

QUILTING AS A GENDERED ACTIVITY:
A STUDY OF MALE & FEMALE
QUILTERS' BELIEFS AND PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ART/CRAFT

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Department of Curriculum Studies

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 1999

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Vancouver, Canada

Date April 12, 1999

Abstract

The recognition of quilting as a valid art form by scholars, art critics, visual artists and quilters has attracted the attention of contemporary society enabling both men and women to identify quilting as their preferred choice of medium for artistic expression. Recent studies have investigated quilting from a female perspective but have neglected to include a male perspective. I decided to investigate how the gender of the individual quilter could be connected to differences in perceptions of quilting experiences. Establishing my own perspective of the quilt medium, I provide an explanation of my research methods and offer a brief overview of quilting literature before presenting the responses of five male and five female quilters participating in a qualitative study. The areas explored are: the medium of quilting, the motivation for quilting, the behaviours/habits and contexts of quilting, the relationship between gender and quilting and quilting in school curriculum. Also, I provide a comparison between contemporary literature and the data findings to indicate how the small sampling of quilters from my study compare to the perceptions held by present-day quilters. In conclusion, I discuss the implications my research has for art education and indicate further directions available for quilting research.

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Dedication

In the spring of 1998 an old friend of my mother's asked to participate in my study. She had been given an explanation of my research intentions through my mother's correspondence. She was an enthusiastic quilter and found that the medium provided her with a sense of accomplishment and pride. The medium of quilting enabled her to face personal adversity on a daily basis. Her hardships were not of her own devising but a result of unfortunate circumstances. I welcomed the opportunity to meet her once again and to study the beautiful quilts that she had produced for friends and family.

In particular, I remember a friendship quilt that was completed approximately 20 years ago. Each of her friends received a letter stating her intentions to create this special quilt and a blank quilt block for completion. Her friends were encouraged to create their own designs using their preferred method of embellishment and to return the completed block for assembling. I vaguely remember the completed friendship quilt and my mother's own contribution towards it. (see Appendix A)

I sincerely wish that she could have taken part in my study, for the opportunity seemed very important to her. I am sorry to say that she has recently passed away. All those who knew her are grateful for the opportunity of her friendship and company. We know that she is beyond the reach of physical and emotional pain. I dedicate my thesis to her memory.

Doris Perkins née Powell

(1922 - 1998)

Introduction

Quilting: A Personal Reflection

For the past two years I have observed a group of individuals meet once a week. They vary in age, ethnicity, economic situations and past experiences, yet share a common characteristic: they are all women. They are also connected by the activity that brings them together — quilting. These women recognize that quilting is not as necessary to their survival as it may have been to their ancestors, yet these women do not underestimate the importance that quilting plays in their lives. The activity of quilting includes the use of needles, thread and scissors but also represents an art medium intertwined with the rich heritage of women's history. As an observer, I recognize the bonds these women have forged as a result of their quilting together. As a woman, I understand the enjoyment they experience from their shared company.

As an educator, I resist the temptation to restrict the experience of quilting to one gender. Men are gaining attention by creating quilts, researching different aspects of quilting history and producing publications that provide readers with step-by-step quilting techniques. These male quilters recognize that they still write for an audience that is primarily female; however, quilts are not created for just one gender. Whether intended for family members, charities, exhibitions or commissioned works, quilts are produced for the enjoyment of both men and women.

The group of women that I observe is unusual because a married couple prepares every quilt. According to the group and my own observations, the husband plays as important a role as does his wife in the creation of each quilt. The husband often designs the quilts and determines their colour schemes. I find it interesting that the women of the quilting group are proud of the husband's involvement and support his continued efforts. I often wonder if his efforts are supported because of the charitable purposes the quilts serve or because he

a male contributing to a female activity. Is this a normal practice in quilting culture and should male participation in quilting be encouraged or discouraged?

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for my family's support throughout this research paper. They supported my long hours at the library and computer, and viewing me surrounded by research materials. My only regret is that my father was unable to see the completion of this paper and this phase in my life. I am sure that he would be proud of my accomplishments.

I would like to thank the quilting group that I have observed for the past two years. Their thoughts and perceptions provided insight and encouraged my own reflections upon quilting. I would like to thank the ten quilters who participated in my research study for without their contributions my paper would lack substance. I would also like to thank the many individuals who have shown an interest in my research topic and encouraged my efforts.

I must also thank the members of my committee. My advisor, Dr. Anna Kindler guided me through the agonizing experience of writing a thesis. Dr. Graeme Chalmers provided the spark of interest that showed me that quilting was a valid topic for research. Nancy Cameron Armstrong, Chairperson of the Canadian Quilt Study Group, proved invaluable as my source for quilting information and materials. Without the assistance and patience of these three dedicated individuals my paper would not have been completed.

I would also like to thank my great-grandmother, Margaret Fowler née Martin (1838-1923) for producing a crazy quilt that encouraged my interest in quilting to develop into an overwhelming passion.

Chapter I

Research Intentions

Quilting: A Perception

Observing the quilting group and the quilt preparation process has challenged my perception of quilting. My perception of an “authentic” quilter was an individual who completed the entire process of choosing the pattern or creating a design, selecting colour combinations, cutting out the fabric using templates, piecing the fabric together and then sewing through the layers of the backing, filler and top. I never considered myself a quilter because my “quilted” projects did not involve this entire process on a consistent basis. My perspective was limited by my inexperience and ignorance. I now realize that quilters are not always involved in the entire quilting process. Quilters are individuals who embrace the opportunities that the medium provides for creativity and self fulfillment. Quilting involves not only technical knowledge and skills but encourages an attitude — a way of being. I have also come to realize that being female is not a condition necessary for participating in quilting experiences.

My research began with a family heirloom. From the estate of a maiden aunt, Gladys Margaret Christian, my sister and I inherited many hand-made items including a crazy quilt (see Appendix B). This quilt was created for our aunt by our great grandmother, Margaret Fowler (née Martin). By its appearance and according to family history we placed the quilt between 100 and 120 years old. Margaret Fowler had produced a quilt for every grandchild bearing the name Margaret. In 1981, when we inherited the quilt I recognized the sentimental and historical value it held for our family. In 1995 I began to study the quilt and to wonder what lay beneath its surface and in what context it was made.

From 1995 to 1998 I focussed many of my final papers, for education course requirements, upon different aspects of quilting as my interest developed. In 1996

I wrote a paper entitled Tearing the Fabric Apart describing the relationship between women and quilting through the perspective of western art. I wrote this paper as a reaction to the ambiguous position that quilting holds within the realm of Art Education. Quilting is recognized as an important part of Home Economics, Sociology and History yet requires justification as a suitable area of study for Art Education.

At the Quilt Canada conference in May of 1998, held at the University of British Columbia, I successfully presented Tearing the Fabric Apart to an interested audience. I was not surprised to observe that women constituted the majority of the audience. Women represent the majority of the consumer audience for the many contemporary quilting publications that include patterns and quilting instructions. Male quilters I have met and have read about may represent a minority group but do not seem to be influenced by a lack of recognition from female quilters or society. They do not want recognition as male quilters but simply as quilters, for they do not perceive gender as being important. Why? Perhaps the culture surrounding quilting does not segregate quilters according to their gender.

I would contend that western society categorizes and separates quilters as male or female. Quilters, themselves, appear to have a more androgynous perspective for they do not identify quilting as a gender-restricted activity. So why does the majority of society still perceive quilting as a gendered activity? I realized that when we first inherited our great grandmother's quilt I initially perceived quilting as being important to women's history. Upon reflection I realize now that my great grandmother's quilt is important to all my relatives, both male and female, for the medium overcomes cultural, social, economic, political and religious factors.

Would other quilting groups have provided similar support for a man's participation in quilting experiences as did the group that I observed? How had other men experienced

quilting? Did men perceive quilting in the same way as women? In fact, could quilting play as important a role in the lives of men as it did for women? How does the gender of the quilter affect the finished product? Has the present role of participation for men in quilting experiences changed? What are the perceptions of contemporary quilters regarding gender stereotypes in quilting? As a means of answering these questions and constructing a firm foundation of knowledge to draw upon, I began researching the history and culture of quilting. My focus has been upon the perceptions of both male and female quilters and their beliefs concerning the experiences of quilting for both genders.

