down time for others than they enjoy themselves.

Tending to others' needs in public in addition to non-public household and family needs, and facing a number of tasks simultaneously in both public and non-public places has simply become a way of life for many women (Nippert-Eng 1996). Women and men are socialized how to do gender (West and Zimmerman 1987) as well as become expert performers of gender throughout their lives, learning appropriately bounded gender behavior as children (Adler, Kless and Adler 1992; Goffman 1976; Grant 1984; Lever 1978; Lucal 1999; Thorne

1997). Scenarios which combine roles and stages are then particularly problematic for contemporary women, as they are not as likely as men to benefit from regular restful activity.

Stratification of Leisure

What happens to women's leisure when it occurs *inside* the home as quilting does? If women's leisure outside the home is contested, would not their leisure attempts within the home also be challenged by spouses, family members, and friends? Women get less leisure time than men, evidenced by the amount of space, the status of space allocated to them within the home, and their ability to enjoy leisurely activities within the home (Barnett and Marshall 1992; Baxter 2000; Deem 1999; Berk and Berheide 1977; Mowl and Towner 1995; Ross and Wright 1998; Shipley and Coats 1992; Tseelon 1991; Tuominen 1994; Wearing 1998).

Women have more stressful jobs at work and at home. When men complete their work days, they retreat to the home and the family to relax and unwind. Families and the home provide more leisure for men than they do for women. Women have few escapes from their work days, whether it is paid or unpaid work. After completing their work days in the paid public sphere, or in the unpaid private sphere, women cannot retreat to the home in the same ways that men do. The home presents social reproduction tasks for women, and is a workplace rather than a haven for women, regardless if they are engaged in paid work or not. If women have private space in the home devoted to leisure pursuits, however, they may have opportunities to set aside domestic work for a time.

Leisure for women (that could help relieve stress) gets squeezed out and is not legitimated. When women do engage in leisure just for themselves, they typically find themselves negotiating their leisure activities with other responsibilities in their lives. According

to prominent gender and leisure scholars, when women participate in leisure activities, they often seek activities outside the home (Deem 1982; Wearing 1998). The space outside the home may give women more freedom to pursue what they want to, to have control over the time they denote for leisure pursuits, and to have some much-needed alone time.

Cultural Production and Transmission

How and why is quilting important to cultural work? Cultural production, as currently studied by sociologists of culture and sociologists of gender is narrowly conceptualized. Such research often ignores women's contributions to cultural production, under-conceptualizing the importance of process in meaning-making activities, while over-emphasizing direct connections to the economic sphere. The non-economic nature of the quilting process as I will present it here, is key to understanding quilting as a self-preservation process for women.

The Process of Cultural Production and Transmission

Women's gendered work within the family maintains and elaborates social ties. Women invest emotion and meaning into their daily activities, such as food preparation, care-taking, housework and childcare, and communication within families. In a field work study, Beoku-Betts (1994) found that Gullah coastal women in South Carolina and Georgia use food-making traditions to transmit important cultural norms, primarily to their daughters. DeVault's (1991) account of mothers as family caretakers shows that women perform daily cooking with great care, attempting to make the family feel like honored individuals. Oakley (1974a, 1974b) discusses women's emotional investments in childcare and housework. These often-devalued home-work tasks have significant long range implications for women as they consider their children's lives beyond the home. For example, Di Leonardo (1987) shows how the routine,

yet thoughtful, act of sending greeting cards, done much more by women than by men but directed toward kin of women as well as their spouses, helps maintain familial and kin relationships within families and establish family traditions.

Nevertheless, some forms of cultural expression are difficult to achieve by women. Women's writing is one of the most frequently studied forms of women's cultural production. Repeatedly, women writers recount their difficulties in gaining the time, support and legitimacy to write (See Aptheker 1989; Bateson 1990; Ferriss 1999; Kallet and Cofer 1999; Olsen 1978; Romero and Stewart 1999). Women have particular difficulty setting aside time to write in the face of familial duties. Additionally, scholars note that normative modes of expression in several forms of writing, such as absence of the author's voice, and writing in the third-person further constrain women's expressions (DeVault 1999; Reinharz 1992; Richardson 1997). These writing conventions are limiting for women writers, since they are often incompatible with the content of women's concerns.

Olsen (1978) documents the centuries of loss in cultural production by women writers, what she terms the *silences* resulting from the missed opportunities to write. Women called to write often could pursue their passion only part-time:

But what if there is not that fullness of time, let alone totality of self? What if the writers, as in some of these silences, must work regularly at something besides their own work—as do nearly all in the arts in the United States today But the actuality testifies: substantial creative work demands time, and with rare exceptions only full-time workers have achieved it. Where the claims of creation cannot be primary, the results are atrophy; unfinished work; minor effort and accomplishment; silences. (Olsen 1978:13)

Ferriss (1999: 55) supports this position, observing, “I have no time! It is the writer’s—especially the woman writer’s—most frequent complaint.”

Women writers’ reflections lend insight to other forms of women’s cultural production. The constraints faced by women who write are also felt by women who engage in other forms of artistic and cultural production. Most face the divided consciousness brought about by frequent interruptions and the struggle to find time and other resources needed for their work.

I will show how, through quilting, women gain an understanding of themselves as cultural actors. Women turn to quilting to escape the individualistic and alienating patriarchal society. They escape from mundane household chores that are expected but unappreciated, and from service-sector jobs that appropriate their emotional labor (Hochschild 1989; Sokoloff 1980). Through this process, they layer themselves with meaning, strengthen their identities as women and as cultural producers, and make connections with other women in their local and global communities.

Previous Quilt Research

When sociologists study quilting, they generally emphasize quilts as cultural and political artifacts, although this is beginning to change. Quilts are important in how they are used and viewed by non-quilting outsiders (e.g., political activists, museum-goers, art connoisseurs, and consumers). For example, Krouse (1993), Lewis and Fraser (1996), and Mueller (1995) focus on political aspects of the AIDS quilt. K. Peterson (1999) examines the process that cultural objects such as quilts go through to become acknowledged as art and to thereby be included in exhibits in art museums. King (1997) explores quilting as a leisure activity, noting

that stress relief, nurturing others, and creative expression were primary reasons that North Texas women engaged in quilting.

Other social scientists investigate quilting in a variety of ways, and from a multitude of disciplines. Collectively, they examine the social organization and social aspects of quilting activities. From Leisure Studies, Todd (1997) conducts a survey study documenting quilters' levels of involvement and competition in quilting activities, measured by the extent to which they entered (and won) quilting competitions. Rake (2000), writing from an historical perspective, interviewed three generations of quilters based in Mennonite churches in Ohio. She notes that although quilting is an important gendered activity, it also served as an income-generating activity for many women, further legitimating it in their lives.

Within Anthropology, Weidlich (1986) studies the renewed Canadian national level interest in quilting as a form of leisure for women. Ice (1984), an English/Folklore scholar, discusses women's identity development in a quilting group within a small community. Pryzbysz (1995) looks at forms of communication used in the presentation of quilts at quilt shows from a Speech Communication perspective.

Few quilt studies consider cultural production solely from the perspective of the women who make them, or focus on the processes by which quilts are produced. Recent studies focused topically on quilting center on the growth of quilting and the positive benefits it provides women. However, under-researched are the multiple meanings women attach to quilting activities as a distinctively gendered form of cultural production, and as a form of women's carework.

Conclusion

In this study I will show how these diverse strains of sociological research contribute to a better understanding of quilting. By partnering a culture perspective with a gender perspective a complex sociological portrait is painted of this multifaceted and multilevel activity. This research expands the sociology of culture by analyzing processes of non-economic culture-creation in privatized, women-dominated sites that have rarely been analyzed before, it highlights the significant relationship between cultural object and culture creator, and demonstrates that women are legitimate cultural creators, and valid subjects of sociological examination. It contributes to the sociology of gender by exploring how quilters simultaneously affirm and transform traditional women's roles through such unpaid creative work and carework of quilting. It makes contributions to research on the family by illuminating how family dynamics make home life a workplace for women and constrain their opportunities, relative to other family members, to experience home as a site of leisure and self-renewal. The substantive chapters point toward a re-conceptualizing of culture-producing social situations as gendered, and that non-economic sites of cultural production are embedded in gendered carework duties. Highlighting the non-economic aspects of cultural production is crucial in that it reveals the importance of meaning-making processes in women's everyday lives. The quilting process adds layers of gendered, cultural meaning to women's lives. It helps them to preserve their selves, and to resist more harmful elements of a patriarchal society.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

Starting from the everyday experiences of women who engage in quilting, I employed participant observation, intensive interview and documentary photography techniques to explore the multiple meanings of quilting among 70 contemporary U.S. women. My background as a long-time quilter helped me make connections and conduct interviews with quilters. I used my insider status as a quilter to better establish rapport with women, and to reduce barriers between researcher and participant (Baca Zinn 1979; Hertz 1997). Because of my insider status, I was also already familiar with quilting settings and techniques, and I felt comfortable talking with quilters.

I conducted four years of participant observation of various quilting activities, to see first hand what kinds of information were exchanged among women. Women met in small groups and quilt guilds, and they gathered at local and national quilt shows. I met quilters in these sites, engaged in quilting activities, and often witnessed spontaneous comments, some which were quilt related and some which were not.

Within such quilting sites, I took extensive and detailed field notes. I wanted to get an idea of how the change in quilting activities has affected which women participated and how women participated in current quilting activities. After conducting participant observation,

reading up on and practicing my quilting techniques for two years, I felt well versed enough in quilting techniques and practices to begin interviewing. Appendices B through E provide greater detail on my data collection strategies and include participant profiles, informed consent, transcript approval form for participants, and the interview guide I used in the field.

Since much of women's everyday lives and culture are oral, I encouraged a feminist perspective to inform the qualitative methods I employed, and give voice to women quilters. Writing about feminist methodology, Reinharz (1992) notes some of the more remarkable goals achieved through feminist research:

Making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the center, rendering the trivial important, putting the spotlight on women as competent actors, understanding women as subjects in their own right rather than objects for men—all continue to be elements of feminist research. (248)

The unstructured interviews for this research resembled guided conversations between two quilters rather than a structured interview between a researcher and a participant (Rubin and Rubin 1995). In these conversations I encouraged women to highlight aspects of quilting important in their lives. Guided by a feminist perspective this methodological strategy privileged participants' experiences as the center point of interviews, recognized women quilters as competent actors, and as subjects in their own right. Additionally, this research exhibits a feminist perspective as it topically makes the heretofore invisible women quilters visible within a sociological perspective.

While conducting participant observation in various quilting sites and during interviews I also took photographs. These images capture general quilting activities such as group quilting, personal quilting spaces, and women with their quilts. They serve as additional data for this study and provide a visual component that aids in understanding certain dimensions of quilting experiences. The important *process* of quilting occurs long before the *product* of a finished quilt appears. The photographs assist me in examining quilting and translating it to the outside world as a process of women's cultural production.

Setting and Samples

Settings

In this ethnographic endeavor to understand women's quilting activities, I cast a wide net of exploration in a four year period: I attended six national quilt shows, 12 regional quilt shows and museum exhibits, visited over 25 fabric and quilt shops across the United States, and two international fabric stores: one in Paris, France, and one in Canterbury, England. I attended 36 guild meetings, attended two different small group meetings called "bees" (46 meeting times), and eight instructional sessions organized by the guild. I spent one afternoon with each of three church groups that engaged in quilting. I conducted 53 intensive interviews of approximately three hours average length with 50 individual women and three group interviews (with 20 women). Finally, I shared numerous informal crafting sessions with family members, in which we quilted and worked on other handwork projects, as described in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. All interviews were conducted in person except for two telephone interviews with individual quilters living in different states. In all field sites, I conducted informal interviews with quilters.

Quilt Guilds

I conducted participant observation and intensive interviews for four years with a quilt guild in the Southeast. The guild grew in size every year that I belonged to it. It currently records over one-hundred members and has continually offered many learning opportunities for members. This guild brings in two national level teachers each year, holds occasional Saturday workshops taught by guild members, and organizes a quilt show for the public every two years. In addition to these activities, small quilting groups, called “bees,” are available for members to attend—some meet every week, while others gather monthly. The organizational structure of the guild strongly resembles a voluntary organization, with a core group of officers and various committees. Its goals center on education and charity, with concern for continuing the art of quilting within the group and promoting quilting in the larger community.

Quilt guilds range in purpose, size and member makeup. Guilds organize around goals specific to their group. Some meet to socialize and work on projects. Others bring in nationally-recognized instructors to teach classes and organize public quilt shows. Most guilds have a charitable project through which they give back to the community. They often select one or more groups to make quilts for, like children’s, women’s, and elderly organizations.

Most contemporary guilds rarely meet to work together on a project in the way they might have in the past, some guilds have progressed to the point of obtaining non-profit status. Guilds sometimes meet in the evenings or on weekends to compensate for women’s expanding roles in contemporary society. What women do at these meetings also has changed from a social function to a something resembling an organizational business meeting. The social function of guilds happens more outside the actual meeting time and is potentially less organized.

Typically, large guilds such as the one I was involved in gather for general meetings monthly. This guild had organized break out groups called *bees*. These quilt bees met at different times from the general guild meeting and often focused on a specific type of quilting or technique (e.g., Amish, Baltimore Album, Art Quilt, Wearables). More often than not, members brought a quilt project of their own to work on by themselves in the company of other quilters. The company of other quilters is part of the attraction for women who attend bees, in addition to their marking a specific time to work on a quilting project.

Church Groups

I conducted participant observation and group interviews with three church groups in a rural area of the Midwest. Beyond church groups, this particular area of the country has few formal organizations devoted to quilting, although there is enough quilting interest to support two quilt shops within twenty miles. When I conducted this research, there was no organized quilt guild in close vicinity, (50 mile radius), but there was talk about starting a quilt guild in the area. All three groups were similar in their purpose, their enjoyment of quilting, and their pleasure in other members' company. All decided where money from their quilting activities would be spent in church. I chose to get involved in the Midwest groups because of the familiarity I already had with the area and the access I was privy to due to my close contacts to these groups. My contacts knew the gatekeepers of these groups quite well, and my entree was entirely unproblematic. I spent one "quilting day" with each group. That is, the quilt to be quilted was set up on the frame, marked for quilting and ready to be quilted. My time with the groups ranged from 3 to 6 hours, average length 4.3 hours.

The church groups I encountered have social contacts and fund raising as their main purposes. The groups met weekly in church space allocated to them specifically, either part of a general use room or in one case, a room in the church rectory. The groups differed from one another in religious denomination, but shared purposes. In general, the money the women raised for their quilting efforts went to the church, with the quilters deciding how the money was spent. Before I attended any group, I planned on a relatively unstructured focus group similar to the interviews I conducted with individual quilters. My original plan did not work with two groups as they were hand quilting a quilt top on a frame and strongly encouraged me to participate:

I arrived in the afternoon as the ladies recommended. They were in the first day of quilting on the quilt. It had already been set up and marked for quilting on the frame. They told me to pull up a chair and grab a thimble, needle, and thread and begin quilting. I did. (field notes 1999)

In two cases I sat at the frame with the women and engaged in their conversation, occasionally asking them specific questions. The group that was hand piecing took my recommendation that my hand piecing was not up to par with theirs and they would have to rip it out after I left. Instead, I watched them as they pieced, trying to learn more about hand piecing as I asked them questions amidst their already established conversation topics. Immediately after spending time with each group I took field notes either by tape recorder or computer.

The women talked about quilting a bit, but spent more time on their other usual topics: their lives, families, friends, church goings-on, and local gossip. At times the conversation would pause and a woman would say, "Do you have another question for us?" I then asked

another question about quilting, and the same pattern would happen, they would begin to discuss answers to my question, then move into their regular conversation. Their non-quilt-related comments were revealing about their relationships with one another, the church, and the community.

Quilt Shows

National quilt shows are meeting places for those women with financial means to attend them, or those lucky few who live near Paducah, Kentucky and Houston, Texas, the two largest and best known national level quilting shows. The national shows have hundreds of vendors and dozens of classes taught by respected national and international quilting instructors.

Large shows like Paducah and Houston occur once a year. The shows usually last four to five days, are organized around a weekend and offer multiple options for attendees. These two national shows display both traditional and contemporary quilts and claim to represent the mainstream U.S. quiltmaker. The Paducah and Houston shows are held yearly in April and November, respectively. I visited the Houston show once and the Paducah show five times during my research. I spoke informally to attendees, quilters, and vendors at the shows. In addition, interview participants shared with me their experiences at these two shows.

Samples

To generate my sample of 70 women quilters, I contacted individual women and women within a quilt guild in the Southeast. I also conducted interviews with individual women in the Midwest and Western U.S. I conducted group interviews with three church groups in the Midwest. I also conducted a number of informal conversations from 1996 to 2000 with

quilters that I met at national, regional and local quilting events. While this is not a random sample, I was able to interview a diverse group of American women who quilted.

My collection efforts resulted in a snowball sample of 70 women, 68 white women, one African American woman and one Latina woman. Twenty-five women belong to the same quilt guild, 24 women quilt individually or in small friendship groups, and 21 women are members of church groups. These women live in seven states in the United States. Their age ranges from 20 to 90 plus, with the majority of women in their 40s and 50s. Sixty-five women in this study (94%) have participated in some form of paid work outside the home. Twenty-four of these women (34%) are currently retired from paid work, leaving 46 women (66%) are currently juggling work (paid and unpaid) with family obligations. Spouses are also a reality in many of these women's lives, as 65 women (94%) have marital experience (3 divorced, 10 widowed), and only five women (6%) have never married. Fifty-five of these women (78%) have children in addition to spouses.

These women are employed in a variety of areas in the paid work force, and many volunteer their time to the communities in which they live. They are accountants, university employees, professional quilters, elementary teachers, college and university professors, retired military officers, hairdressers, art students, graduate students, quilt shop owners, restauranteurs, office managers, and schools, hospital and university secretarial staff. They work in hospitals as nurses, nutritionists, and therapists. They work at state and county levels agriculture, social services, and the environment. They volunteer as girl scout leaders, home room mothers/grandmothers, arts council board members, and hospital greeters. They serve their families and their communities in both visible and invisible ways.

I began my collection attempts with diverse contacts, having more success with white contacts. I cannot explain why I had more success with white women and less success with Black women, but I can speculate from my findings that quilting can be a very personal experience for women. I attempted to minimize differences as much as I was able to, but certainly, there are specific characteristics to my identity that cannot be changed (e.g., race, age, gender). Regardless of my successes and failures in securing interviews with quilters, my collection strategies are in accordance with other feminist qualitative researchers, who note the importance of having similar backgrounds with research participants (Baca Zinn 1979; Beoku-Betts 1994; Reinhartz 1997).

I had more success in locating white quilters, perhaps because I am white. The demographic make up of the sample has much to do with my snowball sampling methods. As I proceeded to collect data in a grounded theory perspective, quilters recommended that I speak next with their friend or relative who also was a quilter. In this way, I encouraged quilters to reveal their friendship and quilting networks, rather than attempt to achieve an age, race, or region based balance of participants. Therefore, I make no claims about quilting based on race, region or age because of said limitations in this study. This study is a base from which to continue research on women's creative lives, as well as the beginnings of a fruitful theoretical framework that incorporates gender and culture.

In contrast to gaining access to a group of quilters, talking with quilters in public was relatively simple. Often times, being a quilter was more than enough to be accepted. One example of acceptance occurred while checking into a hotel before a national quilt show:

During the hotel room cancellation fiasco, a woman turned to me and asked, “Are you a quilter?” I replied, “Yes.” She asked, “Do you want to stay in my room with me since you don’t have a room for the weekend?” (Field Notes 1999)

Quilters generally enjoyed discussing their quilting experiences with an interested and informed listener. Yet, in some contexts when quilting was the only thing we had in common, it alone was not enough. Especially in attempting access to quilting groups with all African-American women, or mixed-race quilting groups, age, race, education, and preferred quilting style and technique level became important barriers. Such access refusals contributed to my understanding that quilting spaces are close-knit, even intimate settings. Access to groups happened successfully with the help of a contact, or gatekeeper.

Some women seemed surprised that I wanted to interview them ask if I would rather interview a more prominent member of the guild, or someone else who quilts in the community that they admired. As I am interested in many aspects of women’s experiences with quilting, and want to center women’s experiences with quilting, I began interviews by specifically asking, “How did you get involved in quilting?” Interviews ranged from one hour to eight hours with the average interview lasting three hours.

Since my sample was diverse in many ways, I was surprised to find many points of overlap that I was not anticipating. Women’s reasons for why they quilted and how they began quilting were remarkably similar. I conducted most interviews in person in women’s homes, with only a few over the telephone. I was hopeful to have more in person interviews because of the documentary photography element of the study. In the few cases where I did conduct

interviews over the telephone, participants agreed to take and send me photographs of themselves with their quilts.

The interview process most often occurred in women's homes. Interviews with individual women resembled casual conversations more so than formal, structured interviews. My time spent at quilters' home felt much like a social visit—we sat down in comfortable chairs to talk and occasionally had snacks. The unstructured format allowed quilters to emphasize what they personally felt was important about quilting in their lives. Most interviews were lengthy, and the time I spent with each quilter was even longer, as we took time before and after the interview to visit, have refreshments, tour the house, and look at the finished and unfinished quilting projects.

Methods of Data Collection

Participant Observation

I conducted participant observation at multiple quilting activities and events. I observed quilting activities in both small (guild meetings, quilting bees, quilters meeting in small groups in women's homes, individual women quilting in their homes) and large settings (local, regional and national quilt shows, quilt shops). In all settings, I took notes and interacted with quilters, their spouses and friends, show officials, and quilt vendors. I was an active participant in these settings, identifying myself as a researcher and a quilter, and asking lots of questions. In some cases, especially at the national shows and the local guild, I took classes and attended lectures.

My insider status and general knowledge of sewing and quilting helped me to participate in group events and serve as a knowledgeable volunteer at quilt shows. Publicizing my identity as a quilter was important in establishing my legitimacy as a researcher. For

example, before entering the quilt guild as a field site the contact person (gatekeeper) strongly encouraged me to become a member. I agreed. I joined the guild the first night I attended and very soon discovered that my membership was an indication of my commitment to the group. When I was introduced, a number of participants asked if I was a member, nodded their heads approvingly when I stated that I was. They then agreed to talk with me at some point regarding their quilting experiences (Field Notes 1997).

Commitment to the group through membership was important in establishing rapport with the members (Baca Zinn 1979). My researcher role was also accepted by quilters who did not work with guilds. I relied heavily on my quilting background when interacting with quilters, and this identity seemed to counteract their negative assumptions about researchers. I would introduce myself as a sociologist and as a quilter, and they would focus on my being a quilter, sometimes even requesting to examine my quilting before they would agree to talk with me. My role as a quilter seeking more quilting knowledge was essential to the success of the project more so than establishing myself as a sociologist.

Before I learned to quilt ten years ago, and especially with my extensive sewing background, like many others, I had discounted quilting as a creative outlet. I had had little exposure to quilting at that point in my life, and thought quilting was rather uncomplicated, and far easier than the advanced clothing construction of which I was capable. When my Aunt Jenny agreed to teach me how to quilt, I hit a number of learning curves. After struggling about which colors were appropriate for a quilt (she liked pastels, while I prefer stronger, bolder colors), we argued about the design of the quilt. I will never forget the important lessons about color and design that I learned from my first quilting experience. Quilting is difficult, not just

technically, but artistically. Once I began to identify myself as a quilter, I also began to notice outsiders' response to quilting—quite similar to my uninformed opinions. Acknowledging my earlier misinformed attitudes about quilting was helpful in that I could understand how quilters keep to themselves when talking in detail about quilting, as they feel others will be unappreciative or mocking. Although difficult at times to manage, having an insider/outsider perspective was beneficial overall for I could see both sides of the situation while collecting, analyzing, and writing.

Before entering the field, I believed that because of my age, quilters I met would place me in the “student” role, taking me under their wings and instructing me about quilting. This was not always the case, as many women much older than me were just learning how to quilt, and relied upon me to guide them through the initial learning-to-quilt stages. Especially when we introduced ourselves to one another in group settings, we shared how long we had been sewing and quilting. In these situations I learned that my personal sewing and quilting experience (sewing for twenty-four years, quilting for ten years) was greater than the majority of women in the group. In a number of cases I was surprised to be one of the most experienced quilters in the group. Because of my experience, I often took on the teacher role instead of the student role (sometimes by coercion, sometimes by choice), instructing women of a variety of ages about sewing and quilting.

Certainly, there were both advantages and disadvantages in sharing myself with these women. I enjoyed learning more about quilting and developing my skills and my artistic eye within the medium of quilting, and got my feet wet in the ways of quilting (Geertz 1983, 1973). I became close friends with many of the women I studied, making the line between researcher

and quilter more fuzzy. To resolve some of the tension I was feeling regarding analyzing my friends, I began writing about my own quilting experiences as well. Putting myself under similar analytical scrutiny helped inform the fuzzy line between researcher and quilter.

Intensive Unstructured Interviewing

Interviews resembled guided conversations more so than structured or formal interviews. I compiled a list of open-ended questions that I used to guide me through the interview if I needed it (See Appendix E). I used the list of questions as a checklist rather than a guide during interviews, for participants would end up covering the issues I wanted to discuss in the order that it made sense to them. When the women had thoroughly covered the list of questions in discussing their quilting, I asked, “Is there anything that I haven’t asked you yet that you feel is important about your quilting?” Although I was not closely following an interview schedule and encouraged women to discuss what they wanted to, many women loosened up and began talking more comfortably when they felt explicitly in control of the interview. In general, participants appeared comfortable talking with me, were flattered that I wanted to interview them, and discussed in considerable depth their personal experiences and how they felt about quilting activities in their lives.

I took field notes about the interview experience within twenty-four hours and as a backup in case of audio taping failure (Laureau 1989). I secured informed consent from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Georgia to audio tape all interviews (See Appendix C for the Informed Consent Form I used during interviews). Participants realized that they could request the tape recorder be shut off at any time during the interview. I also made them aware that they as participants would be able to review their transcripts before I

began initial coding procedures. I transcribed the majority of interviews myself, verbatim. With financial assistance from the Dianne C. Davison Scholarship Award 2000, I hired a transcriber for some interviews. I provided explicit transcription instructions, and I proofread each interview while simultaneously listening to the audiotapes before beginning coding and analysis.

After preparing transcripts, which ranged from 20 to 50 single spaced pages, I mailed the transcript to the participant so that she could examine it for corrections or additions (see Appendix D for a copy of the transcript approval form sent out to all participants). The majority of women were satisfied completely with transcripts as I sent them initially. Some made minor changes such as spelling or dates, which did not substantially change the content of the interviews.

My Field Work Role

My Role As a Quilter

I am a sewer and a quilter. I am learning to weave and knit from my sisters, and I am trying to improve my crocheting and cross stitching. I identify myself primarily as a sewer and secondly as a quilter, based on the time I have spent at each activity. The quilters I interviewed were aware of my sewing and quilting background. We spent some time during interviews discussing current projects and asking one another for advice on quilting projects. Interview participants viewed me in a variety of obvious ways (e.g., as researcher and quilter), but more often than not, they would offer me advice on a number of topics beyond quilting, including my educational choices and my love life. The advice-giving components of my relationships with these women are in accordance with the gendered culture in which quilting exists. Other women in the guilds and church groups participated in similar ways in interchanges like this.

During a majority of interviews, women interviewed me to find out a few things: quilting skills and preferences, age, and marital status (some even suggesting fixing me up with their friends' sons or even their own sons). With this information in hand, then, quilters willingly gave me advice on my quilts, how to proceed with my dissertation research, and, of course, guided me in my personal life. In some cases, if my quilting techniques were not up to par, or if I had a different perspective on what quilting was about, I found it difficult to gain entry to a quilting group.

The majority of participants were older than I was. I anticipated that they would view me as a beginning quilter and teach me additional quilting techniques. However, I discovered that the women were not educating me about specific quilting techniques, but instead how to live the life of a contemporary quilter. As will be elaborated in forthcoming chapters, being a quilter in contemporary times can require complicated negotiations with family and friends. Many women in this study referred to quilting as a necessary component of their lives and central to their well being. Quilters shared with me how they bought fabric, how they stored it in their home, and how they hid it from their families. Accumulated fabric is usually called *stash* or *fabric stash* by quilters in this study (See Chapter Six). Quilters advised me that when I finally settled down, I would need to learn how to hide my fabric stash. Little did they know that their cautions came to me far too late, for I have been purchasing and collecting fabric since I was eight years old. My current fabric stash cannot be hidden from anyone successfully at this point, for it occupies twelve bank boxes and a few random drawers in one room in my three-bedroom rental house.

Preaching to A Choir Member: Quilters Respond to Me

Given the chance to visit with me about quilting activities, women generally took advantage of it. This was especially the case when interviews took place in the quilter's home. Women gave me tours of their homes and quilting rooms, and showed me their quilts in addition to completing the interview. They expressed much of what was going on in their lives beyond quilting, through talking about the process of making each quilt and their reflections on the enjoyment they felt through participating in quilting and meeting other quilters. Most women were delighted to discuss quilting with me, thanked me for doing the research, with one even proclaiming, "finally, someone is writing about something that really matters" (field notes 2000).

These comments, and quilters' willingness to talk with me so extremely reveal that they realize how quilting is devalued by others. My recognition of the importance of quilting in their lives was helpful to them in validating their home life and their quilting. In some cases, participants revealed that their spouses couldn't understand why they were being interviewed about quilting participation. In situations such as this, participants arranged an interview when we would be alone in the house. With husbands away from the home, the women seemed more open in discussing quilting.

Some participants were not able to be alone with me during the interviews. In these situations quilters sent their husbands to a different part of the house or had him run a sudden errand so that we could talk. When husbands were present in the house, interviews were likely to be shorter than the average three hours. Also, when participants' husbands were present during interviews, the women seemed more reserved with me about quilting than during our initial contact to set up the interview.

Some women attempted to involve their husbands in the interview process. They tried to get their husbands to comment on quilting, in part I believe to include them in the process, to make them less suspicious of me, and to emphasize the importance of quilting to them in and outside the home. Despite the validation I provided in interviewing their wives, few husbands wanted to be involved in the interview process at all.

Young children were more likely to be involved in the interview process. Quilters with children at home (i.e., not old enough to be in school) were usually responsible for childcare during part of, if not all of, the interview period. Some of these children were learning to quilt, or at least learning to appreciate the products of their mother's quilting efforts. However, only four women in this study had children below school-age.

Methods of Analysis

In accordance with the guidelines for grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990), I proceeded with analysis by going back and forth between data collection, analysis, and writing. My coding strategy was consistent with the "constant comparative method" (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990). I simultaneously collected and coded data, with emerging understandings and theoretical questions guiding further data analysis (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I found the processes to be beneficial in my understanding of the meaning of quilting to women. I spent a great deal of time with the interviews before beginning "open coding" (Strauss and Corbin 1990). I found that listening carefully during the interview and taking notes, taking field notes about the interview within twenty-four hours, and transcribing the interview myself gave me valuable repeated exposure to the transcripts. In cases where I did not transcribe the interview

myself, I listened to the interview on tape while proofreading it, and made sure to read through the interview an additional time to be familiar with it. I read through each interview a number of times more during the collection and transcribing process, and felt that I had a good sense of what was going on in each transcript. It was at this repeated exposure stage that I began to notice patterns emerge, I jotted notes and wrote research memos about the emerging patterns. With these emerging patterns in my head, I was able to ask more detailed questions during subsequent interviews. This technique helped me tremendously in teasing out non-obvious patterns and meanings.

Qualitative interviewing requires careful listening on the part of the researcher and can at times be mentally strenuous work. While dealing directly with the transcripts, I was simultaneously conducting more interviews. I collected interviews, transcribed, coded transcripts, and recruited new participants all at the same time. When needed, I intentionally took breaks from interviewing every two to three weeks to avoid interview burnout and to reflect on how the interviews were relating to one another. I also tried to involve myself in quilting activities in different ways to ensure that I was not getting too comfortable with the field sites. Examples of being involved differently in field sites are going to a meeting and not taking notes, sitting in different places at meetings, visiting a new quilt bee, attending quilt guild meetings as a visitor while traveling in a different state, and finding new fabric and quilt shops to visit and to interview informally staff and customers, I was continuously in the field during this time, which I believe helped keep me focused on the perspectives of quilters as the central point of my research.

Interviews with women from different states clarified which patterns of meaning making were generalizable. I thought that women involved in the same organization might be socialized to respond to questions in similar ways. However, after interviewing women in seven states, I am able to definitively state that women who quilt share deep personally meaningful links to this activity. The specifics about how, when, where, and how much time/money they spend on the activity is much more individual, but the meaning making processes involved in the activity of quilting recurs in all interviews.

The importance of keeping an emic (one from the perspective of the insiders) focus became clearer to me when I began talking with non-quilters about my research and my initial findings. When I brought up *quilting* as a researchable topic, non-quilters generally responded with statements about how much they loved quilts, told of a quilt from their grandmother, and wanted me to tell them more about a quilt that they owned. The focus of many outsiders is *quilt*-based, not *quilter*- or *quilting*-based. In contrast, women who quilted focused far more on the *process* of quilting. These continual non-quilter responses interested me, and I began to see how I needed to elaborate to outsiders the importance of the *process* of quilting. My focus is on the process of cultural production in women's lives, and this requires an emphasis on process. In discussing my work with outsiders, I had to find a way to convey the importance of this process and to deepen their focus of attention from the artistry or value of finished quilts to embody the critical, but often invisible, process that binds women I met to quilting as a form of cultural production.

I had continual contact with quilters and sewers during the research and writing process. My relationships with quilters who were and were not participants allowed me to get

more involved in the field generally. It helped me to become aware of additional quilt related resources such as quilt stores, websites, and other quilters to interview. I also had continual exposure to quilting, and quilting from the perspective of the people who do it. This exposure kept me abreast of quilting vocabulary and lingo, and also reminded me of the importance of getting at the emic perspective in quilting activities. After I had reached theoretical saturation with interviews, I began discussing with quilters some of my initial findings. This member-check process proved most useful as I was able to engage in a dialectical conversation between quilters, between me and the transcripts, and between me and the sociological community.

Open Coding to Building Theory

I built substantive chapters around themes that emerged from the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). I participated in a week-long Writing Retreat in summer 2000. This for-credit experience provided me with the jump start I needed to begin to tell the story of women quilters. The retreat is where I was able to sit in my pile of my transcribed and coded interviews and begin the tangible process of organizing themes into patterns, grouping patterns together, and placing grouped patterns into loosely organized chapters. It was here that I could merge what I had going on in my head with what was written in the transcripts. I was able to put these two comprehension systems together to formulate the initial skeletal framework of this dissertation.

I have rich data to work with, and some of the concepts and chapter titles are “in-vivo” comments, comments which come directly from the transcripts (Strauss and Corbin 1990). Specific concepts are “fabric stash” and the “skipped generation of quilters”. The larger categories also came directly from the data. Women uniquely organize and remember their

lives according to their quilting instead of more traditional time measures in Chapter Four, “Bookmarking Women’s Lives: Quilting as a Vehicle of Memory,” and develop deeply meaningful identities as quilters in Chapter Five, “If I Had a Needle: Identity Development of Quilters. Chapter Six, “A Room of One’s Own: Women’s Creative Space in the Home” examines the family/work implications of women engaged in quilting and other leisure pursuits at home, as well as the gendered history of women’s space in the home.

Local Knowledge

Clifford Geertz (1983, 1973) discusses the role of the qualitative field researcher. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the native’s point of view, known as *local knowledge*. Local knowledge contributes to the researcher’s comprehension of basic rules and norms within social interaction settings. Additionally, understanding the complex meaning-making activities is enhanced by immersing oneself in a group’s local knowledge.

The local knowledge of a specific society or group is often overlooked during the research process, but it is an essential component to developing an interpretation. As Mead (1934: 147-148) writes:

It is the task not only of the actor but of the artist as well to find the sort of expression that will arouse in others what is going on in himself. The lyric poet has an experience of beauty with an emotional thrill to it, and as an artist using words he is seeking for those words which will answer to his emotional attitude, and which will call out in others the attitude he himself has.

When researchers are able to connect with the tenets of a community’s local knowledge, they can then draw more thorough conclusions and translate a larger, more generalizable social

meaning to a social scientific audience. Geertz (1973:28) elaborates this point: “The aim is to draw large conclusions from small, but very densely textured facts; to support broad assertions about the role of culture in the construction of collective life by engaging them exactly with complex specifics.” Understanding the native wisdom present within local communities can be time consuming, labor intensive, and theoretically challenging.

Important and complex meaning-making activities occur in artistic communities. In art communities generally, and “primitive” art societies specifically, Western aesthetic formalism influences researchers. These presuppositions can lead researchers to impose theoretical frames, interpretations, and analyses in biased and incorrect ways, thus impeding the discovery of local knowledge:

The chief problem presented by the sheer phenomenon of aesthetic force, in whatever form and in result of whatever skill it may come is how to place it within the other modes of social activity, how to incorporate it into the texture of a particular pattern of life. And such placing, the giving to art objects a cultural significance, is always a local matter...no matter how universal the intrinsic qualities that actualize its emotional power...may be. (Geertz 1983:96)

Clearly, witnessing, understanding and integrating local knowledge within sites of culture is crucial to valid social research.

Quilters infuse meaning into the cultural objects themselves--the quilts--and into the *processes* by which they are produced. In this research on women who quilt, I center my inquiry on the perspectives of quilters. To further emphasize my interest in understanding quilting as a form of cultural production, I have become quite familiar with the local cultural

knowledge of quilting and how it translates to the outside world. Immersing myself in the culture of the quilting process provides the base of the interpretive, emic theoretical framework I use in this research (Blumer 1969; Geertz 1983, 1973; Harre' 1979; Mead 1934). This framework problematizes outsiders' interpretation of culture(s) and centers on how natives make meaning out of their cultural experiences and how this meaning translates to more general social frames of understanding the world around them.

Local Knowledge and Grounded Theory

Grounded theory, as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967: 1), is a data collection and analytical strategy with the explicit goal of building social theory: "We believe that the discovery of theory from data...is a major task confronting sociology today, for...such a theory fits empirical situations, and is understandable to sociologists and laymen alike. Most important, it works."

For multiple reasons, grounded theory serves this research endeavor particularly well. Few sociologists have paid attention to forms of cultural production dominated by women, and therefore there is little empirical or theoretical work from which to draw. The social setting in which quilting takes place is generally private and hidden from public scrutiny, making for difficult access for researchers. To gain local knowledge and eventually develop social theory, I needed to become part of the local culture of quilting. Immersing myself in local quilting activities and developing my insider status as a quilter allowed me to better understand the native's point of view. As Geertz (1983: 69) has contended:

...my argument here is merely that it [the native's point of view] is as central to ethnographic interpretation...or for that matter to the informal annotation of everyday experience we call common sense. In order to follow a baseball game one must understand what a bat, a hit, an inning, a left fielder, a squeeze play, a hanging curve, and a tightened infield are, and what the game in which these "things" are elements is all about.

The immediate, local knowledge of "primitive" artistic communities has been overlooked and under-interpreted in sociological research. This is the case especially for artistic communities consisting mostly of women and other marginalized groups. My purpose in this research is to investigate the quilting process from the perspective of the women who do it. I place women's quilting experiences within a broader social context, to develop integrative theory drawing from both sociology of gender and the sociology of culture.

Quilting as a topic provides a cultural and gendered setting in which to demonstrate the hidden but salient meaning present in women's lives, and within their sites of cultural production. Just as certain forms of cultural production are ignored by culture theorists, certain forms of work have been ignored by feminist gender scholars. Research on gender until recently has focused largely on women's activities in public arenas, such as education and the paid workplace. Much less studied is women's activity in traditionally gendered private spaces, in activities that are not undertaken primarily for the generation of income.

CHAPTER 4

BOOKMARKING WOMEN’S LIVES:

QUILTING AS A VEHICLE OF MEMORY

Introduction

Quilts and the quilting process have important symbolic meaning to their makers, marking women’s significant personal and family life events. As markers of history and women’s lives, quilts reveal important meaning making processes in the social institutions of gender, family, and culture. As “[m]onuments resolve in stone the contradictions of the nations that erect them” (Schwartz 1996a, 395), quilts establish through fabric the identity of women as quilters, the development and continuity of gendered familial, personal, and cultural traditions, as well as a way in which to mark time within women’s non-economic cultural production activities. For women who quilt, quilts act as vehicles of memory, bookmarking women’s lives. Similar to family photo albums, when women make, handle and view quilts, they are able to remember and honor the women who made quilts in their pasts, friends, family members, personal and historical events. Quilts evoke memories specific to their makers, locally to friends and family, and more broadly to the non-quilting public, who nowadays are fascinated by and appreciative of quilts.

Quilts serve as vehicles of memory for both quilters and non-quilters on personal, familial and historical levels. Collectively, onlookers reminisce about ordinary women in historical eras who lived difficult lives, or about the greater meaning present in the quilt, such as when viewing the AIDS quilt (Lewis and Fraser 1996). Quilts are no longer necessary home items, and they contain special meaning for those living in more modern times who own them. The meaning of quilting in the United States has changed over time from a necessary activity within the Colonial home to a form of serious leisure in the contemporary home (Stebbins 1979, 1998; Stalp 1998), and a salient way in which to memorialize significant people in our lives (Mueller 1995). Modern consumer options such as blankets, in addition to central heating, currently keep families warm. In contemporary society, then, quilts and the quilting process are extraordinary.

Quilting remains important and meaningful in women's lives specifically, and to our cultural history generally. Women view quilting as a way to speak to other quilters, to care for their families and friends, and to leave behind material objects that perpetuate women's perspectives on their lives. In making quilts, women leave historical markers, revealing that they had enough control over their lives to devote time to a pleasurable activity. Contemporary women generally understand the patriarchal world in which they live and on some level they realize that their everyday mundane efforts (e.g., washing dishes, preparing meals, etc.) will not usually be remembered or memorialized in the ways that family members and friends treasure finished quilts as cultural objects. Finished quilts serve women quilters as memory markers, and helps them to recall what was happening in their lives as they made certain quilts. Quilters can

refer back to their quilts as memory aids, or life bookmarks. When women view their quilts as life bookmarks, they are better able to remember their creative work, and significant life events.

Quilting as a process of cultural production is a particularly gendered form of collective memory. Just as men's spaces and activities (e.g., hunting, fishing) provide sites in which men develop an understanding of traditional masculinity, women's spaces exhibit similar traditional gender socialization through the development of feminine identities. Both gendered spaces rely upon collective notions of what is requisite of modern men and women.

Examining the ways in which women quilters measure time through their quilts reveals a broad conceptualization of time measurement, recollection, memory, and nostalgia for things in our lives that are important to us—this conceptualization moves far beyond quilts into other meaning-making areas of life important to us individually. I highlight both the ways in which women learn to quilt and how they continue to make quilting a memory-making activity in their lives. Quilting provides women one way in which to both enjoy a personal, creative activity, and fulfill a caregiving role within the family. More important, though, quilting provides women a way in which to organize and remember their lives.

Quilting and Memory

Collective memory scholars address the complexity of memories on many levels, ranging from local to global (e.g., Halbwachs 1941, 1992; Olick 1999; Schwartz 1996a, 1996b; Zerubavel 1996). Collective memory “is essentially a reconstruction of the past [which] adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present” (Halbwachs 1941, 7). Quilts and the quilting process contribute to the collective memory of quilters as they reach back through history, making connections to the unknown women artists who constructed

quilts. Quilters are astutely aware of the important role that quilting plays in their lives, and that outsiders to quilting are also able to connect personal, familial, and general, historical memories with quilts.

Women's lives may not be as visible or as publicly well known as men's contributions to society as depicted through war monuments, but, through viewing quilts, one can recall women's important creative and work culture in the home. This recollection through quilts serves quilters and non-quilters alike as vehicles of women's memory. Delineating women's accomplishments in this way reveals that our collective memory processes have been gendered, highlighting men's public accomplishments, yet giving little to no attention to women and the important contributions they have made toward society.

Understanding the current and past memories attached to quilts helps us view quilts not just in an historical sense, but quilts as personally meaningful to their makers. Additionally, the meanings that quilts carry with them assist us in defining who we are, and who are ancestors were. Quilts act as material artifacts and represent both present and past memories of women who quilt. A quilt made today, for example, reminds one of the maker of that specific quilt, as well as the quilters who came before her. The collective memory we have of our nation's past as well as women's history are accessible through viewing and handling quilts.

Women's Cultural Production

Quilters seek to revive the aesthetic in their lives by participating in quilting activities. Through quilting, they make meaning in their lives, preserve and transmit quilting heritage, and secure historical markers that represent them. To many women, establishing their quilting legacy is an important part of constructing how they will be appreciated and remembered. This

construction of self is akin to the concept of the post-self (Schmitt and Leonard 1986), and is also conscious of tradition (Shils 1975, 1981).

Quilting presents a predominantly feminized research site, and one in which cultural memory is constructed, developed and maintained. Drawing from the way in which gender and culture theory has developed up to this point, society continues to assume that situations are gender-neutral, rather than gender-laden. In other words, the default, or neutral category includes men, while a “gendered” category includes women. Drawing from the “underside” of the traditional gender dichotomy, it is more easily evident that a feminized world is also a gendered one. Delineating the tenets of a gendered world within this neglected population makes clearer how gender permeates all aspects of our lives, including cultural memory.

Women’s Ways of Learning to Quilt

When women discussed how they began quilting, they typically began with someone who got them interested in quilting, or someone who taught them how to quilt.⁴ The mere act of learning to quilt, then, is directly connected to larger social memories of quilts, their role in women’s lives, and especially the relationships formed through quilting experiences. Through various ways of learning to quilt, women draw upon familial memories in recalling their quilting ancestors and reasons for learning to or continuing to quilt. Women reach backward through their family tree to re-establish connections with once-forgotten quilters, or establish new quilting traditions that they hope will grow into family memories.

Women in this study learned to quilt in one of three ways: relying upon their *quilting heritage*, in response to the *skipped generation of quilters*, and as *new quilters*. Quilting heritage refers to the unbroken line of familial quilting ancestors, continuing to pass down the

techniques and traditions of quilting among women. Women influenced by their quilting ancestors or quilt heritage choose to continue the already established and culturally strong family tradition of quilting.

The skipped generation of quilters are the women who were not included in the passing down of cultural quilting knowledge, either by choice or by sociohistorical circumstances. Women with skipped quilting generations in their families note with regret the women relatives who never learned how to quilt. Missing out on the cultural knowledge of quilting from ancestors, these women typically learn from others outside the family.

New quilters are those women without any quilting background in their immediate families. Aware of the personal and familial legacy benefits, new quilters seek to begin and establish quilting traditions in their families. As they learn to quilt, they seek to establish new traditions that will endure in their families.

Quilting Heritage

Women with quilting heritage are conscious of their cultural legacy activity as a form of cultural production. Throughout interviews women reveal that they have relied upon their quilting heritage to validate their quilting activities. Many of these women own and treasure quilts made by now-deceased family members and are consciously preserving what they perceive to be a valued family tradition. Women with family quilting heritage recall their quilting ancestors, point with pride to generations of women who quilted before them, and express gratification at knowing that they are perpetuating familial cultural traditions. Theresa recalled:

My mother was a quilter and we've always had quilts in the house. My mother had a quilting frame that hung from the ceiling and when she didn't want to quilt then she would just pull it back up and put it on the ceiling. I would thread needles and stuff like that.

Similarly, Karen's grandmother taught her to quilt while Karen was expecting her first child:

My grandmother was a quilter, and her daughters quilted. My Granny gave me my first fabric for my quilt. She said that every quilt needed to have yellow in it, a little bit of sunshine, and she gave me some yellow cotton fabric and some calico fabric to make a quilt with.

Karen recalls her first quilting lessons affectionately, as she remembers spending quality time with her grandmother. Both these women are able to recall fondly their familial and gendered cultural past in discussing their quilting heritage. Learning to quilt from family members cements the ties among women in families, especially cross-generational ties.

Denise has a long standing quilting tradition in her family: "I come from a long line of quilters." Her grandma was an avid quiltmaker, and pledged to give special gifts to her grandchildren: "My grandma had said that for all the cousins, when they married, they could have a set of silverware or they could have a quilt." Denise never got a quilt specially made by her grandma: "Grandma died when I was in high school and needless to say I did not get a quilt or a set of silverware." Fortunately, for future quilters in the family, the tradition of quiltmaking did not end with her grandmother's death: "My mom felt so bad. There were probably fifteen of us that never got a quilt. She felt that she could do that, so she started making quilts for my cousins and I." Denise's mother picked up the tradition of quilting more actively, to finish the

promise of tradition that her own mother had begun. Yet, with all this quilt activity, Denise still had not picked up sewing or quilting. Until she was newly married, she had little interest for fabric outside of collecting it. Denise taught herself how to quilt as an adult and is currently quite active in quilting. Interestingly, she has transformed a personal interest into her formal career, writing books, teaching classes and giving demonstrations at the regional and national level. She is one of the few women in the study whose income is generated solely from quilting activities. But Denise carries on the traditional aspects of quilting and she is now teaching her children to quilt.

Ginny's mother and grandmother both quilted, piecing and quilting by hand. Ginny had little interest in learning how to quilt by hand, yet she admired her ancestors and the work that they did. A friend, a quilter who used the sewing machine taught her how to quilt as an adult:

A friend asked me if I would teach her daughters how to play piano, and in return she would teach me how to quilt. She taught me two things that were really important.

One is that I could use my sewing machine to make it and secondly it didn't have to be a full sized bed quilt in order to be a quilt, it could be something smaller. I realized, hey, I don't need to make bed quilts. I am an only child, my mother has forty million of them already so I don't need to make bed quilts.

In this exchange of skills Ginny learned how to quilt and is carrying on the quilting tradition in her family. Ginny uses a sewing machine, while both her mother and grandmother quilted by hand, an important difference in the world of quilting.

Together, these women's quilting experiences symbolize a way of carrying on treasured family traditions. Within their accounts of learning to quilt, women reveal the personal, familial and historical importance of continuing quilting traditions.

Skipped Generation of Quilters

Quilters describe the missing links in their quilting heritage, specifically naming women who were overlooked in learning and passing on the quilting tradition. They refer to these women as the *skipped generation of quilters*. There are personal, historical, and cultural reasons that help explain the skipped generation of quilters.

Quilting traditions skip over generations of women for personal reasons, such as personality differences, lack of interest, upward mobility, and paid work demands. Personality issues come into play through the detailed and stereotypical perfectionist techniques that quilting requires. Hannah learned to quilt by taking classes as an adult, despite the fact that both her grandmothers quilted. Her mother disliked quilting as a child and is part of the skipped generation of quilters in her family:

My mother told me, "When I was a little girl, I would attend quilting bees with your grandma. When she quilted at home she'd have me start quilting with her but she'd take out all of my stitches if they were too big. And since she took out all my stitches all the time, I wasn't interested."