Quilt, Quilting and Quilters: A Definition

Before proceeding further I must clarify how the terms quilt, quilting and quilters are used in this study. By addressing these terms directly I hope to avoid any future misinterpretations that may occur. The word “quilt” refers to either completed bedding consisting of a top, filler and backing or textile wall art. Either example must be held together by hand or machine stitching or other appropriate means of fastening and may display embellishments if so desired by the creator. I will only discuss quilts that are created by one individual or a group of individuals and are not commercially produced. I refer to the quilt as a three-layered type of bedding or textile wall art only as a basic explanation for quilters, readers and fellow researchers.

I realize that the term “quilting” amongst quilt makers usually refers to only the decorative stitches that adorn the quilt surface in the final stages of creation. After much contemplation I have decided not to distinguish between the different activities necessary to complete quilts such as cutting, piecing, or appliqué and have given quilting a broader definition to include all the necessary phases of the process involved in creating three-layered types of bedding or textile wall art.

I have identified “quilters” as any individual or group of individuals who are involved in

the process in creating either three-layered types of bedding or textile wall art. Throughout this study I have identified quilters as male or female yet the final analysis should prove that the gender of the quilter is unimportant in the creation of a quilt. The limitations of this format have determined my directions for research; therefore, I have chosen to investigate and record only the thoughts, perceptions and beliefs of individual or group quilters about quilting.

Purpose for Research

A literature review reveals that considerable information is known about the history of quilting and its relationship to women's social development (Atkins, 1994; Elsley, 1994; Fox, 1995; Hall, 1995; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987; Hoffman, 1991; McMorris & Kile, 1996; Shaw, 1997). Sources also provide descriptions or detailed interviews highlighting the thoughts and perceptions of female quilters in regard to their art/craft (Becker, 1996; Carter, 1996; Cooper & Buford, 1977; Fallert, 1996; James, 1978; McDowell, 1996; Walker, 1990).

However, I have discovered that the equally valid thoughts, perceptions and experiences of male quilters are recorded in fewer publications (Crews & Naugle, 1991; James, 1978; McMorris & Kile, 1996; Shaw, 1997). As men are not always identified as possible consumers of, or contributors to quilting, the majority of publications about quilting are undeniably targeted towards a female audience. The influence that men or their experiences have had in quilting has never been fully addressed or researched. Often men have only been mentioned peripherally as supportive or encouraging factors in women's quilting experiences (Fail, 1996; Finley, 1992; Waldvogel & Brackman, 1993;).

Recent studies have focussed upon women and their reasons for joining quilting guilds (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993; Langellier, 1990; Woods, 1992). Yet no studies have been directed towards the perceptions or experiences of male quilters. Nor have the social

implications been addressed to explain why men are not usually members of quilting guilds. In addition, recent studies have not explored the possible differences that exist between male and female quilters.

In this qualitative study I will explore ways in which gender affects the conceptualization of the quilting process and will reflect on the benefits of quilting for both genders. Through investigating the perceptions that quilters have concerning the possible educational benefits of quilting, I will argue for its inclusion in revised art curricula.

Research Questions

Through investigating the beliefs and perceptions that male and female quilters have about their art/craft, this study will endeavor to answer the following questions :

- 1) How do male and female quilters describe the medium of quilting?
- 2) What motivates male and female quilters to quilt?
- 3) What context/behaviour/habits support quilters' participation in quilting?
- 4) How does the gender of the quilter affect/influence their quilting experiences?
- 5) According to male and female quilters, what are the benefits for the inclusion of quilting in art curricula for both genders?

Recently, gender issues have received much attention in educational research. With this qualitative study I have attempted to explore the relationship between the gender of the quilter and their quilting experiences. By including male quilters in my study, I will encourage quilting research to explore the gender boundaries in future explorations of this art/craft. These insights will offer foundations for providing recommendations regarding inclusion of quilting in school curriculum.

Chapter II

Quilting and Quilters: An Overview of Historical Literature

Introduction

When observing the crazy quilt produced by my great grandmother several questions arose. I wondered about the hardships she endured, the challenges she faced and overcame and the ambitions she could not satisfy. Yet, it was just recently that I wondered what her quilting experiences might have been like. I've noticed that many contemporary quilting publications include either artists' statements or personal insights of quilters regarding the medium and their experiences (Becker, 1996; Carter, 1996; Fail, 1996; Hunt, 1996; James, 1996; Rogers, 1996). The historic accounts that I have of my great grandmother's life experiences describe the contributions she made to the Hullet district in Manitoba as an early settler; however, these experiences do not include her perceptions or beliefs about quilting.

I began to speculate as to why her quilting experiences were not acknowledged in published historical accounts and wondered if any records of past quilters did exist. Through research I discovered that some historical literature provided an account of the perceptions and beliefs of quilters, as recorded by the individual quilters themselves (Atkins, 1994; Bonfield, 1989; Davis, 1993; Ferrero, Hedges & Silber, 1987; Lipsett, 1991). In other instances the personal records of past quilters were recorded by another individual uninvolved in the actual quilting experience (Crews & Naugle 1991; Elbert & Elbert 1993; Lipsett, 1997; Lyons, 1997) and were not always accompanied by personal reflections.

For a better understanding of the data collected from my ten case studies I needed to research the history of quilting as well as examine the accounts of the experiences and impressions of past quilters. I concentrated upon the literature describing perceptions and

beliefs of both male and female quilters from historical perspectives. I limited my research and deliberately focussed upon the areas of medium, motivation, behaviour patterns and relationships to gender as introduced by four of my five research questions. The final area describing the benefits of quilting in art curricula will be discussed in Chapter Six as part of my conclusions. Within the format of this chapter, I have attempted to present a limited yet accurate literature overview of quilting and the individuals identified as quilters from a historical perspective.

Personal Reflection

When embarking upon this thesis I believed that I could easily separate the medium of quilting from the individuals who participated in quilting experiences. I have since realized that such attempts of separation are, for the most part, unrealistic. The qualities unique to quilting are, in fact, intertwined with the life experiences of each individual who creates a quilt. The surface of the quilt connects all cultures regardless of obvious differences because of the strong historical links to human culture that it represents.

As for separating male quilters from female quilters, that can also be a futile exercise. In some instances differences exist and have been brought to the attention of my audience but in many areas quilters, regardless of their gender, share similar perceptions and beliefs. The information presented in this chapter will demonstrate the connections between quilting and quilters as well as include brief references to gender differences. Within this chapter I have tried to represent an accurate illustration of the men and women who at one time pursued quilting both for personal and public gratification.

Quilting: An Historical Perspective

It became apparent that literary sources did not provide consistent descriptions of quilting history in North America. Because very few examples of everyday use quilts have survived in North America from the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Oliver, 1997, p. 16)

some unproved theories or myths have been established. I have tried to provide an accurate historical account of quilting based upon the better quality quilt examples that do exist in contemporary collections (Oliver, 1997, p. 16; Ramsey & Waldvogel, 1986, p. 9).

The quilts from the colonial period in North America were composed of three layers. The first layer, the quilt top, could represent structured or unstructured patterns of pieced-together fabric scraps or be a complete length of one fabric with or without added embellishment. The second layer, the filler was composed of wool or a variety of other soft substances available for bedding purposes. The third and final layer of the quilt, the backing, could be either a single length of fabric or a combination of larger pieces of fabric to cover the filler. These three layers were then stitched in patterns or anchored by systematic tying through the three thicknesses to prevent any shifting of the filler.

Quilters: An Historical Perspective

Even if individuals had recorded their experiences there was no guarantee that quilters, male or female, would reflect upon or discuss the factors unique to quilting. Identifying the meaning of quilting or debating the relationship between gender and quilting was not important during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Several historical accounts provide recorded personal details about women quilters (Crews & Naugle, 1991; Cross, 1996; Davis, 1993; Elbert & Elbert, 1993; Hall, 1907; Lipsett, 1991; Lipsett, 1997; Lyons, 1997; Macheski, 1994; Wettre, 1995). Many female quilters kept diaries that provided insight as to their thoughts and perceptions about quilting (Bonfield, 1989; Crews & Naugle, 1991; Davis, 1993; Hall, 1907; Lipsett, 1991; Lipsett, 1997). Despite the minority of male quilters in history, limited accounts of their experiences do exist (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 52; Wettre, 1995, p. 44). Sometimes their experiences began with the observation of their older relatives quilting (Fox, 1995, p. 16). In other instances

their choice of profession (military service, naval service, farming or tailoring) encouraged quilting as a worthwhile activity (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 217; Wettre, 1995, p. 45). Historical accounts indicate that a larger number of women quilted than did men. Perhaps this accounts for why more women than men recorded and reflected upon their quilting experiences.