Hannah notes that both her grandmothers quilted, but that she didn't grow up with quilting surrounding her as Theresa mentioned earlier: "Neither one of my grandmothers made quilts or quilted when the grandchildren were there." Hannah's earliest quilting memories instead consist of quilts being made for her, rather than learning how to quilt from her grandmothers:

When my sister and I were seven and eight, we were spending one of our summers with my grandmother. She took us into one of her bedrooms one day and started getting all these wrapped packages down from the closet, spread them out on the bed, and they were quilt tops. She said, “Now, we’re going to go through these and I want you each to pick out the six tops you like and I’m going to pin your names on them and those are going to be your quilt tops. When you grow up and get married that will be part of your wedding trousseau.”

These quilts were made with a specific purpose—to help prepare Hannah and her sister for marriage. These finished quilts would play an important and expected role of traditional femininity as prescribed by Hannah’s grandmother.

Hannah considers the historical reasons why her grandmothers quilted, and why her mother did not quilt:

My mother was really what I call the “skipped generation” of quilters, in terms of sewing. She came of age after World War II and even though she grew up with a mother who quilted, she herself never took up quilting as a practice. She went to work full time when I was four years old. Even though she sewed it wasn’t really that much of something that held her, and quilting just didn’t interest her.

Women like Hannah’s mother lived through the Depression and World War II, and are predecessors to today’s generation of quilters. Although women have always worked in both paid and non-paid positions, women engaged in paid work in the first half of the twentieth century did not have the public support that some working women enjoy today. These women faced a set of sociohistorical demands different from contemporary women. Additionally, when

women experienced upward mobility, hand-made items were passed over in place of newly made products from the extensive production during the post-World War Two economic upswing. Such hand-made items reminded women of economic hardships experienced in the early 1900s, while new products carried with them hope for future.

Sarah is in her thirties and is among the small number of younger quilters in my study who began quilting earlier in their lives. She took up quilting because she had an interest in it, and she wanted to establish some adult behavior in her life, claiming that “quilting saved me from a life of drinking.” Despite hearing family stories about quilts being thrown out after the Great Depression, she had seen no actual evidence of quilters or quilts in her family history. Intrigued by quilting, Sarah decided to (re)start the quilting tradition in her family she had heard so much about. Having a family quilting heritage is somewhat expected among quilters, as Sarah experienced when she joined her first guild:

Some of the ladies were a little bit surprised that someone in my age group would have picked up quilting without there being a quilting tradition. Others thought that I was kind of creative, thought that my quilting interest was good, a good avenue for me to explore. I know my mom wanted to have quilts so she encouraged me.

Sarah’s mom does not quilt, but she appreciates them enough to encourage her daughter to learn how to quilt. After quilting for a number of years, Sarah noted the amount of quilts she had made, and along with the following comments, considered the advantages of learning to quilt while in her thirties:

One of the ladies said, "I wish I had started quilting when I was thirty." And I said, "Really?" She said, "Oh yeah, just think of all the quilts you'll be able to make by the time you're my age." I think that was the first time that it really dawned on me that I have a whole lifetime ahead of me to make quilts. Women who get started in their fifties don't have a whole lifetime. I wish I had started quilting when I was four.

Sarah is passing on the tradition of quilting she has begun in her family by giving her nieces and nephews quilts as gifts, involving them in her quilting process when they visit her, and teaching them how to sew and quilt.

New Quilters

In explaining why and how they learned how to quilt, women reveal what quilts mean to them, and the important role quilts and quilting play in their lives. Women without a quilting heritage manage to find out about quilting in a variety of ways. Certainly, women cannot control their female ancestors's participation in and passing down of quilting traditions. But, many women have chosen to continue or in new quilters's situations, begin and establish the tradition of quilting in their families. Women marry into quilting families, and have or meet friends who quilt. They also learn because of interests in history or women's cultural activities, and having the desire to establish gendered cultural traditions such as quilting in their own lives.

Michelle remembers being interested in history when she was young. She took a home economics class in the eighth grade and really enjoyed it. At sixteen, she taught herself to quilt: "I just had this old book that somebody had given me, it was a paperback book about quilting and it just fascinated me." Neither her mother nor her grandmother sewed or quilted, but Michelle's interest in history and sewing encouraged her to learn quilting. Although she has

been quilting for over thirty years, Michelle still notes with sadness the absence of sewing and quilting heritage in her family's past:

One thing that makes me really jealous is if I go over to somebody's house and see this really old quilt and they say, "Oh, my grandmother made that" or "My great grandmother made that." I wish I had something like that, but sewing is just not in my past. It's just me and I'm hoping that my daughter has an appreciation for it. I wish that I had come from that kind of family that had a history, but nobody sewed in my family, and I don't know why.

Through her quilting, Michelle hopes to secure family heirlooms and to reinforce the values of home made items to her children. Interestingly, Michelle and her sisters all sew, although their mother does not. And following Michelle's example, her sisters are also picking up quilting: "All of my sisters sew and they have all started to quilt after visiting me as an adult and seeing some of the things that I've made and given them." Encouraged by this, Michelle has taught fifteen women to quilt since she taught herself, ensuring the beginning of a quilting tradition in her life.

Nora has a craft tradition in her family, but was introduced to quilting through her husband's family:

I've known about quilting since I married my husband in 1963. His mother was a quilter. She gave us a quilt when we got married and I appreciated the handwork. I met the ladies in her little church where they quilted tops for \$15 a top, and I loved to look at them.

When Nora's children left for college, she wanted to learn how to quilt as a way to do something fulfilling for herself:

I had finished a graduate degree and had decided to do something for myself. A local quilt store had a machine piecing class and a friend had recommended it. It was six weeks, and it was great. I really found that I could express myself, and I've always been a crafter.

Nora's craft experience and a friend's recommendation made quilting an attractive choice. A self-described crafter, Nora was already familiar with sewing techniques, and knew that she enjoyed learning new crafts.

Karla became interested in quilting when her friend started taking a class. As her friend shared her positive class experiences, her desire to learn how to quilt grew:

I had a friend that had started and she was taking lessons. I just envied her and I wanted to quilt and I could not afford to go to the store and buy one. I wanted one that I could be proud of so that is why I wanted to start. It's addictive and it's expensive, but it's fun and I thoroughly enjoy it and it is like my therapy.

Network connections and the desire to learn how to make a quilt sparked Karla's budding quilting interests.

Leaving a legacy behind for their children was a frequently given reason women gave for becoming involved in quilting with no preexisting background. Emma was attracted to quilts, even more so when she realized she could make quilts as lasting gifts for her children:

I always liked quilts, and I had a neighbor who was quilting and I thought it was really neat. But with two little kids I thought it was not possible. At that point I decided that I was going to make them a quilt by the time they graduate from high school.

The combined network connections and the desire to make memorable gifts for her children were why and how she got involved in quilting.

Learning to quilt is closely linked to women's identities. The cultural transmission within quilting occurs between women through the institutions of family and the quilting community, both local and global. Through the family, quilting techniques are passed down through generations of women. In learning to quilt, women develop aspects of their selves and begin to engage in meaning-making activities that elaborate identities. They make connections with other women who quilt, and can make historically meaningful connections to legacies of women (both familial and non-familial) who have engaged in quilting generations before them.

Currently, the majority of women come to quilting as adults, and mostly at middle-age. Women at this age are better able to invest time and money in quilting after retiring from paid work, when their children attend school or leave home. Life course, human development, and generativity scholars note that at middle-age, many women take the time to assess their current state in life and re-create themselves (Kotre 1984; Miller and Stiver 1997). If women choose to make a more serious commitment to work, or take up a subjective career such as quilting, there can be tension in women's lives: "It is the nature of the conflict between caring and autonomy which imparts a distinctive character to women's life cycle and determines the particular constraints women face at mid-life" (Notman 1980: 106). With such changes, the

existing family structure, spouses, and children can feel confusion, anger, and resentment toward the primary family caretaker.

Quilting communities provide women the support they need when making changes at mid-life. Through such groups, women have the opportunity to learn how to quilt and form common bonds with other women through a multitude of activities. Such activities include joining local quilt guilds, taking quilting classes, reading books, and attending demonstrations. Additionally, the Internet connects women globally around the subject of quilting. It links women's quilting interests through discussion groups, online guilds, and shopping sites for quilting supplies.

The quilting process is clearly important to women. Finished quilt products are significant to their makers, in ways not easily detected by an outside eye. Women have explained their desires for becoming involved in quilting, including personal, familial and historical ties with other women. Finished quilts and the ways in which women discuss them, provide evidence of the important meanings that quilts hold for women. Quilts individually mark salient life events for women, and contribute to their roles as women in larger institutions such as gender, culture, family and paid work.

Quilts as Life Bookmarks

Women describe quilting as an important cultural process, which is personally satisfying and beneficial in maintaining close personal ties with quilters, friends and family members. Quilts as finished products typify the valuable cultural production process that women experience, and they also symbolize important personal and family life events for quilters. As women learn to quilt from others in gendered ways, they also describe their own quilt processes

and finished quilts similarly. Instead of referring to overarching concepts such as linear time (e.g., hours, days, weeks, years), women consistently talk about quilts in relation to their selves, as well as their personal and family connections, aspects heavily emphasized in women's traditional gender roles. Time is second to meaning-making processes in the ways that women measure and discuss their quilting activities.

How Long Did It Take You to Make That Quilt?

Quilters are most likely to talk about a quilt in non-traditional measures, while non-quilters generally talk about quilts in linear ways. Upon viewing a finished quilt, outsiders to quilting generally ask, "How long did this take you?" Since quilters in this study do not consider traditional time measures while discussing their quilts, they often find it difficult to answer time-related questions in meaningful ways.⁵ Quilters discuss a quilt and the quilting process as it relates to the person for whom it was made, or what they were experiencing personally while constructing that particular quilt. If women do discuss a quilt in terms of marking time, they are usually struggling with a new technique, having trouble with fabrics, or frustrated that they did not have enough time that they wanted to devote to it. And, when they do discuss time in this way, they are most likely sharing this detailed quilt information with another quilter, or an understanding outsider or sympathizer to quilting. Additionally, and important to note, the actual discussion of time remains secondary to quilters. The new quilt production technique or problem is at the forefront of the conversation, not the clock.

When asked how long it takes to make a quilt, quilters have various responses. Some state a standard hourly rate (e.g., 100 hours) to answer the meaningless questions quickly (meaningless to them, but more important to outsiders) and move onto a more salient discussion

of the quilt at hand. When giving out a standard hourly answer, some quilters are careful to portray a quilting time frame “that will sound good” to the outsider, and fall in between the precarious and mystical time line of too much time and not enough time spent on any one quilt (Field Notes 1999). Spending too much time on a quilt puts the quilter at risk of being considered a time waster, and not spending enough time can leave her open to criticism if the viewer does not like the quilt, interpreting the fault to lie on the quilter for not devoting enough time to do a satisfactory job. And, some quilters posit that if they make quilting seem too easy by not taking up enough time it will either result in the outsider scoffing at quilting as something easy enough that anyone could do it (e.g., only that long? I could do that!), or the outsider trying to negotiate a no-cost or below-cost quilting arrangement with the quilter. Most quilters in this study do not quilt for money as they tend to enjoy it less when money is involved and it becomes less of a creative process: “when I have quilted for money, it felt less like fun and more like work, yuck” (field notes 1999). When quilters are asked about quilting for money by outsiders, they often quote a price far above what outsiders are willing to pay for the service to turn them off to the idea (field notes 2000).

How Many Quilts Have You Made?

Another common question outsiders ask is, “How many quilts have you made so far?” Interestingly, quilters do not keep track of their quilting in this way, they typically do not have the number of quilts that they have finished in their heads. Instead of using a mainstream conception of quantity to measure their progress in quilting, women refer to their personal relationships with others as a way to tap indirectly into the number of quilts they have made. Many women can recall how many quilts they have made by reviewing the past year’s events to

jar their memory into a quantity mode of reporting them: “In the last year, I made a quilt for my grandson’s birthday, a t-shirt quilt for my niece’s high school graduation, and then I finished a commemorative wall hanging for my parents’ fiftieth wedding anniversary, so I guess that’s three quilts.” Specific quilts, the intentions behind them, and the relationships with people who received them, rather than sheer quantity, are the prominent time-like measures in women’s lives.

In this way, women also use event deadlines and goals to organize their time and their lives, rather than the traditional time allotments such as hours, days, months, or years. I use myself as an example: a number of from high school and college are currently having children. I have chosen to make crib sized quilts, or baby quilts, for their children. I decided to do this because I feel this is a highly personalized and special gift requiring specific skills which I possess that will establish a tie with the child, and indicate the closeness of my relationship to the parents. As I cannot control my friends’ reproductive choices, the need for baby quilts ebbs and flows with their pregnancies. I prefer to make bed-sized quilts for myself, taking considerably more amounts of time and materials, and I do not complete them at the same rate as the baby quilts. When a friend calls with baby news, I highlight the due date in my mind and immediately prioritize the baby quilt rather than the quilt I might be working on for myself. The way in which I have decided to use my quilting talents shapes the types of quilts I make, and for whom I make them. The events surrounding others in my life (e.g., baby’s due date) at times take precedence over quilts that I make for myself.

In addition to the gift-giving purposes quilting provides me, I also have personal quilting goals. I have noticed from my quilt research that the majority of quilters possess few quilts that

they have made themselves—most finished quilts leave the home as gifts. Giving gifts is part of the gendered traditions in quilting, as is establishing a cultural tradition and personal and historical legacy. I want to have immediate visual and tangible evidence of my quilting talent in addition to giving gifts to important people in my life. I sew some of my own clothes, and part of the fun of sewing clothes beyond the enjoyment of the process, is being able to wear them, taking pride in the fact that I made them myself. Similar to sewing clothes, I want to have quilts that I have made near me, and be able to look at them daily, to feel a sense of accomplishment that I have created these beautiful items myself. Therefore, I have decided to invest considerable time into making bed sized quilts for myself. I want my quilts to be in good condition so that I can eventually pass them on. These quilts preserve my artistic and technical quilting talent, as well as exhibit the efforts I put into my quilting activities. Just as published academic research does, quilts also leave a record of the person who created it, tangible proof of their marked efforts. Quilts in this way for myself and other quilters record the continued importance of the gendered cultural tradition of the quilting process.

Quilt Journals and Scrapbooks

Women keep track of the quilts that they have made. Either they record quilts in their heads, or they assemble physical record books to document their quilting activities. Either way, women find it important to remember their quilting efforts. These quilting efforts indicate two important aspects of women's lives. Quilt records establish the importance of the activity in women's lives (e.g., personally and artistically fulfilling), as well as provide evidence of their close personal relationships with other quilters, friends and family members.

From simply looking at an image of a quilt, or describing a quilt that they have made, women are able to recall the process of making that quilt. They remember what they were experiencing in their personal lives at the time that the quilt was constructed. Theresa shared her quilt records with me, and explained how and why she started keeping track of her quilt production, and encouraged others to do the same:

Let me go get my books. (Pause). When I was president of the guild, we had very few people, we had no money, and we were kind of dragging. And I said, “Whatever I do, I’ve got to get people going here.” I gave everyone one of these notebooks. I think everybody needs to keep a record of what they’re doing. It’s amazing how much you grow, and you don’t even know you’re growing. It’s really terrific!

So how many of these notebooks do you have now?

I’m on my third now.

Women’s quilt records both document the volume of quilts already made and given away, exhibit the body of their work, and record how quiltmakers are growing in skill and creativity. Quilters explained to me how these books helped them in their quilting process. Heather records her quilts in a journal and explains its importance to me:

This is my journal as well. No, it has nothing to do with quilting, although it all has to do with quilting. It’s really what’s going on in my life and a lot of times that’s where titles come from. For every quilt I leave two pages, when there’s blank space it just gets filled up or if I’m having a bad day and don’t feel like quilting I’ll sit and write. It’s

what's going on with me emotionally as I'm working on the quilt. It's interesting because you can go back and look. I know that I will have this quilting book for the rest of my life, it's pretty personal.

Heather's quilt journal and quilting process is deeply integrated into the rest of her life. Her journal is not solely about quilts, as she includes what she is experiencing emotionally and personally while simultaneously working on a specific quilt.

Quilt records, such as journals, workbooks, or photo albums document the quantity of finished quilts, as well as highlight the emotional links for women between specific quilts and important life events. When recording quilts that they have made, women include basic information about a quilt, such as start and finish date, pattern sketches, fabric swatches, and even photographs. Some women include the inspiration for a particular quilt, where the quilt ended up if it was given away, and its title. These quilt memories are recorded quilt-by-quilt, rather than in a linear calendar fashion. By recording elements of the quilt process, women pass on the complexities of their unique quilt process, and the finished product.

Bookmarking Life Through Creative Work

While raising six girls and working outside the home part-time, my mother had little time to work on large or complex craft projects, despite her enjoyment of these activities. During her pregnancies, and mostly while spending time away from the family in the maternity ward of the hospital, she finished an intricate needlepoint project that is the basis for the face of a clock that hangs in my parents' living room. Very often she tells us, "When I die, that clock goes in the grave with me" (field notes 2000). This clock represents great effort by my mother to complete a creative project in between giving birth to six children. The clock represents her

creative efforts and is uniquely hers, not a Halloween costume or clothing that she sewed for her children when they were young. She has something to measure this period in her life by, and she has not outgrown it in the way that children outgrow their clothes, or how children grow up and leave the family home. In taking the clock with her when she dies, she will symbolically forever have with her evidence of her creative efforts, linked with memories of all of her children, yet still for herself. Since we have all left the house to pursue our own lives as adults, my mother continues her creative activities and is able to devote more time to similar craft activities she finds fulfilling. Now she has different interests and time/commitment constraints to manage—though few are as consistently time consuming as childbirth once was in her life.

Quilts and other important cultural objects like my mother's needlepoint clock represent personal, familial and historical time. When listing off the quilts they have made, women refer to the intention of the quilt rather than the calendar month. Quilts guide women in organizing their time, and simultaneously mark that time period once completed. Quilters like Rachel mention specific quilts to mark special family-life events, such as a child being born:

I still have to make my grandkids their quilts. They each have one, a crib sized quilt, that's the birth quilt, but I'd like to make them a bed sized quilt, and then I'm done.

And at this point I know I have six bed sized quilts cut out. I mean they're just sitting there waiting for me.

Rather than directly count the number of quilts she has yet to make, Rachel begins the conversation about quilts by talking about her grandchildren and what type of quilt she needs to make them. After this, she mentions briefly in numerical language how many quilts she has to

make—six. Rachel highlights the important people in her life and the quilts she will make them more than sheer numbers. Like the birth quilts that Rachel has constructed for her grandchildren, quilts also mark other family-life events, such as birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, and deaths. Through making special quilts (or needlepoint clocks such as my mother's), women document accomplishments in their lives. These accomplishments are either directly their own, or are achievements of family members, such as a child's graduation from high school.

Rachel participated in the quilt exchange program sponsored by the Atlanta Historical Center for the 1996 Summer Olympic Games held in Atlanta. She was one of many women who made a quilt to be given to each participating country. This tradition was started by Georgia quilters and has been continued in successive Olympic Games (The Quiltmakers of Georgia 1996). Rachel's Olympic quilt has special meaning for her as she contributed importantly to world history. And, finishing this specific quilt has great personal and familial meaning to her as well. Completing this quilt meant Rachel would finally quit smoking, which was a personal goal:

This quilt was finished in June of 1995. The reason I know that is because my husband had bugged me for years to stop smoking, and I said, "When this quilt is done I will stop." I sent it June 9th, and June 10th I quit smoking.

When delving beneath the surface of this quilt, Rachel reveals the personal and familial meaning present in its stitches. Clearly, this quilt holds meaning for Rachel far beyond its surface characteristics, as it marks in her life when she was finally able to stop smoking, and as a result, further cements the ties she has with her family, for they had been encouraging her to quit

smoking for some time. As is true for most quilts, deeper meanings created and attached to the quilt during the quilting process are not easily available to viewers (and sometimes recipients of finished quilts) who are unaware of the story of its creation.

Sarah also documents her personal life through specific quilts. Until she met her husband-to-be and married, she was frustrated about her dating life and decided to express that frustration by making a quilt:

I had been collecting frog fabrics for about two years and it was supposed to be a statement because it had to do with the fact that I was single and had dated all these people, but they were all frogs. So I collected frog fabrics and came up with this quilt idea.

From simply looking at the quilt and having no other information about the quilt or its maker, one might think that Sarah is a huge fan of frogs. However, in discussing this quilt-in-progress with me, Sarah indicated that this quilt is instead a symbol of her unsuccessful dating life during her twenties and thirties. She sees it as akin to the fairy tale *The Little Princess*. Before she recently married, Sarah was frustrated with the men she was dating (or perhaps the men she wanted to be dating but was not). Convinced she was going to be stuck with frogs rather than princes the rest of her life, she decided to express her frustration about dating by making a quilt composed entirely of frogs.

Right before she got married, Sarah bought the remaining frog fabric she needed to complete the quilt, and when telling the fabric store salesperson about her quilt, she declared, "That's the last frog fabric now." And, to commemorate her wedding, Sarah plans to make a quilted wall hanging, using fabric she bought while on her honeymoon: "I'm going to use my

fabric that I bought on our honeymoon. Then I'll put our names and the date we got married underneath it, and then have a little wall memory quilt."

In addition to celebrations and accomplishments, quilts also commemorate sorrow. Such rough times in a quilter's life can include illness, death, endings, or working through particularly difficult situations. Emma has a quilt that she works on when she is angry:

Working on this quilt is good therapy because it only comes out when I am really angry, and it's usually the same person I'm really mad at. Ever since I met him, he drives me crazy.

Is this who the quilt is for?

I think he will end up with it. It's just not the right time yet, but at some point he will get it. I think I've been working on this quilt for three years now.

Specific quilts such as Emma's can take years to complete, as women work on them only when experiencing difficulty, or when thinking about a specific person.

As demonstrated in Emma's anger quilt, the time frame for quilts depends on how that project was originally framed. In addition to framing a project, women's lives and their success in carving out the needed time to quilt is important. Some quilters have few commitments outside of quilting, while others have numerous personal, familial and work related duties to manage in their lives in addition to incorporating their quilting activities. As evidenced by these quilt stories, without the knowledge of the quiltmaker's intent, other viewers could attribute an entirely different meaning from the quilt, as well as about the quilter. Quilts have layers of meaning, and are understood on numerous levels. Highlighting the women who make quilts and

the stories behind them increases the cultural value of quilts, as quilts can now be understood as complex cultural objects to both quilters and outsiders to quilting.

Quilting, Memory, and Time

Women use quilts to document important events in their lives that might not otherwise be remembered, given the tendency to render the personal lives of women invisible. Quilts act as significant metaphorical bookmarks in women's lives. The pages that quilts mark for the women who view and make them are significant pages in their lives. Women use quilts as visual markers to recall important events for them (and for others who are in important relationships with them). Women then use finished quilts in instrumental ways to cement relationships to family and friends and to, in a sense, be part of the important events that occur in the lives of these people.

Quilting gets intermixed with important life events and both helps women get through them effectively and create a documentary record of important events that are evoked over a lifetime, and possibly beyond. Many women turn to quilting to celebrate and reward themselves by engaging in a personally satisfying activity. Quilting helps women to focus, relax, and escape from thinking about daily troubles. With family or work worries, women quilt through family members' surgeries, or while they wait for an important phone call. It helps women to get their mind off of the troublesome issue at hand and to deal more effectively with problematic situations.

When talking about a specific quilt that they have made, quilters can recall what they were experiencing personally as they made that quilt. Similar to academic writing endeavors (articles, book chapters, and dissertations), quilts take a considerable amount of time to

produce. Things happen in people's lives as time-consuming projects such as dissertations and quilts are completed. For example, I am certain when looking back on the quilts that I have made during my dissertation research and writing, I will continue to recall personal trials and successes in my academic and personal life. I will remember life events that occurred during that period, including the quilts I made, and for whom I made them.

Gendered Time, Gendered Lives

Women realize the importance of quilting on personal, familial, and larger historical levels by participating in quilting activities. Personally, women derive many positive benefits. On the family level, women demonstrate their extraordinary familial devotion by participating in this time and labor-intensive activity, to benefit their family and friends. Historically, women leave a cultural legacy behind them, providing examples for current and future generations of women. Many women realize that their quilting efforts will continue beyond their mortal lives, and serve as a remembrance of their contributions to the institution of the family. In many ways, women use quilting as one way in which to manage their impression of self to subsequent generations.

On some level, the social location of quilters effects the amount of time they have to devoted to quilting activities. Women must possess adequate equipment, time, and cultural knowledge to quilt. Finished quilts do reveal certain surface elements about their makers: quilting talent, and money and time invested as indicated through the fabric and techniques used. Basically a quilt can speak of general economic and time-based life circumstances particular to each woman. Similar to artists of other mediums, personal biography is an important component to their survival and success (Lang and Lang 1993, 1990, 1988; Tuchman 1984;

Tuchman and Fortin 1980). Additionally, economic and social forces limit artists' lives. And importantly, gender shapes how women are able to participate in cultural activities over time, including quilting. Therefore, quilters's lives and creative experiences are limited and enhanced by their social locations, including the institutions of gender and the family.