During the nineteenth century, sewing was a skill taught to young girls as part of their preparation for the adult role they were assigned in society. Often experiences of quilting were included as a further application of this skill (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 116). The majority of historical resources indicate that quilters represented only one gender in society — female (Finley, 1991; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987; Jenkins & Seward, 1991). Society perceived quilting as an acceptable activity for women to pursue. In fact quilting became a normal domestic task for women during the nineteenth and early twentieth century in North America (Motz & Browne, 1988, p. 2).

In their own individual way, each female quilter has contributed to the evolution of quilting as a recognized North American art form. Yet sources often overlook the contribution that men may have had upon quilting history. These relatively few men accepted the challenges of quilting and produced fine examples for future generations to admire. Male quilters also proved that an individual can oppose societal expectations to gain personal satisfaction and gratification.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Many publications do not discuss the meaning of quilting from the perspective of the quilter in great detail yet two historical sources are worth mentioning. The first publication, Quilted All Day is a collection of the diaries of pioneer settler, Ida Chambers Melugin. Ida describes the process of quilt construction on a consistent basis through activities of “buying fabric and batting, borrowing patterns, piecing, sewing in lining, and putting on

borders.” (Davis, 1993, p. 84)

The second publication, Eliza Calvert Hall's Aunt Jane of Kentucky (1995) originally printed in 1907, presents an accurate quilter's perspective from the early twentieth century through the fictional character of Aunt Jane. Although a fictional character may not seem appropriate for research purposes I could not doubt the accuracy of the perspectives given about quilting. Aunt Jane demonstrated how the patches stitched together on the quilt's top layer signify different occasions throughout her life. She indicated how each fabric scrap carries a message that is obvious to herself but requires translations for other individuals.

Patchwork? Ah no! It was memory, imagination, history, biography, joy, sorrow, philosophy, religion, romance, realism, life, love, and death: And over all, life a halo, the love of the artist for his work and the soul's longing for earthly immortality.

(Hall, 1995, p. 82)

She also indicates that similar swatches of fabric enable quilters to illustrate their own artistic expression and unique life experiences.

You can give the same kind o' pieces to two persons, and one'll make a 'nine-patch' and one'll make a 'wild-goose chase,' and there'll be two quilts made out o' the same kind o' pieces, and jest as different as they can be. And that is jest the way with livin'.

(Hall, 1995, p. 74)

Often fabric scraps were collected and exchanged between women so that their quilts would have a different meaning for each individual as well as enabling memories to remain current in the quilter's mind (Hall, 1907, p. 82). Another source indicated that “many women made quilts in an attempt to create works that live beyond their lifetime.” (Davis, 1993, p. 84) Aunt Jane also acknowledged that fabric scraps left over from clothing often outlast the life of the owner and will remain vibrant (Hall, 1907, p. 63). Although quilters may have produced quilts using the same techniques each individual had a unique

perspective and understanding of the quilting medium.

Motivation for Quilting

Physical evidence proves that completed quilts were brought to North America by European immigrants and considered a necessary requirement for survival (Colby, 1972; Oliver, 1997). For this reason initially many early settlers continued to quilt to ensure their survival during winter months (Jenkins & Seward, 1991). Granted that such protection was necessary, there were other equally valid reasons for quilt making. Quilting served needs such as comfort, (Finley, 1992) decoration, (Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987) continuing cultural traditions, (Oliver, 1997) and increasing a family's economic status (Oliver, 1997).

Quilting also preserved a family's heritage as a visible record of their ancestors' experiences (Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987). Quilts were often accompanied by stories handed down from one generation to another to clarify the meaning of each block or pattern (Lyons, 1997). These stories proved necessary when particular designs or images on quilt surfaces conveyed intentional or hidden meanings (Anderson, 1991; Brackman, 1997; Jenkins & Seward, 1991). The quilts from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century, although illustrating examples of artistic expression, were solely for domestic purposes. Quilts were perceived as both a domestic necessity and valuable family possession (Brackman, 1997, p. 54; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987, p. 81; Motz & Browne, 1988, p. 2; Ramsey & Waldvogel, 1986).

Many women were introduced to quilting at an early age and continued to produce quilts throughout their lives for different reasons (Hoffman, 1991, p. 29). For example, Kathryn Kennedy produced several quilts during her lifetime. She learned how to quilt as a young teenager and produced two quilts for her hope chest. She later produced a special quilt for her daughter entitled 'Yesterdays Remembered' and was "inspired to use designs from her

childhood and her life.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 63)

Kathryn experienced several difficulties while completing ‘Yesterdays Remembered’ stating “that ideas didn’t come easy, and the drawings were another hurdle.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 67) She used a variety of sources for her designs including magazines, newspapers and photographs and painstakingly transferred her designs onto each quilt block. “As tedious as the work may have been, Kathryn always anticipated the joy of the completed project. As that time grew near she could hardly wait to give the quilt to her daughter, Margaret.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 67) Upon completion Kathryn and her daughter “spread it out and stood together, looking at the designs, recalling memories, and hugging each other.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 67) Kathryn considered the quilt to be “an expression of love from a mother to her daughter” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 67) and indicated that for many women the surface of the quilt became more than a collection of fabric scraps and proved how love for one’s child can motivate quilting experiences.

Many quilts were of the popular patchwork designs, but these were not the only quilts produced. Appliqué in traditional medallion designs and patriotic patterns were also prevalent (Jenkins & Seward, 1991, p. 26). Born as a slave in 1837, Harriet Powers who employed appliqué techniques, received much recognition for her well-crafted biblical quilts. She was motivated to communicate her religious beliefs and her faith through the quilt surface. She created two special quilts that are presently housed in two different locations. One is part of the Smithsonian Institution quilt collection while the other can be found in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. She may have chosen the appliqué technique because it was often “saved for the best quilts, the ones that showed off the needleworker’s skills.” (Lyons, 1993, p. 32) Displaying the capabilities of her skills might have been another motivation for Harriet to participate in quilting experiences.

Harriet did not use popular flower motifs or American Indian geometric forms. She

used “figures, animals, sunbursts, stars and crosses” that were representative of African designs (Lyons, 1993, p. 32-33). Harriet Powers’ first and most famous quilt depicts many of her favourite biblical stories that she had heard about, sung and knew from memory (Lyons, 1993, p. 15). Upon completion, she entered the quilt into a special exhibition for black craftspeople at the International Cotton Exhibition held in 1895 in Atlanta, Georgia. She received an offer to sell her beautiful quilt from art teacher, Onetia Virginia Smith but refused to part with “her beloved stories.” (Lyons, 1993, p. 18) In time, however, economic hardship forced her to reconsider and she eventually accepted Smith’s offer.

Many women were motivated to produce quilts as a means of fundraising for important social concerns (Jenkins & Seward, 1991). They supported a variety of causes with quilts such as war efforts, temperance, abolition of slavery, securing the right to vote for women and missionary work (Atkins, 1994, p. 85). During World War I, several Red Cross quilts were produced and were featured in many magazines including the popular The Ladies Home Journal (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 126). These quilts portrayed signature blocks as part of the overall pattern. A Sunday School teacher Edith Wing, organized her nine year old students to make one as a fund-raiser. They collected signatures at 10 cents each and embroidered these upon the blocks. The completed blocks were then sewn together and quilted by some of the women of the church (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 126).

The male quilters described in these historic accounts seemed to appreciate the usefulness of quilting techniques as a means of using up fabric scraps. These accounts indicate, without much information about the men themselves, that many men produced patchwork quilts from fabric scraps (Wettré, 1995, p. 43). In some instances male quilters gained recognition. For example Astrid Carlsson remembers her grandfather teaching all

his five sons how to become tailors. Patchwork quilts and pillow covers were made from the small pieces of fabric left over (Wettre, 1995, p. 43). During the mid 1800s, oddly enough, another tailor named Karl Magnus Jonsson "taught all his five sons to become tailors." (Wettre, 1995, p. 43) Four of the sons emigrated to America where they continued the practice of using fabric scraps to make patchwork quilts.