Quilting activities provide a site in which to examine gender socialization and gendered cultural production. The family home is the primary place where quilt production takes place. As quilts are no longer necessary items for the home, the effort that women put into quilting is often seen as extraneous by family members in comparison to other necessary everyday tasks like housework, cooking, laundry, or washing dishes. These other necessary activities have everyday repercussions if they are not completed; that is, family members are directly effected if they rely upon one person to cook their meals. The social contexts in which quilts are produced are important sites for socialization and reproduction of gendered identities among women. These are very important to the women who participate in them.

Women view quilting as a means to connect across generations with other members of their families. With quilting, women seek continuity across generational lines. Participating in quilting and passing along the cultural knowledge to other women is important to women. Also important is establishing traditions and appreciation for quilting in their immediate families. With an established quilting tradition, then, women hope that their cultural knowledge will be carried out by other, probably female, kin in future generations.

Quilts act as material artifacts and represent both present and past memories of women who quilt. A quilt made today, for example, reminds one of the maker of that specific quilt, as well as the quilters who came before her. Understanding the current and past memories

attached to quilts helps us view quilts not just in an historical sense, but quilts as personally meaningful to their makers. The meanings that quilts carry with them assist us in defining who we are, and who our ancestors were, similar to other cultural objects.

CHAPTER 5

IF I HAD A NEEDLE: IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT OF QUILTERS

Introduction

Quilting is important to women on a most basic and individual level, for they garner personal fulfillment from participating in the activity. Additionally, quilting benefits extend beyond the self in ways that many other hobby-like activities may not. The actual physical act of quilting benefits women emotionally, leaving with them a calmness and focus not achieved through other requisite, everyday activities such as childcare, laundry, meal preparation, or housework.

Many women engage in paid work outside the home, making household time management more complex and difficult. For some women, quilting is the relaxing equivalent of taking a bubble bath, having some alone time spent at their choosing. Quilting as a form of women's art and craft work provides physical and mental benefits (Anderson and Gold 1998).

Delaney-Mech (2000:6) a physician and a quilter, notes:

A simple sewing task, such as sewing together two patches, lowers your heart rate and blood pressure. It sends a wave of relaxation throughout your whole body. This calming is important because of all the pressures we encounter in our daily lives. We are wives, mothers, care givers to our aging parents, wage-earners, and volunteers. In

the course of our days, we face snarled traffic, new technology, financial pressures, and the challenges of raising children. We need the health and life-giving benefits of quilting.

Quilting provides inner peace, creative outlets, and time for reflexive thinking.

The more women increase their involvement in quilting, the more quilting activities shape their lives. Once women identify themselves as quilters, they take on additional behaviors of being a quilter (e.g., shopping for fabric, spending time with other quilters, spending a great deal of time at quilting activities in the home). Their heads swim with quilting notions, seeing quilt patterns everywhere (e.g., nature, architecture), and they work on problematic designs in their heads as they go about other activities. Quilting can no longer be defined as a simple hobby. Instead, it is at the very least a form of serious leisure (Stalp 1998; Stebbins 1979, 1998). At most, it is a totally-absorbing artistic endeavor which benefits women on many levels.

The development of women's identities as quilters is seen through the *quilting process* as an important gendered cultural site. Just as men's spaces and activities (e.g., hunting, fishing) provide sites in which men develop an understanding of traditional masculinity, women's spaces exhibit similar traditional gender socialization through the development of feminine identities. Both gendered spaces rely upon collective notions of what is requisite of modern men and women.

This chapter focuses on why women quilt in contemporary society. Women face negative stereotypes in developing the identity of a quilter. Quilters cite personal and societal level reasons for why they quilt, and how these reasons are connected to their identities as women, as quilters, and as cultural producers. The quilting process is further tied into women's

lives as related to carework, evident in the gift-giving that occurs once quilts are finished cultural products. Women's accounts of parting with their un-paid creative work indicates how intensely intertwined the quilting process and women's attachment to quilts are with the finished products of quilts.

Quilting as Core Identity

Women are deeply committed to their quilting activities and it holds an important and meaningful place in their lives. For example, Loretta explains how quilting is just a part of who she is now:

It's so much a part of me now, it would be unthinkable not to have it a part of me. I would like for my kids, my grandkids to be able to pick up a quilt and see my stitching and see my color selection and know something about my personality. They would know that I was either funny or silly or serious, they would know it. And it's awesome to me to see quilts from the 1800s being cherished and it's like a Van Gogh or something, it's been around how long and people are in awe of it, it's not the painting itself but it's the accomplishment this person did to get there, and I think it would be instill a goal, that they would know that I was goal oriented.

Quilting provides a creative outlet, control over one's own time, and a way in which women can give of themselves in relationships with others. Individually, women provide specific answers as to why they quilt, and what benefits it provides them. Collectively, these reasons coalesce around the personal, familial and artistic themes in women's lives. Quilters emphasize the personal attachment they have to quilts. When able, they spend a great deal of time quilting. The quilting process also provides women a way in which to build meaningful

social ties with other quilters. Women describe their quilting processes with passion, and their discussions reveal how quilting is closely tied to their core identities. Quilting also provides them a way in which to express themselves artistically.

Identity Development in Marginalized Groups

Quilting activities provide a common bond that links interested women together. In subtle ways, the identity development (or identity acceptance) process that women experience in quilting parallels people identifying themselves with other marginal groups. When women fully embrace the role of a quilter, they gradually become aware of what that identity can entail for them personally, socially, and at the society level.

Susan Krieger (1996) incorporates the self with her investigation of life through the social sciences. In her work *The Family Silver* she explores her self as a lesbian and an academic. She discusses the progression of lesbianism as she has experienced it:

For me, being a lesbian is an ongoing process of seeking intimacy, personal value, and happiness with another women. This process may have an initial stage, but it does not have an end. Often, I think, becoming a lesbian involves challenging basic assumptions about oneself. For me, it has required admitting my most basic needs of other women rather than walling those needs off, or denying them. It has required discarding some of my previous ways of being female, and finding new ones. As this story suggests, women often teach each other how to be lesbian. (Krieger 1996: 34)

Similarly, De Beauvoir (1952) examines the process of gender and socialization:

One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society: it is civilization as a

whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (De Beauvoir 1952: 249)

Wittig (1993) comments on the social implications present for homosexuality generally, and lesbian women specifically:

The refusal to become (or to remain) heterosexual always meant to refuse to become a man or a woman, consciously or not. For a lesbian this goes further than the refusal of the *role* “woman.” It is the refusal of the economic, ideological, and political power of a man. This, we lesbians, and nonlesbians as well, knew before the beginning of the lesbian and feminist movements. (Wittig 1993: 105).

Similarly, other researchers comment on the identity development of craftartists (Mishler 1999), the identity development of romance readers (Brackett 2000; Radway 1991), historical development of hobbies (Gelber 1999), the culture of mushrooming (Fine 1998), and the culture of kitchen workers (Fine 1996).

Sinha (1979) examines the production of potters, revealing the relatively unknown complexity of the social organization of pottery production. Neapolitan (1986, 1985a, 1985b), and Ethridge and Neapolitan (1985) discuss the expansion of craft worlds in the latter half of the twentieth century, focusing on the economic developments crafts are undergoing. Finney (1993) explores the social structures within visual art communities that determine the differences between amateurs and professionals, while Butsch (1984) explores how the model airplane hobby became slowly commodified into an industry. These scholars suggest that craft worlds operate similarly to art worlds, and they all suggest that the art/craft distinction that has dominated much of sociological work in this area is too simplistic.

These works reveal that there is a more complex way in which to examine existing social worlds. These activities are complex and meaning-laden. Aesthetics, design, and reputation are important within such marginalized activities.

Masculine Marginalized Activities

Hunting provides an additional and important parallel experience to developing the identity of a quilter. People experience freedom when participating in activities which they enjoy, hunters and quilters included. Madson (1996: 133) discusses hunting from the perspective of a hunter, and provides an insider understanding of enjoying a non-mainstream activity:

The genuine hunter is probably as free as it's possible to be in this technocracy of ours. Free not because he sheds civilized codes and restraints when he goes into the woods, but because he can project himself out of and beyond himself, out of and beyond the ordinary, to be wholly absorbed in a quieter, deeper, and older world.

Although people engaged in marginal activities perceive the mainstream as wary of their interests, participants in these closely identity-linked activities remain passionately committed to them:

But as much as anything else, one of the greatest urges impelling such a hunter is his search for freedom, and for the genuine personal adventure inherent in such freedom. Just as game species may be the truest indicators of quality natural environments, so hunting can be an indicator of quality natural freedom. (Madson 1996: 132)

A similar theme of commitment is articulated in this discussion of a man's fishing life with a questioning outsider:

A friend, a naturalist, who has not fished since he was a teenager and won't, on "moral grounds," asked me recently if I *had* to fish to be closer to nature Though I have fished since before memory and have never needed a "reason" I realized I don't really go to rivers to "connect" with the natural world; I go to catch fish I go to the river to catch trout. Everything I do depends upon that one fact. I am happy to think I am better skilled now than when I began, so many years ago. There may be sunsets, wild-flowers galore, rainbows in the sky, good fellowship, good fishing, or lousy fishing; but what has drawn me here, the fulcrum of the entire equation, what will always draw me to water, is the simple prospect of catching a fish. (Lyons 1999:72-73)

Analogous to accounts of others in marginal groups, quilters have also felt compelled to justify to non-quilters why they quilt. Carrie reveals how she feels disrespected for her quilting efforts, and how that figures into her identity as a woman:

Why is there such a stigma on women? I mean, it's because of women that people are here period. I mean, we bear children, we mother children, and men couldn't do what they do without us. I'm just like, give us credit, we work our butts off, and I am probably the most lax, lazy mom that I can think of, but if it wasn't for me, my kids wouldn't be who they are, my husband wouldn't be the way he is, and you know, the whole thing. It's because of women. And okay, so we happen to enjoy getting together to spend an afternoon talking about quilts, what's so wrong about that? My husband spent a whole day last weekend hunting a bird.

Quilting Identity Within a Marginalized Group

Women bond together over the experience of quilting, and support and reward each other's activity in quilting activities. My fieldwork sites gave me access to a variety of women's quilting experiences, including quilt shows and exhibits, guilds, bees, fabric stores, and women's personal quilting spaces. In these spaces women reveal their passion for quilting, something they often conceal in other contexts. In these sites quilters nurture interested women into becoming self-identified quilters. At one of the quilt bees I attended, I was able to document one such transformation of personal identity:

One morning, Veronica arrived at the quilt bee, grinning from ear to ear. She told us breathlessly, 'I finally get it. *I am a quilter!*' She told us that she had spent yesterday in her quilt space, simply getting to know her fabric. She had spent an entire day playing with her fabric, experimenting with ideas, colors, and projects. She was entirely focused on the process, not the product. 'When I came down from my quilt room to make dinner, my husband asked, *Did you get anything done up there?* I was so mad at him!' (Field Notes 1999)

Veronica was frustrated at her husband's question that focused on product, for she was now just learning how to enjoy the process of quilting. If she had something tangible to show for her time spent with her fabric, he indicated that he would approve of the time she spent. But, as she focused on the process aspects of quilting and not the product aspects, she had no visible evidence of how she had just spent her time. Additionally, Veronica had only spent a few hours in her quilt room, and planning a quilt can take weeks rather than hours, especially for a beginning quilter. Her husband's comments reveal that he was uninformed about how much

time actually goes into making a quilt, and his expectations were that she have visible proof of how she spent her leisure time, away from the family, and when she returned to the family space, she would immediately transition into meal-preparation.

Previously, Veronica had been feeling guilty because she had not finished any of her quilting projects. She considered herself a beginning quilter, and felt that she lacked advanced skills and confidence necessary to accomplish a quilt project on her own. She joined the quilt bee to meet other women and to learn from them the basics of quilting. Veronica realized how meaningful the quilting process was to her at the specific moment her husband placed more importance on the quilt product than the quilting process, the time that she was able to devote to her self and to her creative needs. Women at the quilt bee were familiar with Veronica's discovery, and they supported her experience:

The women in the bee looked knowingly at one another. One woman commented, "She's got quilt fever." Then another woman said, "Join the club." Then they all laughed as they congratulated Veronica. (Field Notes 1999)

As the more experienced quilters supported Veronica and the slight difficulty she was having with her husband, they were also encouraging Veronica as she developed her identity as a quilter. When women begin to identify themselves as quilters, they soon develop additional behaviors akin to more experienced quilters and became exposed to and involved in more quilting activities (e.g., shopping for fabric, attending quilt-related functions).

Cultural Contradictions of Quilting

Viewing quilting from women's perspectives highlights not just the relevance of quilting in lives of individual women, but also the ways in which quilting connects women to one

another, to non-quilting outsiders, and to (women's) cultural production generally. Quilting, along with other specialized and compelling activities (e.g., Pokemon trading card collecting, doll collecting, hunting, fishing) are often easily misunderstood by outsiders. Quilters perceive outsiders to be dismissive, even explicitly negative, towards their passion for quilting. Angela describes the encompassing position that quilting currently has in her life, and recalls how others respond to her passion:

People ask me, 'What do you do now that you are retired?' I tell them, 'I quilt.' And they look at me like, 'Well you can't possibly spend all your time quilting.' They have no conception that you really could. No, you are not sitting in a chair putting a needle in and out of fabric all the time, but there are so many aspects involved in quilting that you literally can spend your entire life totally engrossed in quilting and I am awfully close to doing that.

The positive elements quilting possesses, however meaningful to those who do it, is not part of our general knowledge of quilting specifically, or of women's activities generally. Kelly, a quilter and an academic in her forties, struggles with being understood by outsiders in both categories. She is aware of the negative connotations attached to both aspects of her identity as a quilter and as a Ph.D. candidate. Her family has traditional notions of what women should be:

Nobody knows what academia is, nobody knows what a Ph.D. is. I don't have kids. If I had kids that would be part of the traditional American life that people understand. I really do think that this is a way that people understand me in a way that they don't understand other parts of my life.

Kelly is quite aware of the gendered family expectations present, as well as the quilting and feminine stereotypes that outsiders to quilting present her: “I think it is really odd in a way but it kind of makes me think maybe I shouldn’t quilt because I don’t want to be pigeon-holed in that way.” Despite the paradoxes present in her work and her quilting life, Kelly continues quilting.

Cassie, a young professional, is careful with whom she shares her quilting interests in the workplace. Her reasons for guarding her quilting identity are similar to Kelly’s. Cassie’s colleagues certainly appreciate the workmanship present in the finished products, yet they are openly suspicious and even hostile about the time she spends conducting such workmanship. They accept the finished quilts as valuable cultural objects, and some of her co-workers have even hired her to make quilts for them, but the time and effort she has spent on them is what they question and judge negatively. For these reasons, Cassie is particularly cautious about sharing her quilting interests with outsiders: “I need to be careful of the people that I show my things to.” She explains how people at work react to her as a quilter when she reveals her finished quilt products:

I don’t want them to say, ‘Oh god, I don’t do anything, you must do everything.’

That’s not the image. So I try to make sure it’s someone who’s not going to say,

‘Well, when do you have the time? You work just as hard as we do!’ I brought in a

quilt that I had made and showed a couple of people and they did say, ‘Well how can

you do that?’ It’s a patronizing kind of remark, ‘Well, how do you do that *and*

everything else?’

Sort of the Martha Stewart thing?

Yeah, 'You do this and you do that, you must do everything, you are everything.' So then I'm justifying it, because here I am not trying to self promote and then it seems like I'm self promoting, so I say, 'Well, I don't have kids and I really don't have any hobbies besides running and so, this is what I do to relax,' which is all true. But I'm justifying why I'm doing something like this. I try to minimize it, but it does kind of get that response, I think more from the men it's 'Oh you quilt' meaning kind of old fashioned, or fuddy duddy.

Interestingly, this excerpt from Cassie's interview demonstrates the multiple standards for women. Her co-workers' knowledge of her quilting interests bring to light that Cassie feels she cannot be too successful, or have too many time consuming activities or hobbies (not including children). The final insinuation by male co-workers that Cassie might be a fuddy duddy because of her quilting, even causes her to be conscious of the potentially negative nature of her outside-work interests. They, similar to family and friends, appreciate the quilt as a finished product, but not the quilter as she engages in the quilting process. Logically, without the quilting process, one would not have a quilt as a finished product. To have a finished quilt, someone has to make it.

Emma has three children and appreciates both the process and the products that quilting gives her. She definitely enjoys quilting because of the process and its benefits, but she also values her pastime of quilting because quilts have more permanence than many other parts of her life. Her efforts at quilting are more obvious and last longer than the other duties she

tends to in her house. With three young children, Emma makes certain to find the time to quilt:

When I started quilting I was at home with the kids and lots of the stuff that you do is so repetitive. Before you have the dishwasher empty, there's more dirty dishes, same thing with the clothes. The house is always a mess, the grass always needs cutting. You never see that you're getting anywhere, or you correct the kids and they do the same thing five minutes later, it's like you're not getting anywhere. Whereas if you make a quilt at the end you have something tangible. That's what really attracted me and the fact that you can make it exactly the way you want it, and there's no really right or wrong way to do it, and it's something that you can give to somebody else, which is really neat too. I get the pleasure while I make it and then at least hope the other people will enjoy it too.

Women value quilting on many important levels, yet they do not expect non-quilters to be interested in, or value, quilting in the same ways that they do. Because of this, some quilters thought it unusual that I as a researcher would want to interview them about quilting. Many women claimed it was difficult to articulate in a way that might make sense to non-quilters why they quilted. Some women have been quilting for so long that it has become a fundamental part of their lives, evidenced in the intensity they talked about quilting as a passion. Others had never been asked, respectfully, about what quilting meant to them. While non-quilters who admire quilts often focus solely or primarily on the product—the finished quilt—quilters give far more emphasis to the *process* of quilting. How a quilt is produced is often as important, or even more important, than the finished quilt itself.

Perfection Standards

Gender expectations accompany impossible standards resembling Superwomen. Super-quilters generate self-imposed standards for their quilting, which at times can deter them from making quilts. Chelsea describes how she manages her critical inner quilting voice:

If you can stop that critical voice constantly you might do a lot better. I think everybody has it, “This is no good, What would people think, How does it match?” All of the comparisons. We are driven to put things in order, just the order and the compulsion.

Hannah also shares her frustration toward other quilters as she sees them consistently apologizing for their work and their ability:

It just galls me how many women do beautiful, what I think is absolutely beautiful work, and they just seem to be waiting for someone to trash it. They really are trashing it in even what are very mild terms that they still say things like, “Well I guess it’s alright for the first time I’ve done something like this.” And I say, “What do you mean? It’s wonderful.” It always amazes me, it’s not a matter of age. There is something that’s ingrained in certain ones, just having no confidence in their skills. People say, “Well I did this over the weekend and I guess I should have taken it all out, it’s awful.” And it’s like, it’s beautiful, sit down and shut up! I mean, just learn to enjoy it. It’s unfortunate because they spend too much time worrying about it, and I think they should reward themselves and benefit from the praise they’re getting around them, because a lot of it is wonderful, and people enjoy it.

Hannah views quilting as a positive activity, sees no need for any qualifying apologies, and hopes instead that women can learn to celebrate their artistic talents with one another. Meg offers a thoughtful reflection on her self-criticism:

At one time I really wanted to be accepted as an artist because I had been accepted as an artist for my oil paintings and I wanted my quilts to be accepted as art also. And then I got to thinking, that's putting the values in the wrong places. If I don't do this to please myself, who in the world am I doing it for? And you're not in competition with anybody but yourself, and a lot of people lose track of that.

Meg's realization that she is only in competition with herself helps her manage criticism coming from others and from herself. Admitting the pleasure she derives from quilting, knowing her own limits to quilting and continuing in it for personal reasons keeps Meg going in her quilting efforts.

Personal Level Benefits from Quilting

Women engage in the quilting process using the sewing machine as well as piecing blocks together and quilting by hand. Women describe the time they spend at quilting as a needed quiet, peaceful activity. Women discuss personal reasons why they quilt, including the zen experience that quilting provides them, personal fulfillment, and self expression.

Quilting Zen

The repetitive motion, or flow, of quilting exhibits religious or trance-like properties. For some women quilting even has a spiritual nature for some women. Heather explains the zen-like qualities hand-quilting has for her:

With quilting there is something about the repetitive motion, it helps somehow. It seems like when I spend three or four hours and don't notice where the time has gone, that's kind of what I'm looking for. That's the goal, that's where I'm trying to end up, is to have spent time and have that sort of calm contented satisfied feeling when I'm finished.

Quilting is necessary to Chelsea's sense of well-being, and she notes that her mood is negatively altered when quilting does not fit into her daily schedule: "I have to quilt. It's funny, though, if I don't do it, I get really irritable." Likewise, Cassie strives to quilt everyday, for it provides her with positive emotional and physical experiences:

My true love is quilting. I know when I'm really stressed out that more times than not, one of the reasons is because I haven't been quilting. Ideally I would like to quilt for one to two hours every night. But normally it's two to three times a week.

Quilting everyday is a goal for a number of women, and nearly all in this study try to quilt several times a week.

Quilting is such a pleasurable activity for women though that some describe it as an addiction that takes over much of their lives. Patricia shares her addictive quilting experience:

Three years ago I had a quilt on the frame and I got so addicted to it that I was quilting late at night, and I actually got tendinitis in my wrist. I had to quilt, I would just think, 'one more block, one more line.' I overdid it. I did it until my wrist was very, very sore. I could hardly move it.

Patricia is not alone in her addictive experience with quilting. Sarah devotes serious time to quilting, and claims, "I would say quilting is bordering on an obsession (laughter)."

Most importantly, when women participate in quilting activities, they are able to take time for themselves. Karla likens quilting to therapy: “I enjoy it and it is therapeutic. I mean, if I am not reading, I am quilting, and if I’m not quilting, I am reading. I have to have something and I prefer doing things with my hands.” Many other quilters echo her sentiments.

Personal Fulfillment

Heather’s comments reveal her commitment to quilting and her commitment to herself as a quilter: “I’m just going to keep making quilts and keep myself happy because that’s all that there is.” Likewise, Eileen states, “It’s just a challenge and it’s just exciting. I mean it’s truly exciting to make quilts for somebody.” Quilting also has personal and spiritual meaning for quilters. Diana reveals the spiritual connections involved in her quilting activities:

To me there’s a spiritual significance to quilting, too. I guess I see that god created me and he gave me certain abilities and so I feel like I am blessing that to god and to others to create. I feel like whatever I have done or accomplished god has given me that ability. I quilt everyday and I ask god to give me time to work, to give me ideas. Then I thank him for that.

Diana takes pride in practicing her quilting everyday, and thereby acknowledging that her work is significant beyond just herself. Her daily activities contribute to her personal spirituality, and to her commitment to her home and family. Denise describes her discovery of quilting as a life changing experience: “Quilting is one of the few experiences in my life I’ve ever had where it was as if somebody hit me upside the head and I said to myself, ‘I was born to do this.’”

Self Expression

Quilting, similar to many other art media, offers endless possibilities for creative self-expression. Many women find that quilts are an appropriate way in which to express themselves personally, spiritually, and artistically. Linda explains that being able to do with quilts virtually anything one can imagine is its most attractive feature:

There are no rules. It is just the matter of your own imagination deciding in whatever message you want to convey with the particular fabric and design and application. You start out with an idea or a required fabric or a required color and none are the same. Everybody brings their ideas into it and so there are many ways that the quilts can express individuality and personality.

Linda's comments indicate that through making quilts, women are able to find and use their personal and artistic voices.

Creating something of herself is a main goal for Meg's quilting: "I quilt to create beauty. To create something of yourself. That's one of my real goals in life, to create beauty. There is enough ugly." As Meg describes her need to quilt, she reveals that she has a close personal connection to her quilts, which she views as personal artistic effort. Cassie explains how she puts herself into each quilt that she makes: "I feel like when I do quilt, it's giving so much of myself into it, and even if it's picking out a panel, it's picking out one that I think the other person will like, and then I can think about them during it." Not only is Cassie deeply involved in deciding how to make a gift quilt personally meaningful, but she also invests a great deal of emotion into the process of quilting.

Women describe their quilting experiences as a serious commitment. Kelly recalls that when she first got really involved in quilting, it encompassed her life: “When you get into a new area of learning about something that you didn’t know anything about before, it just permeates your life.” Heather traces the growth of her commitment to quilting, realizing how her relationship with her quilts has become more intense over time. By focusing on the connections she has to her quilts, Heather stresses the deep meaning embedded within them:

I stopped talking about my quilts in terms of their value simply because of how long it took me to do it. It’s like quantifying something of value based on math rather than based on the thing. I used to feel like I had to justify why I considered them worthwhile. I hope that I talk about them more based on how I felt doing them, if I like them, if I think they’re successful, what I like about them. Just be more willing to interact with them and speak about them from that intuitive side rather than that efficiency side.

When talking with others about her quilting, Heather used to express the worth of her quilts through the traditional measures of time and money. She has since become more aware of the external product-related standards. She now talks about her quilts as they are important to her in light of her personal, artistic, and self-expression standards.

Society Level Benefits of Quilting

Women use quilts and the quilting process as a way of forming lasting bonds with family, friends, and with other quilters. Quilting provides a venue through which women can establishing and maintain their personal and family legacy, while still devoting time to

rejuvenating the self. The society level comprises forging bonds with others, and establishing a legacy for oneself as a quilter.

Forging Bonds with Others

While Cassie was preparing for her wedding, she struggled to find an appropriate and meaningful gift to give to her husband. His mother, her mother and grandmother, and Cassie, all quilt. She decided to link the women in her fiancé's life symbolically in making a quilt for him:

As a sign of unity between our families, I bought all the fabric and sent a quarter of it to my mom, to his mom and my grandmother, and kept one for me. They pieced parts of the top and I arranged the four pieces and quilted it. I put everyone's initials on it. I love it. It's the perfect sit-on-the-couch kind of quilt.

This quilt holds a significant everyday place of importance in Cassie's life and home now.

Although the quilt is not hers, it serves as a daily reinforcement of her marriage and the common interests bonding her, her family, and her husband's family.

Kelly provides an example of the use of quilting as a means to foster family bonding.

As a graduate student, Kelly found it difficult to communicate with her family about her dissertation, as she was the first in her family to pursue a doctoral degree. When attending a recent family event at her parents' house, she brought a quilt to work on while there. Kelly and her father are not able to discuss her doctorate experience comfortably, but quilting turned out to be a way through which he and Kelly could communicate effectively:

My dad had just redecorated part of the house, the dining room. We were having the family over for Thanksgiving and my aunts and uncles were saying, 'Oh this is really

pretty, the dining room looks so great.’ My dad said, ‘Do you want to see something really beautiful? Come on in here.’ He said, ‘Kelly, show them your quilt stuff.’ That was what he was wanting them to see. I mean he wanted them to see the redecorated room, but the thing that was so beautiful to him was not the room, but that I was working on a quilt. I almost cried. It made me feel a part of my family in a way that I almost never do.

Connections with family are important to quilters, as are feeling connected to other quilters. Linda comments on the family-like ties that a common interest in quilting engenders:

It’s like being in the same neighborhood. It’s like growing up in the same neighborhood and when you find out that someone is a quilter, it helps bring a bond with that person. Someone that you may have just met and they say ‘Oh wow, you quilt too.’ Then that opens up certain things about that person. It tells you about that person without defining, I guess it speaks for itself because and of course part of that is because we have invested those kinds of feelings in ourselves and we tend to feel that if someone else shares those kinds of interests they also have those same kinds of values and characteristics and capabilities.

Certainly, as a variety of women participate in quilting, they do not agree on everything within or outside of quilting activities. However, when quilters are together, if they have nothing else in common, they can usually carry on a pleasant conversation about quilting. In these instances, quilting becomes the unifying force and helps women to overcome differences that they might otherwise have.

Quilting helps women establish and maintain bonds with friends and family members. People generally respond positively to quilts, and quilts provide a means through which quilters and non-quilters can communicate. Quilters make connections with each other through interest in quilting, and links women to important people in their lives.

Establishing A Legacy

Sandy finds quilting to be satisfying because she is consciously leaving an historical record of significant events in her and her family's life through her finished quilts:

I just want to make more and more quilts and have them stack up. I want to be able to document them and let people know what was happening in the world at the time.

Different quilts remind me of different times in my life.

Sandy also is a crafter, but she values her quilts the most. She believes that her quilts, unlike her prior craft efforts, will be appreciated greatly by her family and treated as valuable heirlooms after she dies:

About the last ten years I've stuck with quilting and I can't finish my quilts fast enough because I've always got another one or two or three in my head that I want to do. At least these are useable and they'll be heirlooms and not sold at a garage sale with my cross stitch pillows.

Sandy likes quilts because they represent her as a creative person. Through her quilts, she is knowingly documenting her personal experiences. She is relying on her quilts to outlast her and to become legacies to future generations of her family.

Chelsea realizes that her children may or may not take up quilting themselves. Since she enjoys introducing people to the process of quilting, Chelsea passes on her quilting

knowledge to other interested audiences. Although the classes she teaches do not pay her very well, and take up valuable personal quilting time, she continues to devote time to teaching others how to quilt. Chelsea explains why she continues to teach other women how to quilt:

I was at one of the Christmas guild meetings and everybody said their name and how they began quilting. And about every other woman said *my class*. And then they said it has been so great. That is such a *wow* to have been able to be the person who got somebody going and feeling confident with something that allowed them to be creative.

Through her teaching, Chelsea has established a community of women who have learned to quilt under her guidance, thus helping to create and support a local community of quilters.

Michelle views quilting as an essential component to her family life, and she draws on historical notions of quilting and women's lives to define why she values quilting. She interprets quilting to be an art form based on these notions, and she is incorporating it into her contemporary life:

It's preserving an art form and cherishing these women that just did this on a regular basis without any pat on the back or just provided something for their family. I think it's just saying you had a worthwhile thing going there. I hope it never disappears.

Finally, Theresa shares with me her hopes for the future of quilting, noting with pleasure that younger women like myself are becoming involved in quilting:

I really enjoy it. I hope you do, too. I wish that I were, I wish that I had started it thirty years ago so that I would have that much more time to quilt. I really wish that. I'm thrilled that you guys who are young are doing this, because you'll enjoy it all your life,

you truly will. I keep telling my daughters to do this, but they're not quite ready to listen to me yet (laughter).

Extending the Self: Quilts as Finished Products

What a quilt means and how it is to be used is different for every woman who makes them. Generally quilters want their quilts to be used and enjoyed for their appropriate purposes, including comfort, display, and commemoration. Women speak positively about people to whom they have given quilts as gifts. They are hopeful that the recipients use the quilts appropriately, or in accordance with the maker's expectations. The quilt can serve as an extension of the quilter, representing her artistic creativity and her attachment to the person who receives the quilt. When gift quilts are used differently from the quiltmaker's intention, she has to deal with the additional meaning attached to the quilt but the symbolism surrounding the quilt is still present. The finished quilt is so much a part of the quilter, when a quilter gives a quilt as a gift, she is giving something of herself, thus, when people mistreat a quilt, they feel as though they themselves are being mistreated.

Quilters are attached to both the process of quilting, as well as the finished products. What happens after the quilt is finished is also part of the quilting process, with quilters continuing to be involved in the meaning-making process of defining its function. The purposes can include use, display, or putting the quilt away for safekeeping. Women intend certain things to happen to quilts when they are finished, and can become disappointed when quilts are used in ways other than their original intentions. In many ways, how people respond to gifts represents how people respond to the gift giver, and can often cause anxiety in the giver (Schwartz 1967; Wooten 2000). If a hand-made gift is misused, quilters can take it personally

as disrespect for their creative efforts, and a mishandling of the existing relationship between them. Recipients mostly see the finished product, and can usually only imagine the process. Recipients tend to focus on the finished product of the quilt are not typically privy to the richly detailed and meaningful process embedded in every stitch.

Quilts are meaning-laden objects. As a quilt is passed from its creator to its receiver, ownership changes, and new meanings are attached to the object. As far as the quiltmaker is concerned, even though it is a gift, a quilt carries with it the meaning the maker attached to it. When women give quilts as gifts, the recipients have ownership of the quilt, and they also have the opportunity to interpret the quilt and attach their own cultural meanings to it. Sometimes the multiple meanings attached by maker and recipient concur, while other times they clash. Quilters perceive and share these additional meanings attached to quilts.

Karen gave one of her early attempts at quilting to her mother: “I decided for Christmas that year, that I’d give that quilt to my mother. She thought it was so pretty, but that was the ugliest quilt. (laughing).” Learning to quilt was challenging for Karen, and she was not entirely happy with her finished products, but she enjoyed the process and continuing the legacy of quilting in her family.

Carrie gave the first bed sized quilt she made to her mother. Her mother died soon after, and Carrie placed the quilt in the coffin with her mother’s body. She shared the reasons why she decided to give her mother the quilt, and how people reacted to this:

I gave it to my mom and everybody really made a comment, ‘Your first quilt and you’re giving it away?’ Well, yeah, I didn’t think anything wrong with that. My mom had always done so much and it was the least I could do. The poor thing, I’ve never made

her anything. She was always so cold and I didn't want anyone else to have it, it was hers. My husband thought it was really nice, but that's about it. I don't really tell anybody, I don't know why, I don't really talk about it, but it meant a lot to me because it was just for her, nobody else. I didn't want my sister to get it, I didn't want my brother to go and ruin it and put it underneath a car.

Carrie is particular about who receives her quilts. She bases her decisions somewhat on how she thinks they might care for them. Melinda also shares a concern in giving quilts away as gifts to people who might not appreciate them:

I don't know if the people I'm making it for will really appreciate it. One thing I'm a little concerned about is giving my seven year old this quilt. He's still pretty young. Jumping on the bed will probably rip out all those stitches that I did, but he's so proud of it, he knows it's his. And eventually maybe he'll take it to college and he'll remember me and all this kind of stuff and maybe it'll be loved even if it gets ruined or something, he'll remember how long it took mom to make this.

Melinda's fears are not outlandish, especially when considering how quilters react when their quilts are used in ways that conflict with the quiltmaker's intent. For example, Emma recalls discovering that a child was not allowed to use a quilt she had made for him:

I was kind of disappointed when I went to see my friends. My daughter asked, 'Where's the quilt?' And the lady said, 'Oh, I put it away so nothing happens to it.' I asked, 'Why did you put it away like that?' She said, 'Well, it's so pretty I don't want anything to happen to it.' But, then nobody got to enjoy it because it was just stashed

away. So, I decided to make less elaborate things so that people would feel more comfortable using them.

Now when you give quilts away, do you talk to people about how you put it together and what you intended it for?

Yeah, actually now when I send a quilt, I send a little sheet and I explain why I picked that pattern and how much fun it was to make it, and I hope the kids will like to crawl on it and stuff. I also explain how you can wash it.

Note that Emma has not stopped making quilts for others. Instead, she makes quilts for others more appropriate for use and provides necessary maintenance information.

Other women are also aware that their quilts are not used in the ways they intended.

Theresa speculates about her daughter-in-law, for whom she has made a bed-sized quilt:

Has anybody not used a quilt you have given them?

Probably. My daughter in law doesn't use it very often and I keep telling her to use it.

She says, 'Mom, it's too good to use' and I said, 'No, it really isn't.'

I asked Theresa why it mattered to her what people do with gifts she has made them. She responded as follows:

I don't know, I just really want them to use the quilts. My grandchildren all have my quilts hanging on the wall, and they're to be touched and loved and hugged and if they want to drag them around I don't care, that's what they're for. And it really pleases me when I go to their house that they're hanging on the wall instead of in the cupboard.

Cassie shares her response to discovering that her hand-made gifts were being stored and were not being used daily. Importantly, Cassie realizes that she relinquishes control over how the quilt is used once it is finished and given as a gift:

I was babysitting and looking for pajamas to change the little boy into. I pulled open a drawer, and there was the quilt that I had made with a couple of afghans I had made. It first kind of gets you in the stomach because you think, 'Oh, maybe they just really didn't like it,' and then you think, 'Well it probably serves its purpose at some point.' Of course I would want every little child to take my quilt and have it be the one that they are attached to but I know that doesn't happen. I'm fine with that. I'd love to say that I'm more reluctant to give it to people that don't quilt, but that's not true. I don't really make that judgment.

Cassie is aware of the effort and intent behind the gift. In giving the quilt away, she hopes that those receiving the gift will appreciate it and find use with it. The disappointment Cassie expresses initially upon discovering that her hand-made gift was not being used becomes less important than the actual gesture of making and giving the gift.

Quilters also share the joy they feel when their quilting process and products are appreciated and validated by others. Heather recounts the positive feedback she gets when people find out she is a quilter:

Everybody always responds very positively to the notion of quilting. Most people will immediately tell you a story of their favorite quilt or that they quilt. I probably have gotten much more positive reinforcement for doing it than most.

Similarly, Loretta made a commemorative quilt for her son as he completed his military duty. Making this quilt was a deeply emotional process for her, and as she gave it to him, she was pleased with his response:

I think he was awestruck. He just kind of looked at it, he didn't really believe it. He's so proud of it. He would show it to everybody and it's got the place of honor. That's his quilt. When he first got home he took it out and would lay down on the couch and curl up in it. After a while he folded it back up and put it in the safe we've got so it's in its honored position. He's real excited because we're going to have it in the [quilt] show this year. If it does win something, I think it'll thrill him to death. I think it will thrill him more than it will me.

Once quilts are finished, many quilters give their labors of love away to friends and family members. The relationship between the creator of the quilt and the receiver of the quilt is important to the quiltmakers (Griswold 1994). Women sometimes take personally what happens (or does not happen) to the quilt once they give it away. Quilters indicate that they are still somewhat attached to the quilt as a cultural object, they have their own meaning attached to it, while the receivers are also creating meaning and attaching it to the quilt. Women's comments reveal that in some instances, quilts are extensions of themselves, and represent the carework they are doing for others through their quilting efforts. As women give quilts away as gifts, they are also giving part of themselves away to the receiver, and want to be treated with respect, in accordance with the production and gifting of said quilt.

Conclusion

Women offer deeply meaningful and complex reasons for why they quilt. Women's reasons for quilting developed into two distinct categories centered at the personal and the societal levels of quilters' lives. The process of quilting benefits women individually, and the finished products of quilts benefit quilters as well as those around them. Additionally, the medium of finished quilts and the process of quilting offer endless opportunities for artistic and self expression.

Many women describe that the process of quilting puts them into a different zone of thinking. This different zone closely resembles the concept of flow, posed by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1995). Isolating and directing psychic energy positively comprises the flow of certain activities: "From the individual's point of view, the ability to invest psychic energy freely is the prerequisite toward achieving self-control. The exercise of self-control is experienced as an enjoyable state of inner order" (1995: 10). The inner order resulting from a flow of activity accurately depicts how women describe their quilting experiences. Women participate intensively and ritualistically in quilting. In doing so, they lose themselves in the activity, and yet continue to define themselves through the same activity. They experience loss of control as well as exercise self-control through quilting.

As quilting is an important part of women's core identities, they seek emotional support from their family members and close friends for their quilting activities. Through this support, or at the very least, a minimal understanding for their creative efforts, quilters want respect for what they are involved in, as well as control over some parts of their lives. Much of these women's lives, especially those with spouses and children, are devoted to family needs rather

than personal needs (Kallet and Cofer 1999; Romero and Stewart 1999). A personally satisfying activity such as quilting provides women a much needed refuge from their families, to renew their creative energies, and continue catering to family needs.

CHAPTER 6

A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: WOMEN'S CREATIVE SPACE IN THE HOME

Introduction

Personal creative space can provide important insights into women's lives. Quilting activities and the spaces in which they occur in the home denote such creative spaces, signaling women's freedom to engage in personal at-home leisure. Creative spaces devoted to women's leisure challenge the historical patterns of distribution of space by gender in the contemporary household. Typically it is men's leisure activities, more so than women's, that receive more space.

Quilting space fulfills a number of needs for quilters. It makes room for fabric and quilting equipment, and provides a private haven in which women can spend needed leisure time. Women's quilting spaces range from a designated chair or corner in a living room, the kitchen table during allotted times, a cabinet or shelf for storage, a quilt room that doubles as a guest room, and for some women, an entire room in the house reserved solely for quilting. The space itself and the time that women spend in it (as well as the time that women spend outside the home in quilting-related activities) are indicators of how involved women are in quilting. The physical space, as well as the spending of time quilting inside or outside the home, can become a point of contention for quilters and their families as women carve out such resources for

personal leisure activities. Through their interviews, quilters reiterated the importance of having personal creative space that they can escape to during their hectic, everyday lives.

Developing and maintaining a quilting life comes with challenges. Challenges stem not only from the enjoyable creative struggle to quilt, but also from their social networks, including friends and family. Many women employ integrative strategies to merge their quilting activities into already established life patterns. They break down quilt projects into smaller units that are more mobile and that they can take with them when they leave the house to tend to family duties (e.g., carpools, family vacations, taking children to participate in extra-curricular activities). Just as a quilter pieces together fabric, she also pieces together different components of her life. These components are sometimes peaceful, and sometimes conflicting. Creative spaces in the home and how they are used provide important insight into families, gender relations, and women's freedom to comfortably participate in quilting activities.

Quilting Spaces

Quilting spaces within the home exist on a continuum, ranging from public space in easy view of family and visitors to a separate, secluded room. Some women have quilting space apart from common family space, in a basement or attic. A smaller number of women rent space outside the home in which to store materials and spend time quilting, usually referred to as a quilt studio. In this study, two women (2.8%) have rented space outside their homes solely for their quilting needs. Twenty women (28.5%) have some permanently allocated space within the home in which they store their quilting materials and have sewing machines set up. Those with permanent quilting space in the home usually occupy rooms that have additional purposes. These rooms also serve as guest rooms, junk rooms, or bedrooms of children who are away at

college but come home occasionally to occupy the room. The remaining forty-eight women in this study (68%) lack permanent quilting space. Most of these women have spaces in various parts of the home to store materials and equipment. When women without permanent quilting spaces find the time to quilt, they take materials from their storage spaces, set up, and then take down the equipment and return it to its storage space. The time block they could devote solely to the creative process of quilting is cut short by set-up and take-down time.

Having a quilting room does not mean that women go to the room only to quilt. Rather, women want to have a space in their home that they can call their own, where they can “leave a mess and close the door if company comes over” (Field Notes 1999). It is also a space that is mostly off limits to the rest of the family and becomes a great hiding place for incoming additions to the fabric collection, or what quilters call their *fabric stash*.

The Fabric Stash

In their creative work process, painters and potters must have access to raw materials before they begin. They mix paints and clay and water to a desired, functional state. Despite changes in painting and pottery supplies over time, these artists have some control over their raw materials and can readily find needed supplies. Quilters deal with a different set of raw materials. Fabric companies produce particular designs by season, with many quilt stores having a limited supply of any given fabric. Women buying new fabric regularly are at the mercy of the market for what textures, styles, and designs are attainable and affordable. Perhaps due to this supply-controlled relationship between supply and demand, quilters overdo it when buying fabric: “When I see something I like, I buy a lot of it because I know if I don’t, it will be gone when I come back to buy more.”

A quality fabric collection is an essential component of a quilter's life. A painter puts paint to canvas, a potter throws clay on a wheel, and a quilter creates quilts with fabric. Many quilters describe quilting as "a way of painting with fabric." In order to paint with fabric, quilters need access to and possession of a large variety of fabrics, many of the fabrics being new, rather than scraps of fabric from family clothing. Quilters refer to their fabric collections as *fabric stash*, or *stash*. Many women store their fabric in a cleaned-out clothes closet or utility closet somewhere in the home, and arrange fabric by color. By arranging fabric in this way, quilters can easily see what their fabric palettes will provide them. They then can quickly assess which fabrics will work with any given project, or if they need to shop for new fabrics. Importantly, by having fabric stash available in this way, quilters simply have to open the closet door to have immediate access to fabric.

Meg justifies her large fabric stash because she lives in the country, away from town and fabric stores:

The fabric stash is your palette. See, I justify it [fabric stash] because I live so far out. I can't just run down the street and get thread or get another piece of fabric. If I don't have it, it's an effort to get in the car and go for half an hour to get fabric. So I have a *real* justification for all my stash (laughter).

Quilters buy fabric for multiple reasons: for a specific project, it was on sale, or they need a particular color or type of fabric. And, sometimes, fabric just catches their eye and whispers to them in the store to bring it home. Acquiring fabric can be a gleeful experience. Beth describes her friend who became ecstatic about her fabric purchase:

My friend had ordered fabric from a national company through the mail and when her fabric came it was like GASP! I said she was having an *orgasm* just looking at the fabric! She said, ‘There are *solids* I have *never seen!*’

Women who quilt admittedly collect more fabric than they probably will ever use. Theresa realizes that she has a lot of quilting materials, evidenced by the amount of money she’s invested in quilting: “I have far too much money wrapped up into my quilting. But it’s really been cheap entertainment. And when I start quilting, I just have to get right through it until I am done.” Although she feels she has gone a bit overboard on collecting quilting materials, Theresa implies that her positive quilting experience is harmless entertainment.

Accumulating, storing and hiding fabric stash is normal to quilters, and yet these acts are deviant to some, particularly those who share living space with quilters. Having a stash legitimates their claim as quilters. But the meaning of the stash is different for quilters and for their families and friends. Women’s anxieties around acquiring, paying for, and storing their stash highlights their diminished ability, relative to men, to pursue leisure activities without a stigma. Having a private space outside or inside the home makes storing the stash much easier.

Depending on the quilter and her space, she arranges her fabric in a way that best suits her: project, color, fabric type (e.g., solids, patterns, reproductions, hand dyed, marbled, batiks). Regardless of how much money any given quilter has, she is willing to devote some resources in equipment. A 2000 survey reports that the “average dedicated quilter” spends \$1556 annually on quilting materials, roughly a little over \$100 a month (Leman Publications 2000). Women in this study reported similar tenets of expenditure. For those involved in quilting at the level of serious leisure, quilting can be costly, both in time and monetary

measures. Yet women continue to do it. The majority of women in this study have formal work experience and have been responsible for work at home and in the paid labor market. An overwhelming majority of women in this study (94%) have participated in some form of paid work outside the home. As only 24 women are currently retired from paid work, 46 women (66%) are currently juggling work (paid and unpaid) with family obligations. Spouses are also a reality in many of these women's lives, as 65 (93%) have marital experience (3 divorced, 10 widowed), and only five women (7%) have never married. Fifty-five of these women (78%) have children in addition to spouses.

Hiding the Fabric Stash

Often women strategize with other quilters to deceive their husbands about the costs of their quilting. They distort information about the amount of money they spend on quilting materials, the accumulated mass of quilting materials they have already purchased, and where the quilting materials are kept. One legendary tale was passed on to me in a group interview where the women were sharing their stash stories. The women work together at a fabric store in the western US, and were remembering their more colorful customers. Tracy shared that “one woman took all of the food out of her freezer and lined the freezer bottom with her fabric and put the food on top so her husband never knew.”

While discussing this fabric stash-hiding genius, the women seemed somewhat conflicted. They admired her for finding such a good hiding place, but were saddened by the deceit they practice in order to continue to quilt. As the conversation progressed, Carrie recounted her own dilemma. Since Carrie works at a fabric store, she is perpetually tempted by fabric. She came home after working late one night and unexpectedly encountered her still-

awake husband. Faced with exposing her most recent fabric stash purchase, Carrie thought quickly to hide her newest fabric purchase.

One time I brought home a big bag of fabric and I'm thinking, he's usually asleep. I come in and he's awake, and I have this huge bag. And I remember opening the door and I said, 'Oh you're up.' I dropped the bag, so it's sitting out on the porch, under the mailbox. So I'm thinking I'll just get it when he goes to bed. We'll watch *Friends* and we'll go to sleep, or he'll go to sleep. Well, he ran outside to the van to go get whatever, his planner or something and he comes back in and he says, 'Did you forget something?' I went, 'Oh.' And he just put it on the couch and shook his head and said, 'Good Night.' That was the last time I hid fabric. I was so embarrassed because he caught me. He caught me.

Similarly, Melinda remembers the first time she hid fabric from her family:

I read a book about fabric-aholics and I thought, 'Oh, I'm getting to that point.' One day I worked an evening shift, I left some of my fabric in the car, in the back of the car, and I thought, 'Oh I'll just get it tomorrow, my husband will be gone.' I think he had the day off and I'm thinking, 'Oh this plan is not working because now he's going to see me bringing it in during the day.' It's amazing what you do just to hide.

Loretta's stash-hiding stories are also similar, but she realizes that she does not have to hide her fabric because her spouse is quite supportive of her quilting activities. Yet, she still feels the need to guard this part of her life from non-quilters, as if she were hiding a stigmatized addiction:

I have fabric in the trunk of my car, and it's so dumb, my husband does not care. I'll go buy stuff and leave it in the trunk, and after everybody goes to sleep I'll go get it and take it in the house. Now why? They don't care. It's just like you know that you're obsessed, so I guess it's like a bulimic person, you don't want anybody to know that you're eating, although they know you are, so you sneak it and you hide it, and then when it gets melted in there with everything else nobody knows.

It all looks the same to them. Does it have anything to do with the fact that it's yours, it's just yours?

Yeah. I can think of the accomplishment I felt within myself when I finally got a sewing room. And it's just mine, because when you're raising a family, you are doing for everybody else and making quilts gives you an accomplishment.

Although Carrie no longer hides fabric, her family continues to give her difficulty about her fabric stash and her quilting. Carrie used to keep her quilting materials on the dining room table as a temporary quilting space. When she was finally able to move her materials to a permanent quilting space in the basement, even her extended family noticed:

I have a section of the basement now. I took up the dining room for about four years and I was really embarrassed the other day. My sister-in-law said, 'When did you buy that?' referring to the dining room table, and I said, 'Four years ago.' It was embarrassing. I said, 'Didn't you know that's what my fabric sat on?' I mean, they knew my fabric was sitting on there, why couldn't they figure it was sitting on something? My father-in-law said, 'Hey you moved your stuff.' I said, 'Yes.' I didn't know it was so big.

The concept of stash is not restricted to quilters, for other crafters such as weavers, knitters, and women who crochet also refer to their collection of raw materials necessary for their type of cultural production as stash (Field Notes 1999). The fabric stash represents important and revealing elements in quilters' lives. Fabric collections and the space they take up reveal the primacy of women's identities as quilters within the home. Quilters with in-home access to quilting materials can make quilts continuously. It is also visual proof to those who visit their homes that they are quilters.

The presence of a fabric stash does not ensure that women are always able to find materials to work with for every project. Cassie has a fabric stash, but what fabric she has on hand does not always meet upcoming projects. This makes it necessary to go shopping for more quilt materials. She realizes that her husband views the stash differently, as he refers to it as a "stockpile" rather than a stash (Field Notes 2000). Before embarking on a new quilting project, she checks her stash to see if what she has will work: "I always out of quilt go to the stash first. I'll at least go through it before I look at a store to buy more fabric."