Many of the men and women that society referred to as seamstresses and tailors were motivated to find a use for their fabric scraps and discovered the experience of quilting. For example, Minnie Bruse attended a sewing school in the 1920s for her final year of education and was trained as a seamstress. She stated that she made quilts because of personal satisfaction from the experience and she also enjoyed using up her fabric scraps through the quilting process (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 164). Tailoring was an occupation that brought men in close contact with fabric. As shown in examples described earlier, often the father employed as a tailor would encourage his male children to learn the skills of his occupation. Tailoring was perceived as a valuable trade necessary for all regions of North America. If tailors used their fabric scraps to create patchwork quilts or other smaller quilted items, their participation was accepted in a normally female-dominated activity.

Often soldiers and sailors would become quilters, even temporarily, to provide a practical item. Soldiers were given only the most basic of equipment making survival difficult (Brackman, 1997, p. 54). A minority of soldiers in Europe produced their own quilts from fabric scraps as a means of ensuring comfort during extreme weather conditions (Wettre, 1995, p. 40). Sailors, as well, often brought very few possessions on board ships during long journeys. During a 3 - 4 month voyage there was plenty of time available for pursuing other interests, however the limited space on board ship restricted men's activities. Some sailors produced patchwork quilts during their time at sea. This

was not an unusual activity for “all domestic chores were commonplace for a sailor” during their time at sea (Wettre, 1995, p. 41).

Not all males who quilted were tailors, soldiers or sailors as shown by the example of David Larrick. His motivation for quilting was to create an inheritance for each of his eight grandchildren (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 52) after retiring from farming in 1908. His family could not provide an accurate account of how he learned to quilt. A grandson believed that his grandmother might have provided encouragement and technical support. Within Anna Larrick’s family her father and brothers pursued an interest in quilt making. “In fact her own father quilted and actually signed two of his own quilts.” (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 52)

Ernest Haight, as another example, graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1923 with a bachelor’s degree in agricultural engineering. “Ernest preached accuracy and absolute precision, a part of his engineer’s personality.” (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 217) After criticizing the “lack of exactness” in his wife’s quilts in the early 1930s he was challenged to produce a better example. That challenge and the example of his father quilter Elmer Haight provided Ernest with the motivation necessary to begin quilting. He soon showed that his quilting skills were far superior to his wife’s and became the quilt maker of the family. Ernest’s interest in quilting was encouraged and supported by his father, an avid quilter. In fact Ernest and his father completed four quilts together for Ernest’s children.

More recent history presents the motivation for quilting from a different perspective. In the early twentieth century Marie Webster encouraged women to follow her example and pursue quilting as an opportunity for commercial creativity. In 1915, Marie Webster of the Ladies’ Home Journal publication published the first quilting book. “Webster became the personification of the new look in quilts.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 148) For 20 years

following World War I “she ran a successful mail-order business from her home. She provided patterns, quilt-top kits, basted tops and completed quilts.” (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 148) She restored appliqué to prominence, introduced pastel shades and innovative design elements. Her products were sold in several retail facilities including department stores and specialty quilt shops.

During the Depression hard economic times were common throughout North America. Diversions proved necessary to all individuals. One such diversion was to set world records. As the Depression lingered many records were set and then broken in attempts to defy economic hardship. Quilters were motivated by this need for fame and recognition. In fact many quilters tried to make “the quilt containing the most pieces.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 34) The initial record was established by an unidentified female quilter producing a quilt containing 21,840 pieces. She stated that she pitied the next individual who would break the record because she knew the amount of work involved in the process. Within time “a nimble-needed gentleman named Albert Small equalled the 21,840 pieces and added another 100,000 before he was finished.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 34) There is no further reference to either the unidentified female quilter or Albert Small in quilting history. Yet both were undeniably motivated to gain recognition through establishing a quilting record.

Another diversion that led to fame and profit during the Depression was organized contests. Although several contests were held, one in particular created an unprecedented sensation and inspiration amongst quilters. In 1933 Sears, Roebuck and Company sponsored a quilt contest at the Chicago World’s Fair that awarded a first prize of \$1200.00 (Waldvogel & Brackman, 1993, p. xiii). Throughout North America stories were recorded of husbands helping their wives in whatever manner necessary to achieve that elusive first prize. All entries were submitted by women but many men were prompted to help their

wives buy fabric, draft the patterns, cut pieces or help assemble quilts to ensure that their entries had a chance of winning (Waldvogel & Brackman, 1993, p. xvi).

The efforts of Clarence and Linda Revenstorff illustrated how some men were motivated to become involved in quilting experiences. I can only speculate whether the theme of technology and/or the prize of \$1200.00 provided the reason for men's involvement. Clarence had artistic abilities and was asked by his wife to help design a quilt. Sears, Roebuck and Company encouraged quilters to include the theme of the Chicago World's Fair within their entries. As a result many of the quilts depicted the theme "A Century in Progress" in one format or another. The Revenstorffs decided to depict the "the greatest advancements from 1833-1933." (Waldvogel & Brackman, 1993, p. 65) After six weeks of research Clarence designed a quilt that exhibited "the most complete representation of changes wrought by the technological advances of the century." (Waldvogel & Brackman, 1993, p. 69) Clarence helped to determine the layout of the quilt as well as the colour scheme and shaded each drawing for his wife to transfer to fabric. Linda Revenstorff provided the finishing stitches after assembling the quilt top. Their quilt did not win any prizes but was noted as a remarkable undertaking completed by a husband and wife.

The motivations of gaining recognition, fame, profit, or commercial creativity, expressing religious beliefs, providing a family inheritance, bringing attention to social concerns, or ensuring one's comfort or survival were only a few of the examples indicated in this section. Historical resources indicate that the motivations for participating in quilting are numerous and individual to each quilter.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Quilting enabled men and women to produce a practical item for long term usage, yet not all individuals were gifted quilters. Some were unwilling to make their own or lacked the necessary needlework skills; others might have had too many other responsibilities and

did not put forth the effort necessary to complete a bed quilt. The production of cloth in North America and the introduction of the sewing machine altered the experiences of North American quilters. While factory-manufactured cloth and bedding items became more affordable for many individuals, the use of the sewing machine eliminated the need for much hand sewing.

Quilting was typically reserved for the moments when necessary domestic chores had been completed. For many pioneer women quilting was an activity reserved for winter months or special occasions. For many individuals the collecting of fabric scraps proved to be a constant endeavour and the acquiring of new material proved to be an exciting experience. Whether by candle, lantern, fire or day light, quilts were produced in stages. Many quilters belonged to church groups that participated in quilting for fundraising for charitable work. When working in isolation, men and women quilted according to the restrictions of their own schedules, but if working in groups special times were set aside for quilting. Many individuals completed quilt tops until enough were assembled for a larger group setting. These larger groups or “quilting bees” were highly anticipated social events that both men and women enjoyed.

Quilting bees were an activity perceived to be North American in origin. The term bee began to be applied to quilting parties around the turn of the nineteenth century and, interestingly enough, was first applied by men — quite possibly as a carryover from such male-dominated activities as husking bees and logging bees (Atkins, 1994, p. 11). . . . Quilting bees enabled quilters to socialize and develop artistic expression while still accomplishing a necessary domestic task (Hoffman, 1991, p. 28).

Of the tailors, soldiers and sailors recognized as male quilters, their participation in quilting was strictly restricted to their leisure hours (Wettre, 1995, p. 43). Although tailors worked with fabric on a consistent basis, it was the production of clothing for their clients

rather than quilting that provided the majority of their incomes. Quilting was a practical use of leisure time producing a highly desirable type of bedding or in some instances quilted pillows or pillow cases (Wettre, 1995, p. 43).

Changes in behaviour patterns, such as retirement, affect quilting. Quilter David Larrick of Nebraska had an advantage over other men. His retirement from farming provided more opportunities for quilting experiences (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 217). He was not restricted by the demands of the seasons and could participate in quilting on an ongoing basis. His wife's family provided Larrick with the support necessary to complete several quilts for his family.

Behaviour patterns may also be affected by educational training and changes in technical equipment. Ernest Haight, another quilter from Nebraska, pursued quilting for approximately 50 years. As he was a prolific quilter and had completed 30 - 40 quilt tops that waited for quilting, he replaced his treadle sewing machine with a newer zigzag model and developed a method for quilting by machine (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 217). By using a sewing machine he was able to piece a quilt in 50 - 60 hours and then quilt a full-sized quilt in 8 - 12 hours. Support from his family enabled him to maintain both the family farm and his interest in quilting. As an engineer he used his drafting skills to design many quilt patterns (Crew & Naugle, 1991, p. 217). He only stopped quilting when his health would no longer permit participation in the activity.