Gendered Creative Spaces

Hardware commercials and print advertisements in particular provide us a mental template to understand how quilters set up their quilting spaces. A current hardware commercial advertises gifts for "the special man in your life." It pictures a workshop space with a waist-high table and a pegboard panel covering the wall. As the commercial proceeds, the pegboard wall slowly fills up with workshop tools: a hammer, pliers, drill, saw, etc. These tools are generally part of our common culture. Even if we do not personally handle hardware tools, we most probably know what they are. We are surrounded by "men's" things everyday, like

easily recognizable hardware tools, and it is legitimate that such items take up storage space in the home.

The public is less familiar with the tools of quilting. If women's quilting spaces were advertised in similar ways, it is not clear that the general public would be able to recognize and name the difference between a quilter's basic tools (e.g., sewing machine, quilt frame, needles, thread, rotary cutter, cutting mat). Women are aware that while most outsiders recognize what a finished quilt is, many non-quilters are quite unfamiliar to both the processes and tools involved in quilting. For example, a recent advertising campaign for "quilted" toilet paper originally depicted quilters sitting around a piece of toilet paper, quilting it with knitting needles instead of quilting needles. Knitting needles range from 8 inches to 15 inches long and are used with yarn, while quilting needles range approximately from 1 to 1 ½ inches and are used with thread. Only after an immediate negative response from quilters nationwide did the company pull the television commercial and alter it. The cartoon quilters were then using quilting needles, but ones that were the same size as knitting needles. Currently, the commercial depicts needles more in proportion to the cartoon quilters' bodies (Stalp 1999).

Women's quilting spaces greatly resemble men's leisure time and hobby work spaces, such as the one described in the hardware commercial. Some quilters use pegboard panels to line the walls of their rooms, hanging quilting tools on hooks: rotary cutters, rulers, quilting hoops, pattern templates for quilt blocks and quilting designs. More elaborate spaces are filled with such things as cabinets, closets, sewing machines, and ironing boards. Also desirable in a quilt room are waist-high tables for cutting out fabric and basting quilts, and tables which one sits at to do machine sewing.

Part of the quilting process is designing a special quilt or deciding which quilt to make next. Women use design walls to lay out plans for their next quilt, or to mount the quilt in pieces as they move along in the assembly process. A design wall consists of a piece of fabric (usually flannel) stretched across a firm, flat surface. This surface leans against a wall, is secured to a wall, or can be free standing. A design wall provides a large surface which most fabrics will stick to once laid upon it, and can take up an entire wall in a room, having many projects attached to it, or one large quilt. Viewing a quilt vertically rather than horizontally gives quilters needed perspective to determine balance, color selection, and overall design. When placing a quilt on the design wall, many quilters take photographs of the quilt-in-progress to see it from yet another perspective. Having adequate space to view quilts during the assembly process is definitely helpful to quilters. Theresa shares how the design wall plays a role in her quilting process:

My husband has put up a design wall, and I absolutely love it, so all these tools help.

The thing that I like probably the very best is the designing. Once I get this idea and then to get it down on paper and then the quilting.

Having equipment and fabric readily available is a significant part of many women's quilting processes. Theresa, who has a specific room for her quilting activities, has a design wall and a closet with built-in shelves for her fabric, similar to the fabric collections shown visually throughout this paper. She talks about the convenience of having her materials with her in the same room:

When I sew, I'm very messy (laughing). When I'm working on something, I just pull all my fabric. And as I use it I throw it on the floor, because if I need another piece of it, then it's right there and I don't have to search through the greens or whatever. It's just chaos, that's the way it works.

A Room of One's Own

Women describe their quilting spaces in great detail, which is indicative of the important role that quilting plays in their lives. As Chelsea described her quilting spaces to me, she also presented a wish list of how she someday wanted to improve her room to accommodate her precise quilting needs. Currently Chelsea dyes her fabric outside in the garden, although she would prefer to have space to dye fabric in her quilting room:

I've got the computer, a cutting table, a lot of fabric, lots of books. I guess it's about ten by fourteen feet. Then I have a bigger space in the basement with a print table. I have a little space outside where I dye fabric. The only thing I would really like, if you could magically, I would love to have a deep sink and counter, and [have the water] not go into the septic tank.

Loretta describes her quilting space in similar ways, noting that it was once her daughter's bedroom:

Well, when one of my kids moved out I took her bedroom over, and it's probably twelve by twelve, and it is so crammed full. I have a table with a sewing machine and the closet is now shelves with fabric stash, shelves all around the walls with batting.

Some quilters referred to their quilting areas as their quilt studio, their place to keep their quilting materials whether or not they actually did work in that space. Having the space

was important to these women, because it was *their* space. For example, Beth appreciates having a quilting space that is all hers:

It's kind of nice having this room, I don't have to quilt on my kitchen table, so I'm real lucky to have this space. My husband has his computer space, so why shouldn't I have my sewing room? There is nobody else at home and nobody else accountable so I can do stuff like that which is kind of good, I do what I want to.

Loretta shares her reasons for having a quilt room, noting that she stores not only quilt materials but also other personally-meaningful materials in that space:

I love it because I have collections in there, a picture of me and my daddy when I was a little girl, paraphernalia that people have given me. It's just so comforting because everywhere I look there's a memory and I go in there. One of my friends bought me a little waterfall and I have that on. And I don't turn music on and I don't have anything in there, just that little waterfall thing. I just love the solitude. And it is, it's kind of like an oasis away from everything. I can sit for four or five hours without moving and quilt and the time just flies by, it's like a catharsis. Just soothing to your soul, it really is.

Having a room of one's own in which to quilt is related to age and affluence. Younger newly married women, women living with roommates, or women with small children at home had quilting areas rather than quilt rooms. Many older women converted bedrooms into quilt rooms once their children left home. Women looking for a new house or building a house made certain to select one that included a sewing room, or at least a guest bedroom that could double as a quilt room when the guests leave: "they bought this house which is a split level, and the bottom floor is one large room and the garage, the large room is hers to work in, and she said

that they bought this house with the intention that this room would be hers” (Field Notes 1999).

Karla shares how she got her quilt room:

I have a room. When we bought this house my husband had said, ‘We only need two bedrooms.’ I said, ‘No, we don’t, we need three.’ He asked, ‘Why?’ Well, I need a room, and we need a guest room. He finally agreed, but he did not know my ulterior motive was to have a sewing room, a craft room.

Similarly, Linda’s quilt room was a space that they planned for when she and her husband built their house:

We built the home that we are living in now and I decided that I wanted to have a room that I could have for my sewing. I could spread out my work materials and I could just shut the door. So I have a beautiful table, and a walk-in closet that has shelving for my material.

Women with quilt rooms were envied by others in this study.

Longing For A Room

Quilters without specific quilting spaces in the home wish for such a room. They lament the time it takes them to unpack their materials, set up, work and then take the equipment down again, so that the family can again use the space. Quilting is time and labor intensive, and can be expensive. However, the monetary and physical costs are outweighed by the pleasure that women derive while quilting. In addition to physical and material challenges, women suffer emotional costs in garnering time and space to quilt. Similar to women writers, quilters take on additional burdens in quilting, such as having to incorporate their quilting into other aspects of life, cutting corners to steal time away to quilt, and feeling guilty because they are devoting time

to themselves and an activity they greatly enjoy when there are family-centered duties they feel obligated to perform.

When Sarah married, she moved into her husband's house, which does not have a specific room for a quilting space for her. Before she married, Sarah was living alone and did have quilting space in her apartment. Negotiating space generally, and quilting space specifically, is a challenge she and her husband face as a newly married couple. Sarah comments on the amount of space it takes her to quilt effectively:

The more space you have though, I think it is easier to work on stuff. Now especially I have to almost work on what I'm working with and then put it away, and drag out something else. I mean it's alright, I'm getting it done.

So, if your husband ever goes away for the weekend, what would happen?

(Laughing) There would be fabric from one end of the house to the other. I think I would just use it as an opportunity to spread out more.

Having a specific space allows quilters to experience their quilting process more freely, and temporary spaces such as Sarah's shapes how she experiences leisure through quilting. She feels more free to spread out her materials as she needs them when her spouse is not at home. When he is at home, then, she works with her materials in a more contained, and presumably less ideal space.

Securing a quilting room of one's own depends upon a variety of factors in women's lives, such as class, age, children's ages, and available space in the house. Women's quilting areas range from a designated chair or corner in a living room, the kitchen table during allotted

times or days, or a cabinet or shelf for storage. Cassie's quilting space is considerably smaller than most quilters' spaces in this study, and yet it is powerfully meaningful to her:

This is my little quilting area, which I love. I feel like this little corner of the world is mine and I try to keep it organized. If I'm sitting here and can just pull it up and that's it, then I can start going and do it for a half an hour, that's a half hour more that I would get done.

Cassie's quilting corner takes up little space in the living room, especially since she does all her quilting by hand and does not need space to set up a sewing machine. As she stores her materials in a cabinet away from her quilting corner, only the project she is currently hand quilting is out in the open. Some projects that Cassie works on require more space and time than her corner allows. Cassie and her husband argue about how much space her quilting takes up in the home, although her husband currently occupies the extra bedroom as his home office and definitely takes up more square footage than she does for personal use. Cassie shares her frustration about this, and also how she plans to resolve the space issues with a quilting room of her own:

He does complain when quilting takes over, or especially when I have a quilt out for six weeks. I'll say, 'Well, unfortunately, this is common space.' I definitely don't try to be bitchy about it, but I told him that when we buy a house I'm having my own sewing room and it's going to be mine and he can come in sometimes.

In her mind, Cassie has moved beyond just talking about the room. She has planned out what it will look like, and she actively shares that vision with her husband as they make plans to buy a house:

I have these visions of what I want and lots of light and baskets full of fabric and a chair that's so comfortable, with pretty walls with quilts on the walls and a tile floor. I have it all mapped out in my mind. Whenever we look at a house and we see a standard formal house and there's a side room that some people make into a breakfast room I say, 'That's going to be my quilting room, that's going to be it. You've had your own room for a long time.' I want a space that's mine.

Patricia also longs for a more convenient space in which to quilt. She lives in a two story farmhouse and has her equipment spread throughout the house:

Well I have a sewing room, it's kind of a room upstairs at the top of our steps. It's kind of a half hallway where I have my sewing machine. I've had my sewing machine downstairs, too, but I put it upstairs a couple of years ago. Most of it I do up there although upstairs is still not set up really well. That room isn't big enough for cutting out and then I have to bring everything down to the kitchen table to cut it out and then take it up to the sewing machine. Hand work and stuff I just sit by the chair and a lamp. I usually have a basket full of stuff sitting there. But I would say that all of my machine work is done upstairs.

The upstairs room, where her machine is, is not large enough for all her quilting tasks beyond sewing such as designing, cutting and ironing fabric. She uses other common family space to hand quilt and has even used the kitchen table to sew on. The kitchen is large enough, but because it is frequently used for other purposes, she has to take down her equipment for family needs:

My daughter and I set two machines up on the kitchen table. We both sewed at the same time and had the ironing board there and everything. But you know as far as having a really nice sewing space I don't have that. I see a lot of people that have a big room and they have their ironing board, they have everything right there.

Patricia realizes the potential of a quilt room and sees other quilters with specific, and adequate space in which to quilt. She wants a "really nice sewing space."

Incorporating the Quilting Process and the Family

Both family and friends and quilting are important to these women. Therefore, they strive to integrate family time with quilting by preparing quilt projects to fold into already-established family activities. They prepare smaller pieces of a larger project that they can work on by hand instead of by machine. These smaller projects are mobile, and work in a variety of family-centered situations: long car trips, family vacations, watching television, waiting for children while driving the neighborhood car pool, watching children at sporting events, and other extracurricular activities. These strategies help quilters enjoy the quilting process while spending important time with their families. Incorporating quilting into family life helps quilters deal with the guilt they sometimes feel while quilting.

By spending time quilting, some women feel that they are using time selfishly that could be devoted to the family. Realizing this, Meg taught quilting classes and designed projects that had quilters' busy lifestyles in mind:

I taught lap quilting where you quilted one block at a time and then put the quilt together with the blocks already quilted. This appeals so much, because women could take it with them, while they were waiting for kids, while they were car pooling. Those that

work could do it at their lunch hour, they could do it watching television at night. It kept them within the family instead of taking them out of the family. Because I think women don't necessarily like to be pulled out of their families to do their hobby. But this you can take with you. The nice thing is that you can carry it with you and you don't feel quite as guilty about doing something for yourself. Because you know women are full of guilt That's how we're raised.

Denise has a permanent quilting space in her home, and when her family is not around, she spends a great deal of time in there. But, when her family is present and she also wants to quilt, she consciously incorporates both quilting and family:

I have a room that I keep all the quilts in that I use for teaching. I have a little tiny space that has a cutting board that I will work at in there if I can't get the dogs to quit walking across. But I get lonesome for my family so I will often cut right here in the living room. So I will basically go where my family is. If they're in the office, I'll go in the main area. We have a big main area downstairs and I will move to be with them quickly.

With two teenaged children Ginny also finds it important to incorporate quilting projects into her everyday life. She has been quilting since her children were young and the family now sees her quilting activities as part of the regular routine. However, with no permanent quilting space, Ginny spends the time to set up and take down her quilting area each time she quilts. When she gets the opportunity and the family is gone for the day, she takes over the kitchen table as her quilting space, and the family definitely notices:

I know there are times when my husband comes in and says, ‘Oh my goodness she’s at it again.’ There is fabric everywhere and everything is going. One time I put a note on the door that said “When you enter, instead of saying what you want to say, say ‘My it looks like you had a fun day.’”

I remember you incorporated your quilting to go with the rest of your life. You talked about making something you can hand quilt on when you were going to games. Did you do that this summer?

Yeah when we’re going to ball games. I am very much a let’s be doing something and so if I can have something that I can be working on by hand or designing that’s fine with me.

Sandy comments on how she uses her time with her sons to explore quilting activities in the area:

Whenever I go on baseball trips with my boys, if I’m going to be there for a week or so I like to check out the quilt stores in other areas. I get in the car and try to find them. It’s an adventure.

Tina describes a typical situation in which she compromises what type of quilting project she will work on when her boyfriend wants to go on a driving trip over the weekend:

I’ve never had a fight about it or anything and if he decides to go off someplace, it takes away from the sewing machine time that I would like to have done that weekend but then I’ll go ahead and carry something else with me to just try to compromise that way. I don’t always get exactly what I want, but I’ll get something done.

Note that Tina continues to get some type of quilting done, she does not compromise her quilting entirely, just which project she will focus on. Other quilters have similar project choices to make when including family activities, like Beth: “I like handwork because I can do it in the car.” Additionally, Sandy plans quilting into everyday schedule, after her family obligations are completed:

This is mine. Quilting is my reward. Once the toilets are clean and the dishes are done it’s quilting time. And like tonight, I’ll sit and watch the baseball game all night and quilt.

Making time for both family needs and personal needs fulfilled through quilting is important to quilters. As some women have recognized their work as a perceived threat to a collective family time, they make marked effort to arrange their quilting schedule so that they can spend time with family members when the family is home: “I try to save the handwork for evenings, so I can watch television and spend time with my family in a more general sense. My husband doesn’t like it when I go into the other room to work when he’s watching television at night” (Field Notes 1999).

In the past, as sewing was a necessary activity within the home, sewing and quilting were considered part of a woman’s necessary domestic work day, and quilting spaces were thus incorporated into general family space. General family space served multiple purposes, and the presence of handwork in home common areas was typical as women were responsible for clothing the family. From Colonial times up to the Depression Era, women often set up large quilt frames in general family spaces, such as a contemporary family room. These frames were sometimes large enough to fit a queen sized quilt on them, and they could take up the

entire room. Some women did not have the space to quilt on frames in their homes and instead gathered together at women's homes where there was enough space. Together they would quilt on a frame. With enough women working on it simultaneously, they were usually able to finish a quilt top in a few days. This finished quilt would be a needed item to keep the family warm, and the legitimacy of the activity, or the space it took up in the home, was never questioned.

In contrast, quilting in general family space in contemporary society can disrupt family life. Women who are in the paid workforce quilt only when they are off the clock and finished with other domestic tasks. Women who are doing unpaid work at home are still working when they are home and thus find it difficult to engage in leisure while in the workplace of the home. When the rest of the family is at home, away from paid work or school, they are using general family space that might have been used for women's leisure activities. Also, as women are primarily responsible for home duties even as others rest, they have little time to devote to a leisure activity such as quilting. How can they engage in leisure in their own workplaces?

Because of these social, familial, and gendered constraints, quilters perceive that the time, money and space they spend on quilting can "take away" from their family's general needs, rather than help to meet them. Traditional families expect women to serve others before paying attention to themselves, as Olsen (1978:16-17) notes in her discussion of women's roles in contemporary society:

Am I resaying the moldy theory that women have no need, some say no capacity, to create art, because they can 'create' babies? And the additional proof is precisely that the few women who have created it are nearly all childless? No. The power and the

need to create, over and beyond reproduction, is native in both women and men.

Where the gifted among women (and men) have remained mute, or have never attained full capacity, it is because of circumstances, inner or outer, which oppose the needs of creation. Wholly surrendered and dedicated lives; time as needed for the work; totality of the self. But women are traditionally trained to place others' needs first, to feel these needs as their own (the "infinite capacity"); their sphere, their satisfaction to be in making it possible for others to use their abilities.

Accounting for "Progress" in Quilting

Quilting is a time and labor intensive process, and it is sometimes difficult for others to see or measure progress from a single session of quilting. Other home tasks, such as cooking a meal or doing dishes or laundry, can be done quickly when compared to making a quilt from start to finish. The results of these efforts are easily detected by family members who benefit directly by eating a meal on clean dishes, or wearing clean and pressed clothes. Family members do not necessarily benefit immediately, directly, or even personally from women's quilting efforts. Families do not rely solely upon quilts to keep them warm, as they currently have access to blankets and central heating. In addition, many finished quilts leave the home as gifts from the family. Therefore, because quilting is such a time and labor intensive process, the results from women's quilting efforts are therefore not always wholly appreciated by family members. Especially at the actual quilting stage, a family member may only see the quilter working on the same project, seemingly making little progress. This perception can be frustrating to family members, and they may begin to view the time spent on quilting as "wasted" time. They do not understand it, or they want the quilter to be doing something that relates

more directly to their own needs, or the family's needs generally. For example, Tina enjoys quilting above other home-related activities such as cooking and grocery shopping. She prefers to quilt over watching television, which sometimes upsets her family and friends:

They don't like to see me spend so much time on it. It seems that they'd like to do more things with me, but then in reality the things that they really want you to do sometimes are just sitting in front of the television and stuff like that. My boyfriend right now, he's really jealous of me doing quilting.

Misunderstanding and sometimes resentment of absorption with a leisure activity is not limited to quilters, but can be directed to any family member who has serious personal interests such as runners (Goff, Fick and Oppliger 1997), barbershop singers (Stebbins 1996), romance fiction readers (Brackett 2000), and drummers (Curran 1996).

Time and space for quilting activities have thus become sites of negotiation for gendered leisure in the modern home. Sarah, who met her husband after she started quilting, notes that it might be difficult for a non-quilters to be in a relationship with someone who is becoming involved in quilting:

It's easier to meet somebody who's a quilter than to meet somebody and then be married to them and then have them become a quilter because then you're like 'Oh my God what happened!' When I buy fabric it's my money. I guess in other people's relationships it really does take a whole lot of time and space. So I could see if you were settled into your routine and then all of a sudden, 'I need more space for this and I need more money for this,' it could be hard for your partner to understand.

Women certainly experience leisure, and family leisure, differently and in less positive ways than their spouses or children (Larson, Gillman, and Richards 1997). Furthermore, women are not always successful at distancing themselves from the roles of caretaker and household duties (Freysinger and Flannery 1992), and thereby might not be able to enjoy leisure activities in the home.

The presence of a quilt room does not magically resolve issues of respect in the home. Rather, it is one point within already-occurring negotiations about gender, space, resources, and respect. Quilters feel that family members who resent temporary space in the home devoted to quilting will continue to be resentful if the women have a permanent quilting space. The issue of legitimating space and resources for women's quilting remains.

With equal access to home space, women and men should theoretically be on equal footing in using its resources for leisure-time activities. However, the home is a cultural and a gendered space. Gender inequality pervades the home as it does other social institutions. Separate spaces alone do not guarantee respect or support for quilting. Such equality requires far more complex negotiations among its occupants.

Men find leisure time within the home to relax from their paid work experiences in more obvious ways. Within the home, the women's duties are either performed or neglected. In order for women to perform social reproduction duties well, they also need to find time for leisure activities such as quilting. Men leave the public domain to relax in the private domain. Women work in both the public and private domain. When women attempt in the private domain of the home by taking up quilting or other pleasurable activities, they feel that they are

not “off the clock.” They hold themselves responsible for their non-public duties, and their families do, too.

Quilters both accept and perpetuate women’s traditional gendered activities, but they also challenge the invisibility and taken-for-granted-ness of these activities by making efforts to engage in personal leisure activities that they enjoy. In seeking leisure time and space for themselves via quilting spaces, women challenge gender inequities in families that accord less legitimacy to women’s leisure and pleasurable personal time than men. Existing research in leisure, work, and family does not capture all family members’ experiences adequately, particularly women’s leisure experiences. Previous research attempts to fit individual family member’s leisure experiences into a narrowly conceived definitions of family leisure.

The modern home is characterized by persistent gender stratification. Women have less personal time, less private space, fewer economic resources, and less tolerance and respect than their male partners for pursuing the activities they enjoy and find fulfilling, especially leisure activities. Under the doctrine of separate spheres that dominate thinking about gender roles and stratification for many decades, home is women’s domain, but patriarchal norms do not make it hers to use as she pleases. The home exists in a larger world governed by patriarchy and capitalism. The model is one that is reflected in the idealized nuclear family of the 1950’s, with a clear delineation between women’s and men’s roles—a model that family historians have shown did not exist in reality for the vast number of Americans (Coontz 1992). Sociology of gender scholars note that the institution of the family and its resources center the acts of men while decentering the acts of women (Hochschild 1989; Oakley 1974a, 1974b; Olsen 1978). And, although the home, the bastion of the family institution has a “woman’s space” folklore

attached to it, as this research indicates, the home is not always in the control of women. The home and what occurs within it is still affected by patriarchal society, which privileges men and their activities over those of women.

Because in contemporary life quilting is not a necessity (and indeed may be a luxury), it is not always legitimated as an activity worthy of time, space, and resources. Thus, contemporary women performing a traditionally feminized needlework craft sometimes feel guilty doing so and sometimes have to struggle and engage in subterfuge to do so successfully. That women are less free to use family resources to pursue traditionally feminized activities such as quilting, in contrast to men who use them to pursue traditionally masculine activities (e.g., woodworking, sports spectating, etc.), reveals the still gendered configuration of home and family life.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Quilting as Identity Work: Self-Preservation Through Quilting

Processes of non-economic cultural production such as quilting allow people to rejuvenate themselves to go about the rest of their everyday lives. On a recent episode of the talk show television program *Oprah*, a young mother was encouraged to reinstate time for quilting in her life to remedy her depression, give missing meaning to her life, and most importantly, take some time for herself every day (*The Oprah Winfrey Show* 2000). Additionally, the popular press reports that Hollywood actresses in growing numbers are currently turning to knitting and other forms of needlework for personal reasons: relaxation, self-renewal, and to make gifts for family and friends (*People* 9/10/01:25). Without the pressures to succeed or fail in the economic market, non-economic cultural producers are more free to enjoy the process and the product than they would be if they pursued these activities as work or for profit.

The mortification process that Goffman describes are embedded in notions of self-denial, self-inflicted pain or discomfort, and a sense of humiliation and shame caused by something that wounds one's pride or self-respect. Meaning-making processes can be reviewed as the reverse of Goffman's stages in mortification. Becoming a means of self-preservation, such activities accomplish self-indulgence, self-inflicted comfort, a sense of

accomplishment and pride caused by an activity that celebrates and enhances one's creative abilities. The chapters in this study show how quilting is the antithesis of mortification. It re-layers what women's experiences in patriarchal society have stripped, giving them freedom, autonomy, creativity, and time to themselves.

Chapter Four shows how women become engaged in the process of gendered cultural production. They learn how to quilt, organize their quilting, and devise clever ways to remember the quilts they have completed. These memories focus not just on the finished products but on the motivations, challenges, feelings, and social contexts that surround the making of a particular quilt. Remembrances of these elements often are paired with visual images of the quilt at various stages of production.

Women do the work of the family, or carework, when they are making quilts for other people. How they remember their quilts is significant for themselves and for the relationships they have with people in their lives. How many quilts one makes is not particularly important, for values are not measured in metrics or economic terms. For whom the quilts are made and what they represent to the quilter is what is salient for the women. In this way, we see how embedded quilting practices are in women's lives, recording extraordinary events. Sarah's frog quilt, representing her social commentary on her dating experiences, Emma's anger quilt, which helped her through a difficult time, are examples. Additionally, quilters in this study used quilting to develop identities that were not directly tied to their identities and roles in their families. In seeking out other women to learn quilting techniques, women learn to quilt and practice quilting in gendered ways: women make quilts that reflect and give voice to their lives, and make quilts as gifts for family members and close friends. By engaging in these creative acts, women exhibit

carework for those close to them, maintaining family ties, and passing on memories of themselves as skilled quilters and caretakers.

Chapter Five reveals how, as women develop and identify as quilters, they balance personal and family needs in seeking resources to quilt. Women I studied primarily produced quilts for personal reasons, such as creative expression or release of tension. None of the women in this study depend entirely on their quilting efforts to put food on the table. Social class was important to this study in many ways—it shaped which women belonged to the organizations where I first started interviewing. As women that I interviewed recommended me to their quilting friends, more likely than not they were of similar backgrounds, including social class.

They instead engage in quilting to fulfill personal, emotional, and artistic needs. The creative activity provides them the peace that they are seeking, and acts as a haven from the rest of their worlds. For some, part of the benefits of quilting is the opportunity it gives them to spend time with other women, exchanging not only information about needlework but thoughts about a variety of issues relevant to contemporary women's lives. After engaging in quilting and escaping from their life stressors, they are better able to engage the complex and trying systems in which they already exist, mainly the economy and the family. The paid work that these women engage in is interesting to note, but is not particularly important in terms of why they turned to quilting as an escape. As Hochschild (1997: 38) notes in her study at a "family-friendly" corporation, work and home have reversed roles: "For Linda, home had become work and work had become home. Somehow, the two worlds had been reversed. Indeed, Linda felt she could only get relief from the "work" of being at home by going to the "home" of

work.” In these employees’ lives, their work lives are more inviting than their home lives. For quilters, their intimate, connected quilting communities are supportive to their creative selves in ways that their families, friends, and paid work lives are not.

This chapter establishes that quilting is an essential part of these women’s core identities. They self-identify as quilters, and state that quilting encourages self expression, provides a way to establish a conscious legacy of themselves, as well as fulfilling other society-level needs. As a feminized activity, quilting is not always understood or supported by non-quilters, such as family and friends. Thus, women rely upon one another to garner support and encouragement from other quilters for their quilting activities. Gifting quilts to others also reveals the importance of the processes and products of quilting. When women give quilts as gifts to others, they say that symbolically they are gifting a part of their selves—when quilters feel their gifts, their selves, are being mistreated or treated well, they feel it deeply. Most recognize that these deep feelings are appreciated fully only within the community of other quilters.

Chapter Six shows how through quilting women work out complex balances between personal and family needs. Women want to quilt, but they also want to involve the family in their everyday lives as much as is possible. Women find ways to value both the family and their quilting passions. They realize the tension that exists between the sometimes competing components in their lives. They complain about it, give into their family’s demands, and cause disruption in their family as they find adequate resources to continue quilting. Some break down quilting projects into smaller tasks, which can be carried along on family outings or combined with other family activities. Others struggle to find private, uninterrupted time and treasure days when family members are otherwise occupied to be able to immerse themselves

in quilting projects. They continually negotiate and re-negotiate their everyday lives, determined to include their families into their quilting, and their quilting activities into family life.

They very complex strategies that women use to gain time and other resources needed to quilt represent a challenge to the inequitable distribution of opportunities for leisure to women and men. Legitimation for quilting is important to women. Legitimation for quilting represents respect for women, the right for women to have time alone for themselves, the right for women to engage in leisure, and the right to enhance creative interests. Establishing and hiding the fabric stash and negotiating for space in the home to quilt and store materials, for example, exhibit women's difficulties generally in marking time for themselves in homes that operate under patriarchal norms that subordinate women's leisure interests to those of others. When financially and spatially able, women seek to obtain a room of their own for quilting and for themselves. Attaining such space represents a validation of self and self-worth.

Quilting therefore, allows women a way in which to develop and maintain their identities, to rejuvenate and preserve their selves. As women quilt, they both engage in acts of self-preservation and challenge the constrictive gendered world (e.g., greedy institutions of the family with inequitable distributions of labor, gendered divisions of paid work that demand emotional labor from women more than men). Unpaid creative work such as quilting exemplify identity development for women as cultural producers. As women continue and increase their quilting activity, they layer themselves with cultural and gendered meaning, meanings that legitimate and enhance their creative selves. Through quilting, women discover and develop their creative selves, while strengthening and enhancing relationships with family and friends.

In quilters' lives, the stripping process is reversed, so that quilting builds a positive, multilayered identity that other life experiences do not. The quilting process allows quilters to escape from identity-stripping duties of everyday life to develop a distinctive identity. Although women often begin quilting as a leisure activity, those who continue to quilt develop close ties between quilting and identity. Quilting becomes a type of subjective career where images of selves as cultural workers are elaborated. Whereas persons entering institutions are stripped of identities, women who engage in quilting develop rich and distinctive identities that come to define their lives in far-reaching ways.

Women who quilt seriously (e.g., self-identify as quilters) become self-conscious cultural producers, creating visual and tactile objects that document important aspects of their lives often not commemorated in public, commercialized, forms of contemporary culture (e.g., war monuments as studied by Schwartz and Bayma 1999; Wagner-Pacifici and Schwartz 1991). By engaging in quilting, women both re-enact and transform gender relations in families, challenging stratified social relations that grant more time and attention to others' leisure pursuits than their own. By communicating with other women around quilting activities and using quilts in gift exchanges that cement kin and friendship ties, women build communities of local knowledge and innovate and transmit a culture that is distinctively feminized and that integrates successfully tradition and modernity.

Quilting as Family Work

Because there is little value placed on what occurs in the home, those who do value it feel devalued and sometimes ridiculed. Society does not consider the difficult drudgery that can be housework, and quilting is often considered an obliterated, old-fashioned, even unnecessary

form of housework (Oakley 1974a, 1974b; Crittendon 2001). When women quilt, they participate in a somewhat old fashioned and antiquated way of providing physical warmth and care to family members and friends. The amount of time that women spend at quilting is not what matters. The meaning embedded within the time spent on quilting, and the enjoyment in the creative process, are what is important.

Carework through quilting is complicated, as are many of the roles that women hold in contemporary society. For example, we consider women to be good mothers (whether engaged in paid work or not) when they appear to be unselfish caretakers. As Hays (1996: 167) suggests, “The image of an appropriate mother is one of an unselfish nurturer.” Women are good mothers when they make homemade gifts for their children, spouses, and extended kin through quilting. But the time and effort that goes into making quilts is still seen as wasted time, or time taken away from being a good mother, spouse, or friend. Through constructing and gifting quilts, women express their care for others not just as quilters, but as spouses, mothers, and friends. In the eyes of women who produce quilts, quilting as a caring act is deeply intertwined with gendered notions of family and motherhood.

Women challenge and embrace contemporary family dynamics as they simultaneously carve out time to quilt and incorporate the family. These findings coincide with other scholars focused on U.S. women’s experiences with family dynamics and work life (Crosby 1991, 1987; Hochschild 1997), and mothers supporting their family’s sports activities (Chafetz and Kotarba 1995; Thompson 1999). Rather than women resenting their families for the energy and time they put into managing family and work responsibilities, they instead use their quilting activities as a strategy to achieve both family and work (Collins 1991). They *both* embrace

their families and friends *and* they continue to quilt. Instead of taking time away from the family, women's quilting efforts actually contribute to the healthy maintenance of families. For as women find time through quilting to spend on themselves, they nurture themselves and simultaneously engage in carework for themselves as well as for their families.

To understand issues of power and voice, private life activities, commitments, passions, subjective careers and objective careers are important indicators of women's status in society. The relationship between women's voluntary non-economic activities and women's activities in other domains of contemporary life is complicated, but it certainly is worth studying how women use these kinds of activities to cope. In this complex and multi-layered process, it is not just that women are participating in regenerating activities, but by doing so, their senses of self are becoming empowered. If women can engage successfully in identity-layering processes through quilting activities, these strengthened identities can spill over into other arenas of life, allowing them to write dissertations, get over bad relationships, and take on challenging leadership roles. The activity has the ability to transform the self, and it also has the ability to transform other areas of women's lives. A meaningful subjective career can bolster an identity, making one more confident about taking on other challenges. This dynamic interplay between the positive effects of quilting with the remainder of women's lives is something that I have not been able to fully study, but it is a fruitful area for further research by gender scholars.

Quilters engage in complex negotiations within the family to acquire resources needed to quilt. They often encounter resistance and engage in various subterfuges to preserve their opportunities to quilt. Families misunderstanding personal activities is not limited to quilters, but to any family member who pursues personal interests in a serious fashion. Runners (Goff, Fick

and Oppliger 1997), barbershop singers (Stebbins 1996), and romance fiction readers (Brackett 2000) all are reported to face similar opposition. Women typically get less tolerance and deference for their pursuits in comparison to women and children.

The struggles women face to pursue quilting reflect inequality in power dynamics within the family. The resistance in that domain to allowing women to pursue creative and fulfilling activities results from the fact that in contemporary society—unlike in the way we understand our collective past—quilting does not seem directly related to family well-being. Quilting, does, however, contribute indirectly to the family and the women who engage in it view it as one of many forms of carework done by women. This carework benefits the family as it benefits the quilter. And, opposite of the mortification process that patients endure when entering a total institution, quilters undergo deeply meaningful and voluntary processes that layer them with individualized cultural and gendered meaning. Quilting makes these women special, different from who they were before they began quilting, and as they continue to quilt, these women are unique in special ways from their family and friends, and other non-quilters around them.

Women leave historical markers through quiltmaking, revealing that they had enough control over their lives to devote time to a pleasurable and creative activity. Even though it is often devalued and trivialized by important people in women's lives, quilting remains important and meaningful in these women's lives specifically, and to our cultural history generally.

Contemporary women generally understand the patriarchal world in which they live and on some level most realize that their everyday mundane efforts (e.g., washing dishes, preparing meals, etc.) will not usually be remembered or memorialized (DeVault 1991; Schmitt and

Leonard 1986). To some, being appreciated and remembered as they wish to be remembered—as they define themselves—is important.

Quilting as Cultural Work

As women in this study develop identities as quilters and begin to frame subjective careers around quilting, they begin to see themselves as cultural workers on a personal, and in some cases, a societal level. Quilters realize that they are actors connected to past and future, and that the quilts they make can influence others in multiple ways for generations to come. Additionally, these women understand that they can engage in creation and design, and have their skills recognized locally or in even broader contexts.

Most women do not enter quilting as a “quest” in which to discover and develop their artistic identities. Instead, they become interested in quilting for a variety of reasons, ranging from being able to do something creative on their own, to commemorating family ties through making quilts as family gifts. Some women come from families where quilting has been a longstanding tradition among women. Others take it up as adults, perhaps inspired by friends, media, or public displays of quilts. Perhaps most intriguing of all, some decide as an adult to “recover” family traditions of quilting that were lost in the last generation, when quilting was discarded as quaint and unmodern. Once they learn and enjoy quilting, women find deeper layers of meaning in quilting the longer they pursue it. They begin to “see quilts everywhere” and relate many other life’s activities to quilting. Children’s activities, family holidays, vacations and other travel all inspire quilts, through a complicated mix of visual and emotional phenomena. Essentially, women get hooked on the activity and that is when women begin to self-identify as quilters and the serious identity work begins. Women discover that through quilting they can

develop “subjective careers” in their seemingly constrictive feminine carework roles as wives and mothers (Evetts 1996), and purposefully construct and maintain their “post-self,” managing how subsequent generations will view them as creative actors (Schmitt and Leonard 1986). In this process of developing a subjective career, the self becomes developed/defined in the context of the work that women do. Quilting for women blends traditionalism and modernism, including the forging of a gender identity that merges aspects of traditional and modern feminine roles. After some passage of time, women come to see themselves as cultural workers, doing important and meaningful work, even if others do not always acknowledge this. The sense of oneself as a cultural worker is most evident when women contribute to projects such as Olympic quilts or the AIDS quilt where their quilts will clearly have impact over time and beyond their local communities, or when they enter their quilts into local or national competitions, but in addition women who treasure quilts made by their female kin of prior generations and envision the quilts they make being used, admired and interpreted by friends and descendants also develop a sense of themselves as contributors to culture.

In my personal experience, I did not “take” to quilting immediately once I learned how to do it. After completing my first quilt, I brought it to college and have used it on my bed ever since. However, I did not continue quilting at an intense pace. When beginning this research years later, I slowly started getting back into quilting: buying fabric, attending guild meetings and visiting quilt shops. Similar to other quilters, I then began making quilts as gifts for others, mostly crib-sized quilts for my friends’ newborn babies. Smaller than the bed-sized quilts I eventually wanted to make, these crib-sized quilts were a training ground. In making these quilts I experimented with various techniques, color, design, and machine and hand quilting.

Through the research process, I got more involved in the aspects of the quilting communities I found personally and academically compelling. In the smaller groups of women gathered to quilt, I found the connections between women to be more cohesive and more personal, almost intimate. These connections were about quilting and not about quilting—these women let me into their lives beyond quilting conversations, and I found myself also sharing non-quilt related information with them as well. Additionally, family members and other friends picked up quilting along with me. It gave us one more commonality to share, upon which to build and maintain connections.

Many aspects of contemporary social life for women strip away their distinctive identities and their creative potential. Processes of identity development and individuation, or making the self distinct, allow women to gain distinctive identities and challenge the identity-stripping characteristics of patriarchal contemporary social and family life. Quilting is one way in which women achieve the end of preserving their creative selves. Women in this study use quilting as a venue through which they develop and maintain their creative selves. They also express their individual identities as women, as historical actors, and cultural producers. Quilting then becomes a way in which to challenge the heretofore undervalued feminized activities in society, the subordination of women, and the invisibility of women's contributions to culture through their unpaid creative work.

Holyfield (1995:171) notes in her research on adventure-seekers (e.g., white water rafting, ropes courses) that people make important meaning out of their lives through leisure activities in which they choose to become involved: "Modern society represses 'aesthetic experience,' devaluing the emotional and thus turning meaningful things into objects, forcing us

to seek escape (e.g., adventure).” Quilters therefore seek to revive the aesthetic in their lives by participating in quilting activities. Through engaging in quilting, women make individual and collective meaning in their lives, preserve and transmit quilting heritage, and forge historical markers that represent them as women and as cultural producers. The process of quilting is of course less physically dangerous than outdoor adventure pursuits. Yet, both types of pursuits are daring in their own ways and can provide the necessary aesthetic experiences that are both relaxing and rejuvenating.

Why Quilting?

Is quilting distinctively different from all other kinds of creative activities that women can do? Could this study have been carried out in another unpaid creative form, such as knitting or weaving? Many creative activities do share similarities with quilting. Those most similar to quilting are elaborations of women’s everyday domestic roles and that result in long term, tangible and functional cultural products. Additionally, some of these activities, at least those which can be pursued on both an individual and a collective level, will share more characteristics with quilting. Quilting, however, possesses some important differences, both in its construct, and as how it is considered a finished product in societies’ collective past, present, and future.

First, from a leisure standpoint, quilting is both a process and a product. People desiring relaxation from everyday stress turn to a variety of activities, including exercise and sports, movie-watching, going out to eat, and spending time with family and friends.

Highlighted in these activities is the experience of relaxation. When people engage in these activities, they have a sense of doing something besides paid work that brings them relaxation

and rejuvenation. Yet, besides the transitory feeling of relaxation, engaging in many leisure pursuits at this level does not produce a lasting, finished product. This makes quilting different from many other leisure activities.

Quilting produces a product for others to enjoy. Gardening, decorative cakebaking, and gourmet cooking are somewhat similar to quilting as traditional feminine activities and as creative processes. The products of these efforts are appreciated, but are soon consumed by family and friends. Memories of women's creative efforts in these activities may be strong, and though the event may be recorded in videotape, in people's memories, or in a scrapbook, journal or cookbook, there is not the lasting, tangible product that the quilting process produces. This product can be interpreted by others at later dates, even beyond the lifetime of the quilter. It extends an element of her identity across time.

In addition to being a relaxing process and producing a product for others to enjoy, the quilting process produces an enduring product—a quilt that is typically given away as a gift. Activities similar to quilting are knitting, crocheting, scrapbooking, weaving, stained glass, cross stitching, and woodworking (traditionally considered a man's activity). Quilts can bookmark quilters' lives (e.g., living memories of the relaxing process for the quilter, recording visually the event or person for which it was made), and exist as living memorials of the women who constructed the quilts. Finished products are often used as everyday home decoration items (e.g., a cross-stitched sampler, a quilted wall hanging), as well as artifacts used to celebrate special events (e.g., a woven tablecloth, a wedding scrapbook, an anniversary quilt). Because there are tangible products remaining from the creative process of these types of cultural activities, they can be used both in everyday life as well as for special occasions. Quilts often

outlive their makers and become treasured heirlooms, which are subject to “reading” and interpretation in future generations. They keep alive something of the effort and creative vision of their makers.

Finally, quilts and the quilting process possess tactile elements. The quilting process is both exciting and soothing to women, and quilts themselves are physically and emotionally comforting to quilters and non-quilters alike, as viewers of the AIDS quilt report after seeing it (Lewis and Fraser 1996). As one quilter told me: “I made a quilt specifically to commemorate my divorce. I needed something to crawl into, to comfort myself, and to be able to hide away. I knew it had to be pink, like a womb, so that I could heal while I was snuggled in it.” Similarly, women derive pleasure from imagining the comfort that others will derive from use of the quilts they make. They imagine grandchildren curling up for a nap, warmed by a quilt they have made. Women’s caretaking efforts are thus extended beyond their immediate surroundings, and the quilts women make can provide care for others even when the makers are not physically present.

Quilting and quilts are unique from these other leisure activities in that they bring together components of leisure, memory, and aesthetics in instrumental objects. A quilt can have multiple dimensions of meaning embedded in it for the creator, as well as for those who come in contact with it. Beyond the immediate relationship between the creator and receiver, a quilt has a public audience as well. The arts and antiques worlds in the last thirty years have recognized the quilt as artistic, valuable media. Additionally, quilts historically have had the ability to carry women’s political messages (e.g., the AIDS quilt, Olympic quilts, quilts made for children who have survived domestic violence experiences, and the various projects women are

organizing to commemorate the terrorist bombing in the U.S. on 9/11/01). With political voice, private and public memory, and commemoration, quilts can travel through time in both public and private ways that other cultural objects cannot. They carry the identities of their makers into the fabric of culture.

Although quilts as finished cultural products currently occupy more than one space (e.g., craft, art, leisure, work, family heirloom, utilitarian object), the self-preserving processes by which quilts and other domestic cultural objects are created are similar. Regardless of whether the processes result in mere relaxation or treasured family heirlooms (or both), these activities are similar to one another in that they provide rejuvenation from everyday stressors, and they can be enjoyed in non-competitive and non-economic ways. Women in this study did not seek out quilting specifically as a way in which to re-build their creative identities. Many women in this study, especially those at mid-life, found themselves re-examining their lives and somehow happened upon quilting—they had friends or family who got them interested and involved. Others discussed their family history as the origin of their interest in quilting—they either had a strong quilting legacy, a skipped quilting legacy, or no quilting legacy at all. Speaking retrospectively about their quilting beginnings, they related their quilting activities to personal connections with family and friends. Quilting is one of many ways in which women can connect with other women on personal and societal levels, develop a creative self in which women find themselves not just as family caretakers, but as subjects of their own lives.

Conclusion

The women in this study were somewhat diverse in that they represented four geographic areas (South, Midwest, West, Northeast), with more emphasis on quilters from the

Southern region of the United States. Participants were mostly Euro-American and middle aged women living at or near a middle class lifestyle. All participants in my study were self-identified quilters. Those who tried quilting but did not consider themselves quilters, or women who tried quilting but did not like it or continue with it, were not a part of the study. Although I interviewed a few women who earned regular income from quilting or quilt-related activities (e.g., quilt shop owners, quilt instructors), and they provided interesting information concerning their professionalization in quilting, they were not the majority of the study participants. The contributions of this research are bounded by these constraints, and because of this, one needs to be cautious in generalizing. Future studies of quilting and other feminized forms of cultural production might usefully be extended to other groups and populations. Despite the limitations of my sample and methods, the yields of this research have been important.

This dissertation is only the beginning of further academic research concerning creative work as gendered cultural processes and as a means for self-preservation in contemporary lives. With a more general inquiry, one could include different forms of women's participation in leisure activities, such as knitting, crocheting and weaving, to determine the life-giving and life-sustaining benefits present in these creative pursuits. Men's leisure experiences would also be fruitful in this vein of theoretical exploration. Testing the findings posed in this dissertation would be easily possible, concerning the challenges of unpaid creative work in the home to the traditional home lifestyle for women and their families, as well as men and their families. This dissertation specifically and the future avenues of research described above will provide the basis for a more thorough sociological investigation of creative unpaid work and non-economic cultural production, by women and men.

This research analyzes the meaning of quiltmaking as a meaning-laden form of cultural production among contemporary American women. As a feminized cultural activity, quilting provides a successful case in which to examine the complex role unpaid creative work plays in contemporary women's lives. Quilting appears to be a simple pastime, but for those who become involved with it over time, it becomes important and multidimensional work. Women preserve the gendered nature of cultural transmission, as well as the gendered culture in which quilting activities exist. Through quilting, women are able to reach back into history and connect with their quilting foremothers, the women who quilted before them and left the tradition of quilting in which they now engage. Women are also involved in quilting activities as individuals, embedded in their own homes and families. It is in their home-based experiences that women reveal how the creative activity of quilting challenges the power balance and family dynamics within the home. Such worthwhile analysis of women's everyday activity teaches us much about society and culture, and holds the potential for great sociological yield.

END NOTES

1. I purposely avoid referring to quilting as a hobby. First, the women in this study did not define or describe what they were doing as a hobby. Second, as Stebbins (1979) makes the distinction between professionals and amateurs (hobbyists), one of the major denoting factors is tied to the economic sphere. Centering my study in women's experiences, I also center the non-economic aspects of cultural production processes. Terming quilting a "hobby" leads one to measure successes and failures as determined by professionals in the economic sphere. Such an economic metric is not relevant in these quilters' lives.
2. In her research on British women's housework, Oakley (1974a) points to the male biases within the discipline of sociology. Studying women, in their traditional activities, and from their perspectives is an important way, she suggests, of giving women the visibility they deserve within sociology—a discipline which claims scientific objectivity: "The concealment of women runs right through sociology. It extends from the classification of subject-areas and the definition of concepts through the topics and methods of empirical research to the construction of models and theory generally" (Oakley 1974a: 3). Giving sociological visibility to women in the discipline of sociology then, is to conduct and expand stand-alone research on women's traditional activities.
3. In extreme situations, such as domestic abuse, the family can indeed be a total institution for women (Avni 1991).
4. This study focused on women who identified themselves as quilters. A few women were also teachers, but the majority of interviews centered on women's personal quilting (and learning to quilt) experiences.
5. As the quilters in this study quilt for personal reasons, they are not as concerned about how much time they devote to any one quilt as a professional quilter might be, for example. Quilters are concerned about how to price one's time when quilting for others, but the activity of quilting for others is a minor element in these particular women's quilting lives.

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APPENDIX A

QUILTING HISTORY IN THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

Evidence of human handiwork, including quilting, can be traced back to tenth century Europe (Von Gwinner 1988). Historians from around the world have discovered, documented and collected such handiwork. Generations of families, ethnic heritages, and nations have passed down quilting traditions. Quilting techniques are present worldwide, not only in everyday items, such as quilts or clothing, but in "luxury items" as well: formal clothing, wall hangings, and other decorative items (Von Gwinner 1988).

Euro-American quilting traditions made their way to the United States from European nations by way of immigration patterns. As White ethnics "settled" the U.S., women made a variety of quilts in commemoration of their experiences in the new world. Around the 1800s, women constructed "friendship quilts" and gave them as gifts to friends who were leaving the northeast for western territories (Lipsett 1985). The friendship quilt is one of many examples of quilting patterns developing specific meanings. Quilting traditions therefore have become rooted in U.S. heritage, and sometimes are independent of their European beginnings in terms of social meaning.

Gunn (1992:196) characterizes US quilt history into three distinct time periods:

...the pioneer period (1890-1930) when interest in colonial-revival decorative arts

stimulated quilt study; a practical era (1930-1970) emphasizing patterns and how-to books; and a revival period (1970-1990) characterized by increasingly sophisticated and well-documented interdisciplinary studies.

These time periods reflect historical trends in the US, although much quilt research implies a historical relationship rather than making direct connections between quilt construction and history. The first era of quilt history/scholarship can be linked to the nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement (ACM) in the US and Europe, emphasizing the development of the feminine arts. The back to basics tendency of the middle period indicates a less frivolous society, using difficult financial times like the Great Depression to celebrate the earlier, more successful periods of development in the US. In this practical time, people began recording and documenting quilters and pattern names to actual quilts (Gunn 1992). The third period of quilt research combines the romantic aspects of the first era and the practical aspects of the second era to construct an increased awareness of quilting history and future.

The Arts and Crafts Movement (ACM) separated craft from art, and defined standards of quilting still present in current quiltmaking (Elsley 1995). The ACM placed emphasis on domestic aesthetics and beauty during the nineteenth century (Gunn 1984; Morris 1893/1996; Naylor 1971; Ramsey 1994). In Europe and the United States, the ACM romanticized feminine tasks such as needlework and embroidery, heralding them as art. Quilting was not considered art at the onset of the ACM, for quilting was still too useful in comparison to more decorative needlework and embroidery. Slowly, some quilting (mostly women's quilting in the Northeastern US) began to resemble needlework. Attention to detailed stitching was valued,

and many quilters adjusted their techniques while trying to fit closer to the definition of an aesthetically pleasing household object with quilting efforts (Gunn 1992, 1984; Naylor 1971).