I believe that quilting was not the only textile-related activity that these men might have had an interest in and avidly pursued when time was permitted. For example, sailors often knitted their own clothing accessories such as socks during their long sea voyages (Wettre, 1995, p. 43). Knitting is a skill that demands good hand and eye coordination supporting behaviours necessary for producing quilts. Other sailors might have produced small wood or bone carvings while restricted to the cramped living quarters aboard ship. Such carving

requires imagination and the ability to visualize the end result. These behaviours are also necessary in quilting. Ernest Haight of Nebraska carved interlocking wooden blocks and chains. He incorporated the complexity of these problem-solving skills into one of his quilts indicating that different behaviours utilized in other mediums may be transferred to quilting (Crews & Naugle, 1991, p. 218).

Each quilter identified deliberately reserved time for quilting. Historic accounts do not indicate the frequency of that reserved time but I would assume that similar to the motivations for quilting, the behaviours regarding quilting were also highly individual and unique to each quilter. However, not all quilters were able to commit to the time necessary to complete an entire quilt. Many used time saving devices such as the pre-made quilt kits provided by Rosalie and Ona Wilinon. These two sisters established a mail-order business specializing in commercially produced quilts that thrived between 1915 - 1926 until the factory was destroyed by fire. They offered a catalogue advertizing a wide variety of quilt materials and batting. They also offered a choice of marked tops for purchase. Rosalie and Ona supervised the production of each quilt to ensure high standards of quality for their customers (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p. 150).

Commitment to quilting also includes conducting research and writing for publication. For example Carrie Hall and Rose Kretsinger were quilters who became researchers and co-authors. Rose Kretsinger produced several quilts that are currently part of public and private collections. Carrie Hall decided to begin collecting quilt patterns after World War I as a way of exploring and developing her interest in the medium.

Carrie filled six scrap books with patterns clipped from magazines and newspapers and made approximately one thousand [sic] quilt blocks before deciding there was no end in sight. She became famous for the quilt talks she offered to a variety of audiences in colonial attire under the title of Madam Hall, in the 1930s (Elbert & Elbert, 1993, p.

161). Their quilting history classic The Romance of the Patchwork Quilt in America (Hall & Kretsinger, 1988), originally published in 1935, detailed the possible origins of different quilt names and patterns in the United States. Ruth Finley, a researcher and author influential to quilt history, wrote Old Patchwork Quilts and the Women Who Made Them (Finley, 1929). Both of these publications helped organize available information and materials by providing an important resource for quilting to a wider population as well as established quilting myths that persist and are difficult to eliminate even when proven untrue by contemporary researchers.

Differences in lifestyle, use of innovative techniques, technical equipment or labour saving devices, educational skills or training, preferences for isolated or group participation, time of year or time of day, all contribute to the behaviour patterns distinct to each quilter. The actions of conducting research, writing and compiling information are also important as identified behaviour patterns involved in quilting experiences.

Gender and Quilting

During the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century, quilting was perceived by society as an activity appropriate for and exclusive to women.

Quilts have long played an important role in the textiles tradition of this country functionally as a means of beliefs and history of the women who made them; and socially as a means for women to gather and work together in friendship, solidarity and mutual aid. (Atkins, 1994, p. 1)

This quote reflects the consensus of many historical resources by limiting quilting to women. The role or influence that men might have had upon women's quilting experiences is either overlooked or not accurately recorded.

When I explored the recorded accounts of gender composition for quilting "bees" or large gatherings of quilters I discovered contrary historical accounts. While sources agree

that quilting bees were organized in both rural and urban communities (Finley, 1992; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987) there are inconsistent accounts as to the extent of men's participation. Very clearly women were always in control of the quilting whether a spontaneous gathering or organized event (Atkins, 1994, p. 16). One perspective restricts men's participation to the feast and social activities that followed the completion of the quilts (Atkins, 1994; Finley, 1992; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987).

Another perspective reveals that men were invited and might have limited their participation to threading needles or holding candles and were present "on the women's sufferance." (Atkins, 1992, p. 16) In some instances men's participation was expanded to include drawing "complex patterns on a quilt top or cutting out templates from which patterns were cut." (Jenkins & Seward, 1991, p. 22) Because society recognized the production of quilts as "women's exclusive property" (Finley, 1991, p. 20), the extent of men's participation depended upon the common consent of the women quilting.

As quilting literature does not address the importance that boys and girls played in quilting bees in great detail, I can only assume the extent of their participation. Perhaps children were utilized as helpers ensuring that quilters had all the necessary supplies they required and those showing skills in quilting might have been invited to participate under the careful supervision of the adults, as long as their presence did not disturb the dynamics of the quilting bee.

The contradictory perspectives describing men's participation in quilting bees only indicate the uncertainty of the extent of men's overall experiences in quilting. Historical accounts maintain that a larger number of women than men engaged in quilting and that society associated the medium of quilting with women. I must acknowledge that not all men were interested in participating in quilting but I would indicate that men generally received fewer opportunities for quilting experiences than women. Men certainly observed

the activity of quilting as is recorded by several diaries but did not always participate in the event (Fox, 1995, p. 16). While sources provide different reasons for the lack of male participation in quilting (Finley, 1991; Atkins, 1992), quilting history maintains that male quilters who challenged the restrictions placed upon them by society for their own individual reasons were rare.

During the early twentieth century, the quilt industry promoted quilting as a feminine activity by encouraging newspapers and women's magazines to include "quilt-pattern columns" within their issues "written by fictional grandmas and aunts who assured readers that their patterns were authentic" and not imitations or copies (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 32). These fictional characters were also busy producing, in some instances, quilting thread, patches and bedspread patterns (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 32). Male publishers and heads of companies recognized and defined the market for quilting as middle-class women and further promoted the medium as a women's hobby.

Not all men felt restricted by the commercialization of quilting as a female-dominated activity. Men such as Ernest Haight provided inspiration for other men to participate in quilting experiences by developing skills and establishing innovative quilting techniques. It is unfortunate that many resources have limited quilting experiences to a single gender. Within the next chapter research indicates how quilting still represents a predominantly female population but shows how the medium has changed due to the efforts of both male and female quilters.

Chapter III

Quilting and Quilters: An Overview of Contemporary Literature

Introduction

While observing the quilts on display for the 1998 Quilt Canada conference at the University of British Columbia, I was amazed by the variety of styles and techniques represented by the different quilters. Each quilt was highly individual — a testament to the different experiences that each quilter brings along with their skills to the quilt surface. An artist's statement accompanied each work giving the general public further insight when studying the quilts. Each statement gave an explanation of the work as well as reasons for the choices made in the overall construction. I discovered that information about the quilters themselves made each quilt seem more substantial than layers of fabric. As an observer I was able to gain more from the experience than a visual, emotional or spiritual response. The artists' statements often caused a deliberate cognitive study of their work.

Within this chapter I have provided limited information about the history of contemporary quilting as well as the recorded perceptions, beliefs and contributions of many amateur and professional quilters to establish a basis for appreciating the individual case studies presented by five male and five female quilters in Chapter Five. The responses of the ten case studies are then compared to other amateur and professional quilters in Chapter Six.

Quilting: A Contemporary Perspective

A resurgence of interest in quilting began during the 1970s as witnessed by contemporary society. However this resurgence has not been without controversy. The exploration of colour, format, techniques and subject matter by some individuals has not always been well received by quilters who continue to produce traditional quilt patterns from the past (McMorris & Kyle, 1996, p. 69; Shaw, 1997, p. 8-9). Quilt makers, artists,

scholars and the general public now question whether quilting should be categorized as an art or craft. I believe that any controversy is useful in encouraging individuals to discuss their personal interpretations of quilting as well as to identify how their life experiences are reflected through the quilt medium (Fail, 1996, p. 8). I have never intended to fully examine or to settle these controversies but to present them as factors important to contemporary quilting.