Traditional quilting patterns in American history have been construed to carry with them specific and sometimes mythical meanings. For example, one of the most well known and often cited quilting myths is that the color schemes of the quilt patterns known as Log Cabin and Underground Railroad were carefully manipulated for easier identification of safehouses of the Underground Railroad, or implicit political support for abolition in the American South (Brackman 1997; Freeman 1996; Von Gwinner 1988). In contrast, the Drunkard's Path pattern was created by and associated with supporters of the Temperance Movement, and was constructed purposely with the Women's Christian Temperance Union's organizational colors of blue and White (Jenkins and Seward 1991). Quilting traditions have become rooted in U.S. heritage, and can be seen as independent of their European beginnings in terms of social meaning.

Although African-American, Native American and Latina women were part of the passing down of the craft of quilting, the industry's publishing and advertising markets do not usually consider them explicitly as foremothers of quilting (of course there are exceptions, see specifically Freeman 1996; and Fry 1990). Additionally, the history of African-American quilting does not necessarily fall into the artistic categories of many of the quilt competitions and shows nationwide. Collins (1991) discusses the differing approaches to quilting from the African-American and Euro-American artistic perspectives:

the symmetry in African-American quilts does not come from uniformity as it does in Euro-American quilts. Rather, symmetry comes from diversity...participation [in aesthetic assessment, including the production of art] is not based on conformity but instead is seen as individual uniqueness that enhances the overall "beauty" of the group. Using such criteria, no individual is inherently beautiful because beauty is not a state of being. Instead beauty is always defined in a context as a state of becoming. All African-American women as well as all humans become capable of beauty. (Collins 1991:89)

The work of African-American women and other women of color is not as central as White ethnic women's historical quilting. The absence of their voices results in the systematic neglect of the audience of women of color in the mainstream quilting industry. Some historical analysis exists in academic books and journals on quilts and/or quilt collections. Quilt history is important to comprehend, because in many cases the actual quilter does not receive credit. Fry (1990) has highlighted numerous instances in which quilts were passed off as being made entirely by White plantation owners' wives in the southern US; in actuality, former female house slaves made quilts, and taught quiltmaking techniques. Research on African-American quilting traditions is beneficial as it brings to light a more inclusive history of US quilting (Benberry 1993; Freeman 1996; Fry 1990).

Quilting literature deviating from the White ethnic norm are often written on a more academic level, such as the analysis of slave quilts by Fry (1990), or the political impetus behind the construction of specific quilts (Williams 1990, 1994; Friedlich 1991). Since many of these books are written at an academic level rather than at an instructive level, they are not as

likely to reach or have an impact on women interested in making quilts as industry magazines and/or instructional books.

Women have been quilting steadily throughout the nation's history, and a renewed interest in quilting surfaced in the US during preparations for the bicentennial anniversary in 1976 (Gunn 1992). This was the nation's bicentennial as well as a pivotal crossroads in determining women's roles in the context of the 1960s-1970s women's movement. Scholars consider the post-bicentennial interest in quilting as controversial (Cerny 1991; Crothers 1993; Gunn 1984, 1992). Some see the resurgence of "feminine" activities, such as quilting, knitting and embroidery as a pastoral attempt to recapture femininity, complying with the politically conservative backlash against women. Others argue that quilting and other feminine activities are the base construct of women's social networks. These networks "provide mutual support within a context of 'warmth and emotional openness'" (Cerny 1991:35). Furthermore, they posit that feminine activities such as quilting are not a compliance to patriarchal domination, but constitute a separate sphere of existence outside the male dominant mainstream.

Quilts as Necessity

Popular sentiment constructs quilters as sharing characteristics with their colonial-era ancestors. According to legend, women dutifully and resourcefully sewed together fabric scraps to keep families warm. Despite this idealized notion of quilting as a purely functional aspect, women took great pride in sewing beautiful quilts for their families, even purchasing new fabric specifically to make clothes and quilts. Sewing for the family was a necessity, and regardless of whether or not women enjoyed it or not, their efforts contributed to fulfilling the family's needs. Pleasure and pride in producing items of aesthetic worth has always been a

part of sewing and quilting. These women-centered activities were accorded status and prestige when deemed essential for family survival.

During wartime (e.g., Civil War, World Wars I and II), the state taught and encouraged sewing and other handicrafts such as knitting. Specifically during the World Wars, educational institutions taught children to knit and repair soldiers' socks, scheduling a daily knitting period during the school day for the good of the war (Macdonald 1988). Burman (1999) found this also to be the case in England during the war. In this case, learning a handicraft was seen as contributing something vital to the nation, and to the larger cause of winning the war.

During the Great Depression farm women recycled cloth sacks formerly holding livestock feed and food staples (e.g., flour, sugar) into clothes for the family. Companies constructed cloth sacks from pre-printed fabric to meet women's clothing construction needs, and to increase the appeal of their product: "The reuse of cotton-sack fabric became more desirable when feed-sack manufacturers offered a wide variety of attractive sack prints by the end of the 1930s" (Rhoades 1997: 122). Two sacks with the same pattern were enough yardage for a woman's dress. Women sent their husbands and sons back to town if they bought feed sacks with mismatching fabric (Field Notes 1999). Leftover scraps were then made into towels, curtains, cleaning rags, and quilts. Handicrafts once again were viewed as essential for the well-being of families during economic hard times.

Americans living through the Great Depression and World War II associated home-made goods with memories of economic suffering. Once the country began its post-World War II economic upswing, the availability of ready-made goods increased, including pre-made blankets. Families replaced home-made goods with store-bought goods. In this era, many

quilts were thrown away in exchange for manufactured blankets, and soon after, electric blankets (Brackman 1997). As Sarah told me,

There are a couple of family quilts in my family but my aunt told me that when they were able to buy blankets that they threw the quilts away because they were moving up, they didn't have to have that hand made stuff anymore.

From Necessity to Pleasure

Quilting has transformed from a necessity during colonial times to a contemporary form of serious leisure (Stalp 1998; Stebbins 1998; 1979). Valentine (2000:1) elaborates:

Quilts radiate emotional comfort and evoke appreciation for the time and talent invested in their creation. At one time, quilts provided necessary protection from cold weather, piled high on the bed to provide wintertime warmth when the household fires were banked low for the night. With today's heated bedrooms and insulated dwellings, patchwork quilts often fulfill a more symbolic than utilitarian role, adding a homey atmosphere to the modern environment.

Sewing and similar handicrafts (e.g., knitting, crocheting, lace-making) have also been influenced by modernization and technology (see Channer and Buck 1991; Macdonald 1988; Palliser 1984). The changes in technology have made these goods formerly made by individual women more available as they are produced in mass quantities in a factory or sweatshop setting. Women (and men) no longer need to possess handiwork skills to ensure the survival of their families, for sewn, knitted, and crocheted goods (e.g., sweaters, clothes, linens and other everyday household items) can be readily purchased on the market. In economic terms, producing a handcrafted item can be more costly than buying its equivalent in the marketplace.

Preserving and maintaining handicraft skills in the U.S. has definitely decreased as modernization has progressed. For example, teaching children (usually girls) to sew in the home and in schools has diminished sharply:

By the mid-1970s, sewing education had already been dropped from many school curriculums, and great numbers of women were entering the workforce and were neither sewing themselves nor teaching their daughters to sew. They simply did not have the time. (American Sewing Guild 2000:1)

National organizations such as the American Sewing Guild, 4-H, the American Knitting Guild and other similar organizations are currently working to reverse this trend. To highlight women's contributions and to keep handicraft techniques alive, many of these organizations have learning campaigns during which they urge those with handicraft knowledge to teach others. Some handicrafts publicize a nationally-recognized day. For example, September is National Sewing Month, and National Quilting Day is the third Saturday in March every year, with many quilt guilds in the nation espouse educating others about quilting as one of their purposes.

Since the current quilt revival began in the 1970s, though, industry and technology have taken note of quilters' growing needs. For the first time in history, fabric companies have devoted a small portion of their production to making quilt fabric (Field Notes 1998). At no other time in history have quilters enjoyed the variety of quilt fabric available, helpful tools designed specifically for quilting which introduce time-saving techniques, and sewing machines with extraordinary technological advancements available for individual at-home use (Brackman 1997; Stalp 1998). As was true in earlier historical periods, fabric production is out of the

hands of the consumer; fabric producers and the trade industry control the fabric industry (Mukerji 1983). Some quilters do have control of one step of fabric production by hand dyeing their own fabrics, but this usually comprises a small number of quilters. Women who dyed either a portion of or all their quilting fabric were a minority in my sample. Others experimented with hand dyeing techniques. Some did this to experiment with different techniques, while others were seriously studying dyeing techniques to have more fabric control.

As of yet, there is no formal degree available in quilting techniques. A few devoted quilt enthusiasts have self-designed independent study degrees that are based in quilt history. Currently, the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, “is believed to be the only U.S. institution that offers graduate study in textile history and textile design with an emphasis in quilt studies” (International Quilt Study Center 2000). National quilt organizations such as the National Quilting Association, and the American Quilter’s Society in Paducah, Kentucky, offers specialized training and certificates particular to quilting related activities (e.g., judging, appraising). Ways of teaching and learning, especially those resembling formal education, are just beginning to emerge as viable options for quilters.

Quilting classes are available to interested students in mainly non-mainstream educational venues nationally and internationally. Women learn quilting from women they know in the home, their friendship networks, and loosely formal educational settings, such as adult education classes, or evening classes in community college settings. Specific and advanced technique classes are often available at regional and national workshops, quilt shows, retreats, and quilt cruises.

Quilts made by women in developing nations are also available for purchase through mail order, department and discount stores, for a price much less than the work put into them. In these situations, third world women quilters are paid pennies for their work, similar to other sweatshop models of production in developing nations, where finished products are sold in developed nations and profits ending up in stockholder's pockets.

Conclusion

In the past, a quilt was most often considered an item of utility, although women took great efforts to make aesthetically pleasing quilts. Most quilts made in the past also had personal or hidden meaning attached to them, just as contemporary quilts do. Often credited for being thrifty and making quilts out of clothing and household scraps, when financially able, women have historically bought and continue to buy new fabric for the purposes of quilting. Contemporary women make quilts using new, 100% cotton fabric that textile companies manufacture specifically for quilting. Currently quilts have multiple meanings and purposes. They continue to have utilitarian purposes and meaning for the women who make them. In addition, the general public is developing a sentimental and an artistic appreciation for quilts.

Nowadays, women are quite engaged in quilting activities. Once women discover that they enjoy quilting, they spend a great deal of time not only quilting, but shopping for fabric and equipment, meeting with other quilters in small and large group settings, take classes from other quilters, and attend quilt exhibits and shows. To understand the ever-increasing social world of quilters, one must first realize the extent to which women are engaged in quilting activities.

Quilters take part in a complex form of cultural creation, preservation, and transmission. Activities surrounding quilting provide a space in which women interact inter- and intra-

generationally, learning women's lives generally. In these spaces women learn about the physical mechanics of quilting and pass along their knowledge to other women. They leave clues about their lives in the quilts they make: the patterns, fabrics, and time available to them to spend quilting, evidence of their artistic vision and intricate sewing skills. The clues women leave in their quilts and how they talk about them differ from how art critics usually discuss quilts. A particular quilt may have deeply personal meaning to its maker, but this dimension may be overlooked by others. Similar to other cultural objects, quilts mean different things to different people.

APPENDIX B

PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

Individual Interviews

Abby is in her fifties, married, with two children. She has been quilting for over 20 years, and has a quilting space of her own. She is a professional quilter, and has owned her own business, a quilt shop, for over 20 years.

Alexis is in her fifties, married, with two children, and one grandchild. Alexis works inside the home. She has been quilting casually (off and on) for five years, and does not have a quilting space in her home. She belongs to a guild and attends smaller quilt groups.

Alice is in her sixties, married, with children. She is engaged in paid work outside the home, has sewn her whole life, and has been quilting the past 10 years. She has a quilting space in her home, enjoys taking quilt classes, and has just joined a quilt guild.

Allison is in her seventies, widowed, with children and grand-children. She has sewn and quilted her entire life. She has a space in her home to quilt, and belongs to a quilt guild.

Ann is in her fifties, married, with four children. She has been quilting for over 5 years, has a quilting space in her home, and works part-time machine quilting for others. She is thinking about starting a quilt guild in her community.

Angela is in her fifties, married, with children. She has been quilting for 30 years and belongs to a number of quilt guilds. She attends smaller quilting groups with friends, and is retired from paid work outside the home. She has a quilting space in her home.

Angie is married and in her 70s. She has been quilting for 10 years, does not belong to a guild, works inside the home, and spends much of her time volunteering in the community.

Bernie is in her 90s, is single and has a quilting room. She has worked most of her life outside the home, and is now retired. She has been sewing and quilting her entire life, and belongs to a quilting group.

Beth is in her 60s, married. She has been quilting for 15 years and has a quilting room. She has two children and works outside the home. Belongs to a guild.

Carrie is in her forties, married with three children. She has been quilting for 10 years, and attends a small quilting group with friends. She works outside the home and has just garnered a permanent quilting space for herself in her home.

Cassie is in her thirties, married. She has been sewing her whole life, quilting the past 10 years, and does not have a quilting space in her home. She is engaged in paid work outside the home.

Charlotte is in her seventies, widowed, with children and grand-children. She has been quilting her entire life, but has recently had to stop because of her arthritis. She has chosen to get involved in gardening as her creative outlet, and still displays finished quilts in her home. She is officially retired from paid work, but works part-time when her company needs her.

Chelsea is in her forties, married. She has been quilting for 15 years and has a quilting room. She has two children and works outside the home. Belongs to a guild.

Denise is in her forties, married, with two children. She has been quilting for over 15 years, and has her own quilting room. She works as a professional quilt restorer and appraiser, out of her home office.

Diana is in her fifties, married with three children. She works inside the home, has been quilting for 15 years and does not belong to a guild.

Eileen is in her sixties, married, with children and grand-children. She has been sewing her whole life, quilting for the past 10 years. She works inside the home, but has spent much of her life volunteering for her community, and donates sewing and baked goods to local organizations. She has a quilting space in her home.

Elise is in her 80s, married, with children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She works inside the home. She has been sewing and quilting most of her life. Her circle of quilting friends has just split up, due to illness and death.

Emma is in her forties, married, with three small children. She has been quilting for approximately 10 years and does not have a quilting space in her home. She belongs to a guild and attends smaller quilting groups. As the family's needs change, she works part-time outside the home while continually working inside the home.

Frances is in her forties, married. She has been quilting for 10 years, and enjoys teaching children how to sew and quilt. She has a space in her home in which to quilt, and is engaged in paid work outside the home. She does not belong to a guild.

Ginny is married, in her forties. She has been quilting for 15 years, does not have a quilt room. She has two children and has a business that she runs from home. She belongs to a guild, attends small quilt groups and teaches kids and adults about quilting through presentations and workshops.

Gwen is in her seventies, widowed, with children and grand-children. She has been quilting for 10 years, and has a quilting space of her own. Now retired from paid work, she volunteers part-time for her church, and attends small quilting groups in addition to belonging to a guild.

Hannah is in her fifties, single. She has been quilting for 20 years, belongs to a guild. She attends small quilting groups with friends, and works outside the home.

Heather is in her forties, divorced. She has been sewing her entire life, and quilting the past 20 years. She belongs to a quilt guild, attends smaller quilt groups, and has a quilting space in her home.

Jean is in her sixties, married, with children and grandchildren. She has been quilting for over 10 years, belongs to a guild and attends smaller groups to quilt with friends. She works outside the home, and has a quilting space in her home.

JoAnn is in her fifties, married, with two children. She has been sewing and quilting her entire life, and teaches sewing/quilting part-time. She is engaged in paid work outside the home, and has a quilting space in her home.

Judy is in her thirties, single. She has been quilting for three years, and has a quilting space in her home. She is engaged in paid work outside the home, and belongs to a guild and attends smaller quilting groups with friends. She enjoys taking quilting classes and shopping for fabric.

Karen is in her fifties, married with two children. She has been quilting for 25 years, and belongs to a few quilting guilds. She attends quilting groups with friends, and is engaged in paid work outside the home. She has a quilting space of her own in her home.

Karla is in her sixties, married with two children. She has been quilting for 15 years, has a quilting room of her own, and belongs to a quilt guild, and attends small quilting groups.

Kathy is in her forties, married, with children. She has been quilting for 15 years, and belongs to a guild. She also attends smaller quilt groups with friends. She currently works inside the home, and is the primary caretaker of her school-aged children.

Kelly is in her forties, divorced. She has been quilting for 5 years, and belongs to a quilt guild. She enjoys taking quilting classes, and is engaged in paid work outside the home. She has a small corner in her home office devoted to quilting space.

Kim is in her seventies, widowed, with children and grand-children. She is currently retired from paid work outside the home. She has been quilting her entire life, and does not have a quilting room in her home.

Linda is in her sixties, married, with children. She is retired from paid work, belongs to a quilt guild, loves to check out quilt shops around the country, and dreams of opening her own quilt shop someday. She has been quilting for five years.

Lindsay is in her thirties, single. She is engaged in paid work outside the home, and has been sewing her entire life. She has been quilting for 10 years and belongs to a guild. She also attends a smaller quilting group with friends, and has a home quilting space.

Lisa is in her fifties, married. She has been quilting for 10 years, and has her own quilting space. Her favorite quilts to make are Christmas quilts. She works outside the home and belongs to a quilt guild.

Loretta is in her fifties, married, with three children. She has been quilting for 5 years, and has her own quilting space, belongs to a guild.

Margaret is in her fifties, married. She works inside the home, and has been quilting for 15 years. She belongs to a guild, attends small quilting groups and has a quilting space in her home.

Meg is in her seventies, married with children and grand-children. She has been quilting for 20 years, and occasionally teaches quilting classes. She belongs to a guild and attends small quilting groups with friends. She is currently retired and works inside the home.

Melinda is in her forties, married, with two children. She has been quilting for 15 years, yet still considers herself a beginner, realizing that she has a lot to learn about quilting. Retired temporarily from her career, she works part-time outside the home so that she is home when her school-aged children are home from school. She has a small quilting space in her home, and attends a small quilting group with friends.

Melissa is in her seventies, married, with children and grand-children. She has been quilting for over 20 years, sewing as long as she can remember, and has a sewing/quilting room for herself in her home. Retired from paid work, Melissa gathers with friends in a smaller quilting group.

Michelle is in her fifties, married, with children. She taught herself to quilt 30 years ago, and has been enjoying it ever since then. She does not belong to a guild, nor does she quilt with others. She enjoys sitting with her family in the den and quilting. She is engaged in paid work outside the home.

Nora is in her sixties, married with children and grandchildren. Retired from her career, she has recently started working part-time. She has been sewing all her life, quilting for 10 years and has a permanent quilting space.

Patricia is in her fifties, married, with four children. She has been sewing and quilting her entire life, and has what she describes as a “too small” quilting room in her home. She attends a small quilting group to “drag and brag” her finished quilts.

Rachel is divorced, in her forties, with one child. She has been sewing and quilting all her life, and has a quilting space in her home. She attends smaller quilting groups with her friends, and owns her own business, working outside the home.

Sandy is in her fifties, married, with two children. She has been quilting for 20 years, and works outside the home. She does not belong to a guild, but attends smaller quilting groups with friends. She does not have a quilting space in her home.

Sarah is in her thirties, married. She has been quilting for five years, and works outside the home. She does not have a quilting space in her home.

Tami is in her fifties, married, and engages in paid work outside the home. She has been quilting and sewing all her life. She belongs to a guild and attends small quilting groups with friends.

Theresa is in her sixties, married, with children and grand-children. She has been sewing all her life, quilting for the past 20 years. She has a quilting room, belongs to a guild and attends smaller quilting groups.

Tina is in her forties, single, and has been quilting for 10 years. She has a quilting space in her home, and often does paid quilting work for others, in addition to her paid work outside the home.

Tracy is in her twenties, single. She has been sewing her entire life, and quilting the past 10 years. She is engaged in paid work outside the home, and attends small quilt groups.

Veronica is in her fifties, married with two children. She has been quilting off and on for 10 years, with a currently renewed interest in quilting. She has joined a quilt guild, attends smaller quilt groups and enjoys visiting quilt shops when she travels with her husband. Currently retired from paid work, Veronica works inside the home, and volunteers a great deal in her community.

Group Interviews

I unknowingly came upon three groups that had historical contact with my own family legacy of quilting, about which I knew very little. In these settings, I was also able to gather important stories about my grandmother and great-grandmother on my father's side. Both of these women were avid sewers and quilters, and taught many of these older women's grandmothers and mothers how to sew and quilt. This information could best be learned from these women, as they carried the stories of the deceased women in my family tree, in an oral tradition fashion.

The age range in these church groups was higher than the interviews I conducted with individual women, mainly because the populations in quilt guilds and church groups seem markedly different to me. Women ranged from their forties to their nineties in church groups, while guild members ranged from their twenties to their seventies. There were no established quilt guilds in the towns in which these churches existed. There was a fourth group of older quilters in their eighties and nineties that had just disbanded because of age and death. Because they had disbanded, I was not able to conduct participant observation with them. I was able to interview one still living member from this group to understand their group makeup and purpose, and to get a general idea of how they ran their group. Her interview is included in the individual interviews, rather than the group interviews.

The church groups I encountered have social aspects as one of their main purposes. The groups met in church space that was allocated to them specifically, either part of a general use room or in one case, a room in the church rectory. The groups differed from one another in religious denomination, but shared purposes generally. All groups shared fund raising for their respective religious organizations as a goal, and they all met weekly.

Group One

Group One consisted of six members. Together, they made a quilt together entirely by hand from start to finish, and used the finished quilt as a fund raising effort. They worked on the quilt only when together, and they designed the project and paced their work so that making the quilt would encompass one year's time. When the women finished that quilt, they began plans for making next year's quilt to raise funds for their church.

Group Two

Group two consisted of seven members. They quilted for others in addition to quilting quilt tops that individual members had made, charging roughly \$100 per quilt. After their weekly meeting of quilting, they had a potluck dinner together with the pastor of their church. Many of its members were widows and liked to eat meals with each other, and it also gave them specific time to spend with the pastor of their church. Money raised from quilting efforts went to the church, with the quilters deciding how the money was spent.

Group Three

Group three, with six members, also charged for their quilting. They charged \$100 to \$200 per quilt for hand quilting, based on size and quilting detail. At these rates, they loosely figured their quilting wages to be \$.06 an hour. They joked with me that they were doing this for personal reasons, and not for the money (Field Notes 1999). This group also had a number of widows in it. These women met almost every day when they had a quilt on the frame. Members of this group also worked on their own quilts at individual's houses when no urgent quilts were waiting for them at the church rectory. Each year this group made two quilts for the annual church bazaar. They sold tickets for the quilts and the money would be added to the fund raising efforts of the bazaar. The money made from the quilts they worked on more regularly, though, they had control of. The money still went to the church, but they would determine how much went toward what purpose in the church.

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in the research titled "Giving Voice: Uncovering The Social History of Quilting in the United States" which is being conducted by Marybeth C. Stalp, Department of Sociology, (706) 542-2421. I understand that this participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The following points have been explained to me:

- 1) The purpose of this project is to examine quilting history in the United States, by collecting and recording the experiences of people who participate in quilting activities. Excerpts from these materials (including interviews, documents and quilts) will be published in scholarly publications.
- 2) Participation in this project will take approximately 1-2 hours (1-2 hour interviews) of audiotaping. I will also have the opportunity to review the final edited excerpts, before publication to make any needed corrections. The audiotaped interviews and transcripts will be available to me if I wish to have copies.
- 3) No discomforts or stresses are foreseen.

- 4) No risks are foreseen.
- 5) The results of this participation will be confidential (unless otherwise requested by the participant), and will not be released in any individually identifiable form without my prior consent, unless otherwise required by law. The tapes will be kept indefinitely for educational/research purposes.
- 6) The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

Signature of Researcher, Date

Signature of Participant, Date

PLEASE SIGN BOTH COPIES OF THIS FORM. KEEP ONE AND RETURN THE OTHER TO THE INVESTIGATOR.

Research at The University of Georgia which involves human participants is overseen by the Institutional Review Board. Questions or problems regarding your rights as a participant should be addressed to Julia D. Alexander; Institutional Review Board; Office of V.P. for Research; The University of Georgia; 606A Graduate Studies Research Center; Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-6514.

APPENDIX D

TRANSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

Response Form

Marybeth Stalp

Sociology, Baldwin Hall

University of Georgia

Athens, GA 30602-1611

Please indicate how you feel about the use of your words in the enclosed materials.

Mark any changes on the enclosed materials and feel free to add any comments. Please place these materials in the stamped envelope that we have provided. Thank you for your time!

_____ The excerpts are satisfactory.

_____ I would like the excerpts used differently. (Please indicate how you would like these excerpts to be changed or indicate which excerpts you do not want me to use.)

_____ I would like a copy of the completed paper.

Comments:

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE

When/how/why did you get into quilting?

How would you characterize yourself as a quilter, based on what work you like to do?

What happens to most quilts that you make, once they're finished (gifts, contests)?

What techniques do you prefer (hand vs machine)?

Do you belong to a guild? What does belonging to this group do for you?

How would you characterize your guild?

Do you belong to any other groups (e.g., bees, stitch n bitch, church groups, chat groups, listservs, national level groups)? Are you involved in any bees in your guild?

What other than the guild do you consider a useful resource (e.g., magazines, books, tv shows, classes [local and national] quilt shows, teachers, programs, retreats, etc.)?

Describe the quilting world (or current quilting activities locally and nationally).

Are there any changes that you've seen in quilting since you've started?

Traditional vs. contemporary, what's that about?

How do you think the general public regards quilters?

What meaning do you attach to your quilts?

How do you define your work (art, craft, both)?

Does the definition of a quilt (art or craft) also define its use and its worth?