Contemporary quilts may include multiple sides or corners, unfinished, rounded or jagged edges, multiple layering of fabric, combinations with other art mediums, openings or closures or other alterations as determined by the intent of the quilter (James, 1991, p. 2; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 58-59; Shaw, 1997, p. 66-67). Many traditional materials are still being used but in some instances quilts may incorporate items such as

buttons, beads, oil and acrylic paint, leather, glass, bone carvings, felt, ribbons, yarn, embroidery floss, gemstones, fibre-reactive dyes, painted canvas, photo-transfers, metallic threads and string. More bizarre items such as recycled copper, used tea bags and dyed dryer lint, egg shells, dried banana peels and orange rinds, coffee grounds, human hair, bras, zippers, old gloves and dresses, violin strings, a slinky, toy airplanes, and X-Acto knife blades (Shaw, 1997, p. 83)

have also been introduced into quilt construction.

Quilters: A Contemporary Perspective

Through research I discovered that quilters often provide within quilting publications explanations for their choices of colour, pattern, design and technique. Many individuals also include artists' statements with their quilts to allow for a more complete understanding of their work from their audience. What Aunt Jane of Kentucky stated in 1907 is still relevant in present times for no two quilters will ever produce the same quilt, have similar experiences when quilting or provide similar explanations of their work (Hall, 1907, p.

74).

Quilters classify themselves under different categories according to their skills, abilities and artistic intent. There are some individuals who have carried on traditional quilting practices of the past in their quilt designs (Fail, 1996, p. 7; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 60; Rogers, 1996, p. 4; Shaw, 1997, p. 36). These individuals classified as either amateur, hobbyist, or professional, participate in quilting either for leisure, business or educational purposes. There is another group of individuals who classify themselves as artists and challenge the acceptable boundaries of the quilt medium (Hunt, 1996, p. x; McDowell, 1996, p. 11; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 60; Rogers, 1996, p. 64; Shaw, 1997, p. 42). All classifications of quilters decide whether the quilt surface serves public or private use — individual, artistic or political expression. Well known quilter Ruth McDowell provides her audience an explanation for assuming the title of quilt artist.

In choosing a label for myself, I have become comfortable with calling myself an artist.

This is not to try to set myself up as part of an elite group. We are all artists in some way when we try to do the best we can, whatever our field or creative endeavour. (McDowell, 1996, p. 11)

Sources state how the modern quilter has evolved from a homemaker to an academically trained artist (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 64; Shaw, 1997, p. 21-22). I would clarify this statement by saying that not all quilters have formal training in art as that is not a necessary requirement for participating in quilting. Many quilters receive their first formal instruction in quilting through courses or workshops. Others are fortunate enough to receive tutelage and encouragement from family members who quilt.

Some individuals enjoy the presence of the quilt as a representation of comfort and history. Others glorify in the political potential that quilting brings to a variety of causes. Society is slowly recognizing that quilters can be either male or female and that gender

does not affect an individual's interests or abilities.

Society's perception of quilters has been affected by many of the individuals who refer to themselves as artists (Becker, 1996, p. 11; Carter, 1996, p. 14; Fallert, 1996, p. 12; James, 1996, p. 6-7; McDowell, 1996, p. 11; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 56; Shaw, 1997, p. 7). Such artists have achieved recognition in another art medium and have discovered further opportunities for artistic expression from fabric through quilting. They have provided inspiration for both male and female quilters, as well as developing support and validity for quilting from the rest of society. The contributions provided by quilters producing traditional patterns and artists extending the quilt medium have equally affected the present popularity of quilting. Whether achieving fame through publications or local or international exhibitions or continuing to participate in the activity of quilting for reasons of local recognition, family appreciation and support, quilters — amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist — influence society's perception of quilting.

Without question, women still represent the majority of quilters in contemporary society (James, 1991, p. 2). Contemporary female quilters recognize that quilting has an undeniable connection to women's history and often reflect that connection within their works (Atkins, 1994 ; Crews & Naugle, 1991; Cross, 1996; Davis, 1993; Fox, 1995; Jenkins & Seward, 1991; Hedges, Ferrero & Silber, 1987; Lipsett, 1991; Lipsett, 1997; Lyons, 1997). In fact quilting is often perceived as a means of remembering the experiences of past generations of women and establishing roots for modern women (Atkins, 1994, p. 82).

Although some individuals have said that "it's difficult to describe the average quilter" (James, 1981, p. 2) others have produced a credible profile of the contemporary quilter (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 22; Langellier, 1990, p. 49). The individuals who pursue quilting are not restricted to a single age or cultural group but share a common

interest (James, 1991, p. 2; Shaw, 1997, p. 16). They share the interest of transforming pieces of fabric into a 3-dimensional art form. Whether male or female, the contemporary quilter must establish a commitment to including quilting in often hectic daily routines.

The contemporary quilter continues to challenge previous gender stereotypes associated with quilting. The efforts of quilt artists have enabled both men and women to become interested in quilts, learn the techniques used in quilting and become recognized as quilters (James, 1981, p. 2; Shaw, 1997, p. 23). The most prevalent and eloquent male quilter in contemporary society is Michael James. Two of his publications, The Quiltmaker's Handbook and The Second Quiltmaker's Handbook, provide instruction in the design and construction of quilts.

Due to the abundance of female quilters I could not name only one individual as being influential. Instead I have recognized women such as Nancy Crow, Faith Ringgold, Terrie Hancock Mangat, Ruth McDowell, Judith Larzelere, Joan Schulze and Jan Myers-Newbury for their continuous pursuit of self-expression through the medium. These women are featured in several different publications and provide workshops for individuals fascinated with quilting and wanting to explore their interest further. Within this chapter, I have tried to present as accurate a representation as possible of the men and women of contemporary society who participate in quilting experiences.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

The majority of quilters, including those who participated in my study, produce traditional quilt patterns. They display little interest in expanding the horizons of traditional quilting beyond three-layered objects maintained by simple or complex decorative stitches but recognize that the format of the quilt itself has evolved. Quilts are no longer restricted to the square or rectangular shape that characterized much of the bedding produced previously (Fail, 1996, p. 8; Hunt, 1996, p. 3; James, 1978, p. 2; McMorris & Kile,

1996, p. 68; Shaw, 1997, p. 82). Quilters may intend their work to be displayed as bedding or textile wall art. Either format is acceptable when displayed publicly in galleries or privately in homes. These quilts produced by contemporary quilters have expanded the scale and focus of traditional quilts from the past through “avant-garde techniques and different choices in subject matter.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 60-61)

Most quilters recognize that “the medium is the message, and it forms a major component of the meaning of their work” thus determining the ultimate shape or appearance of the completed work (Shaw, 1997, 16). Individuals have discovered through their experiences that the most distinctive quality about creating quilts is the appearance of the fabric surface and that it is incapable of replication by any other medium (Shaw, 1997, 7).

Quilts illustrate the possible effects of movement and colour onto a broader or expanded format (Fasset, 1997, 6) as well as reflect the artistic impressions or intentions of the quilter. Like their historical counterparts, contemporary quilters recognize that the medium of quilting also provides an outlet for their unique artistic expression or ‘voice.’ Quilt artist Erika Carter indicates that through the medium of quilting she has discovered how to use her voice: “I knew I must make many quilts to understand what I wanted to say and how I wanted to say it.” (Carter, 1996, p. 12) Carter also realizes that quilting has “changed her way of thinking” and enabled further “self discovery.” (Carter, 1996, p. 10) As another example, quilter Caryl Bryer Fallert indicates that quilting allows her to express qualities incapable of description. Through quilting she could reflect “joy, energy and healing — about things that are positive and life-affirming.” She uses quilting to express “intangible” qualities as well as explore the functions of “seeing, experiencing and imagining.” Fallert intentionally uses imagery in her quilts as “metaphors for feelings or ideas.” (Becker, 1996, p. 12) Other quilters, such as Wendy Lewington Coulter, also appreciate the potential quilting has for representing metaphors. Coulter perceives quilting “as a metaphor

for the creative resourcefulness necessary to survive as a woman in the patriarchal system.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 18) She compares lives to quilt making as a process of “piecing together fragments and remnants in an attempt to form an integrated whole.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 18) Her quilts represent her “contribution to the world.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 18)

Regardless of whether the quilter is an amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist, they use the same techniques but apply those techniques differently in their quilting experiences (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 60). The choice of subject matter is individually determined by each quilter, yet the quilt surface connects all individuals through history and illustrates common experiences and emotions. For example, quilt artist Michael James strongly advocates “looking beyond” the medium of quilting by recognizing the connections between our experiences and artistic endeavours. Quilt artists are very aware of how some quilters object to any type of experimentation with the quilt medium (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59) but are encouraged by the words spoken by Yvonne Porcella. She believes that “the more quilt artists show their work, the more that work will challenge the traditional definition of the quilt.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 68)

Motivation for Quilting

Displaying an interest in the medium and medium-related experiences are no longer the only common factors that individuals from different backgrounds share (James, 1991, p. 2; Woods, 1995, 41). Many acknowledge that the medium of quilting encourages “an exploration of design ideas” (Fail, 1996, p. 29; James, 1981, p. 2), the opportunity to “express their views on society, politics and the environment,” reflect “a wide range of emotions” or illustrate the journeys involved in self-discovery (Rogers, 1996, p. 3).

As the medium of quilting has changed in contemporary society so has the motivation for voluntarily pursuing the activity. No longer is quilting restricted to motivating only women or necessary as a protective measure against extreme weather conditions. Artists

and scholars have encouraged a change in perspective towards quilting due in part to its contemporary relevance and potential to deliver political messages (Atkins, 1994, 85; Shaw, 1997, p. 41). The most memorable and ongoing contemporary quilt project to promote changes in governmental policies is The Names Project Memorial Quilt. This project was started in June of 1987 "to commemorate those individuals who died from the AIDS virus." (Anderson, 1991, p. 162) Quilts have also been devoted to other causes such as peace, disarmament, the environment, human rights, medical research, homelessness and drunk driving.

In some instances an interest in quilting may develop into a passion or overwhelming obsession (Fasset, 1997, p. 9; Hunt, 1996, p. 20). What follows is only a sample of individuals' obsessions. Quilter Wendy Lewington Coulter confesses that "until her third child was born, she quilted in every available scrap of time ... staying up late and getting up early." (Hunt, 1996, p. 20) Quilt artist Erika Carter describes how the "passion for creating something of substance from raw materials" initially led her to quilting (Carter, 1996, p. 9) and now has become "a driving force" in her life affecting everything she experiences (Carter, 1996, p. 12). She also indicates how her obsession provided unexpected results in her own artistic development. "The more I worked, the more I felt like working; the more I produced, the more I learned; and the more I learned, the more I recognized how little I knew." (Carter, 1996, p. 15). Quilter Connie James also alludes to the fact that she has more to learn about the medium of quilting. "My quilt art is all consuming, too much so sometimes. Quilting is exciting; it feeds on itself and just keeps building. The more I learn, the more I want to know." (Becker, 1996, p. 45)

In every instance, these quilters and quilt artists have identified their obsession to quilt as originating from their own interest and not that of society's interests. Quilter Deborah White explains how her passion for quilting has become very important to her daily

routine.

I'm a fanatic when it comes to quilt making. I never stop. I have ideas popping up in my head constantly. My brain is always thinking quilts. It's a driving energy that I can't squelch. My quilting keeps me sane and keeps my mind balanced. My quilting is the delight of my day, something to look forward to. (Becker, 1996, 27)

Quilter Sheila R. Chapman admits to being "driven to complete" her quilts so that she can transfer her ideas to tangible objects (Becker, 1996, p. 73). Quilter Roslyn Rowley-Penk uses words such as "passionate", "excites" and "becomes all consuming" to indicate the obsession that quilting has become in her life experiences (Becker, 1996, p. 65).

Many quilters are still motivated by the practicality of the quilt medium as a means of warmth. Others identify the history or the quality of "legacy" surrounding the quilting medium and its connection to human culture as another motivation for quilting (James, 1981, 2; James, 1998, p. 16; McMorris & Kile, 1988, p. 48). Whether intended as bedding, decoration, charitable donations or gifts, many individuals quilt to achieve self fulfillment. Quilter Connie James recognizes that quilting serves an important role in her life. "I create quilts because I felt like there's always been an art process in me that has not been fulfilled. I love working with colour, values, and forms, and quilting allows me to express myself." (Becker, 1996, p. 45)

Some quilters have discovered that quilting brings relaxation into their hectic lives (James, 1998, p. 5). Quilt artist Pauline Burbridge describes the experience of her first quilt as "therapy" (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 63) while another quilter Ivy Tuttle, describes the process of "appliqué as being relaxing." (Becker, 1996, p. 73) Other individuals find the experience of quilting not only relaxing but inspirational. Quilter Win Burry, who describes inspiration as "the gentle listening to the wisdom of our inner being," indicates that inspiration "comes very slowly and quietly" and acknowledges that "there is

nothing that does not have the potential to inspire.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 103) Burry hopes that her quilts prove inspirational to other individuals searching for their own artistic expression.

The attraction of fabric texture, colour, the opportunities to create original designs, the juxtaposition of traditional or altered patterns, and adding the final decorative stitches motivate many to quilt (James, 1987, p. 3; James, 1998, p. 12; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 65-66; Shaw, 1997, p. 83-84). Quilter Iris Ethridge confesses that she “had been aware of the pleasure of colour, pattern and texture for as long as she can remember and quilting seems to offer the widest diversity of possibilities for exploring in these areas.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 143) Another quilter, Pat White, indicates her enjoyment of “the interplay of colour and design in quilting but also pushes the limits in colour, combinations of techniques and subject matter.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 196)

In some instances male and female quilters appreciate the versatility of the quilt surface for utilizing or combining techniques from other art forms (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 60; Shaw, 1997, p. 80). Quilt artist Terrie Hancock Mangat eventually appreciated the possibilities that quilting had to offer to her art work.

When I was six years old, my mother asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I said ‘fabric.’ She bought me six one-half-yard pieces and wrapped them up. They meant so much to me; I kept them in a box and took them out to enjoy them. However it wasn’t until I’d graduated from art college that I realized I could use fabric in my art instead of the ‘approved’ media. (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 63)

Many quilters just want to create something beautiful (James, 1991, p. 7) and are unconcerned as to whether their finished product appeals to others as long as they themselves have been satisfied by the end result (James, 1991, p. 8). While quilter Patti Cunningham has realized that she only needs to please herself when quilting (Becker,

1996, p. 99) quilter Kathy Martin acknowledges that determination and self-direction are necessary to generate her motivation to quilt. "When I create a quilt, I try to express myself and not worry about what others will think. I am complimented if others understand my work, especially if I am conveying a certain message." (Becker, 1996, 41)

Whether pursuing quilting as a leisure activity or utilizing the surface of the quilt as a means of self employment, each quilter perceives quilting as being an important factor in their lives. Individuals are willing to risk negative feedback to pursue their interest in the medium because quilting is so important. Quilter Charlene Phinney provides the best explanation of the determination necessary to be successful in quilting.

Creating quilts is the only way I can release my artistic ability. I think doing anything artistic is taking a risk. Some people won't understand your art, so you automatically set yourself up for criticism. You've got to be able to accept criticism because not everyone will like everything you do. What you think is important. (Becker, 1996, p. 69)

Context/Behaviours/Habits

The contemporary quilter has an advantage over quilters from the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth century because of the availability of fabric, close proximity of quilting supplies, convenience of electric sewing machines and electric lights. These innovations have provided more opportunities for quilting experiences while encouraging the use of unique themes, application of new materials and techniques.

Within the section entitled Quilting: A Contemporary Perspective I eluded to the different shapes that were now acceptable as quilt formats. In contrast, there are functional and economic reasons why some quilt artists have decided to maintain the traditional square or rectangular formats for their quilts. "While art quilters are not constrained by these functional conventions and limitations, many choose to work in traditional large,

rectangular, bed-sized formats” for these can be suspended vertically or horizontally on walls (Shaw, 1997, p. 82). In order to increase productivity and to respond to the changing economy some individuals are producing smaller quilts. These quilts are “less labour intensive and can be marketed at more reasonable prices than larger pieces. They are also often better suited to the scale of home and apartment walls.” (Shaw, 1997, p. 82)

All contemporary quilters have the freedom to determine the factors that characterize their quilting experiences. Individuals can access quilting through instruction from educational institutions, retail store workshops and from large regional conferences. This skill is no longer necessarily handed down from one generation to the next. However some quilters were fortunate to receive instruction from their family members. Quilter Judy Day was

as a child, surrounded by creativity and encouraged to sew by her mother, an expert needlewoman and dressmaker. In fact when the new electric sewing machine arrived in the house, Judy, aged five, was the first to try it out. Even before starting school she was able to knit and crochet, skills taught to her by her grandmother. (Fail, 1996, p. 11)

Like their historical counterparts, many traditional quilters of modern society participate in quilting experiences as a leisure time activity. This does not guarantee that quilting will be maintained on a regular basis, as there is a wider choice of interests that individuals can pursue in contemporary society. Quilting often becomes another activity to accomplish during a busy routine. Some quilters may limit their quilting experiences to particular seasons in the year, for instance as an indoor activity during colder weather conditions. Recognition must also be given to the commitment of time necessary for completing a quilt.

Quilt making also is and always has been extremely labour intensive. The craft of quilt making demands time and patience, a willingness to suspend results while pursuing

process. The distance between conception and completion, between inspiration and realization, is greater in quilt making than in most other craft or art forms ... A quilt can take months, even years of full-time work to finish, especially if the quilt maker does his own quilt stitching by hand. (Shaw, 1997, p. 81)

The thinking process of contemporary quilters is complex and filled with unexpected developments. Many quilters spend a lot of their time thinking consciously and subconsciously about quilting when participating in other activities. Quilter Robyn Ginn, finds that many of her designs emerge when "doodling while on the phone and come back later to see that I have the beginnings of a fantastic bird or some other fantasy creature." (Fail, 1996, p. 91) Quilter Wendy Saclier acknowledges that her thinking process in the construction of a quilt is often the result of placing the pieces by trial and error:

Just throw down a few fabrics and stand back to decide what you think the important thing is to keep going; everything changes when the embellishments go on. The pieces become smaller and the colours you use take up the strength of colour of the embellishments. (Fail, 1996, p. 24)

Both Ginn and Saclier encourage their students "to develop their own creativity" by beginning with predrawn designs and adding individual features (Fail, 1996, p. 92).

Quilter Brenda Duncan Shornick also spends much time mentally planning a quilt. I think about an idea for a new quilt for a long time and mull it around, refining the design before I begin. When I shop for fabrics, my original quilt plan often vanishes because I see other fabrics and colours I want to use. I always arrange my colours on the wall to see how they work together ... You need to experiment and realize it's okay if something doesn't turn out the way you hoped. (Becker, 1996, p. 3)

Another quilter, Barbara Lee Olsen, indicates that her thinking process as follows:

I use a picture or shape that has inspired me as a beginning point, and then I let the quilt

evolve. It's like I am in control to a certain point and then I have to let the quilt take on a life of its own. Even though I have a mental image I feel a stronger force works through me to create my quilts. (Becker, 1996, p. 37)

Contemporary quilters have the choice to either work individually within the homes or assemble in larger groups at designated locations for both personal and political causes (Shaw, 1997, p. 81). Regarding space, quilters will often identify a particular room for the creation, storing and production of quilts. Yet these quilters are not restricted to that space. Quilts may be brought to other areas in the home for continued attention. This allows individuals to share their quilting experiences with others. Quilt artists often create their quilts within the context of studios solely intended for their vocational purposes (Shaw, 1997, p. 81). These studios may consist of additional rooms added to the quilt artist's residence or spaces rented in warehouses or public buildings.

Any quilter — amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist — if adequately motivated by emotional, symbolic, practical, obsessive, or intellectual stimulation will place the creating of quilts as a priority in their life at the expense of other interests (James, 1998, p. 117) and develop techniques and characteristics unique to their quilts.

Gender and Quilting

As indicated from the historical perspective in Chapter Three, society perceived a relationship to exist between the female gender and quilting. Author Nathaniel Hawthorne of the 1837 novel The Scarlet Letter remarks upon this relationship declaring that “women derive a pleasure, incomprehensible to the other sex, from the delicate toil of the needle.” (McDowell, 1996, p. 10) Two major events of contemporary society challenged that statement and encouraged a change of perspective towards the relationship between gender and quilting. The first event to influence quilting was the womens' liberation movement. It was not until the feminist movement began in the early 1970s, and more

and more women challenged the male-dominated art establishment, that quilt making caught the interest of women (and men) who possessed professional art backgrounds. Today, there are many quilt artists who are working in the medium. (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 61)

The second event The Names Project Memorial Quilt (Howe, 1992), also influenced how individuals perceived the relationship between gender and quilting. In October 1992, 20,064 panels of this quilt were displayed in Washington, D.C. Additional panels are continuously produced by both men and women, heterosexual as well as homosexual (Atkins, 1994). This AIDS quilt transformed the activity of quilting from representing “women’s culture” to “human culture.” Society recognized that both men and women could produce quilt panels not only for political causes, but to reflect self-expression. The panels of The Names Project established that “quilt making gives everyone an opportunity to explore their own creativity and to play with colour, design and texture.” (Fail, 1996, p. 33) The opportunities provided by quilting do not guarantee that instances of discrimination are nonexistent, but emphasize that gender need not be used as a condition for participating in quilting.

Whether male or female individuals of different cultures, religious denominations, ethnic backgrounds and sexual orientations have the freedom to participate in quilting experiences. These individuals recognize that through exploring our differences we identify the common qualities that we all possess regardless of gender differences. As quilter Brenda Duncan Shornick explains, quilting provides a connection “across generations and cultures. Even though abilities and choices vary, the connection between human culture remains. Quilting is an artistic outlet for so many people and the wonderful thing is that there’s room for everybody.” (Becker, 1996, p. 3) Many previously female-dominated art traditions are now explored by both male and female artists.

Individuals can not ignore that in some instances stereotypes may still linger on. Quilt artist Deborah Felix, believes that stereotypes still exist in the perception of quilting experiences. As quilting is perceived as an activity that “just something women do” she considers that quilts are “not going to be accepted as an art form for a long time.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69) Quilt artist Nancy Crow, shares a different perspective acknowledging that quilting has been denied previous recognition because of its fabric composition but insists that “the quilt’s [sic] time has come.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69) As contemporary quilters representing different ability levels and intentions discover that gender need not determine an individual’s choice of artistic expression, the presence of both males and females in quilting experiences will hopefully gain acceptance by society.

Men who quilt in contemporary society still challenge the remains of social preconceptions from past history: “for the most part, however those men who make quilts do so for the same reasons that motivate women.” (James, 1981, p. 2) Some couples are creating quilts collaboratively exploring the strengths of each other’s artistic skills and experiencing an admiration for their individual abilities. For example both Marjorie Patterson and Sherry Bussey create quilts with their husbands. They indicate that “no sense of competition” exists and that each proves influential in the appearance of the completed quilt (Fail, 1996, p. 32; Hunt, 1996, p. 173). Both Bussey and Patterson’s quilting efforts enjoy the support that their husbands give on a regular basis.

The recognition of quilts as art has encouraged more men and women to learn the techniques of quilting (James, 1991, p. 2). Some have transferred techniques between quilting and different art mediums (Shaw, 1997, p. 81) while others have incorporated the presence of quilts in their art works (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 55-57). Through this recognition, many more individuals are observing and taking an interest in quilting than previously recorded (James, 1991, p. 2).

The relationship that quilters perceive between gender and quilting is highly individual. Some may admit that history has designated quilting as “a woman’s art” (James 1987, p. 3) and that this can create societal barriers for participating in quilting. Other quilters will consider the barriers as being self-imposed and self-regulated. The majority of quilters indicate that the gender of the quilter is unimportant and should not be a factor in their decision to participate in quilting (James, 1998, p. 126).

Michael James reflected upon the relationship between gender and quilting and has come to the following decisions.

I did wonder, when I first got involved in quilts what people would think of a man getting this serious and this focussed on something that men except for a handful, simply didn’t do. I came to the conclusion that I had to do what I felt would feed me regardless of what anybody thought ... I have always felt that the novelty of my gender in this medium wasn’t enough to sustain interest in my work — the work itself had to speak and its construction had to be as rock-solid as any around ... I could be perceived as a white male ‘establishment’ voice in a field that is 99% female. Certainly, some individuals are hostile to that voice. Yet I feel that my convictions about the validity of this medium relative to other media is proof of my commitment to quilts and quilt making and quilt makers. (James, 1996, p. 126)

A final issue regarding gender and quilting is hostility arising from some female quilters who refuse to accept male quilters as part of their quilting experiences whether through guild organizations or informal quilting bees. This does not suggest that men require permission to quilt, just that in some instances acceptance of male quilters is neither forthcoming nor granted. Men may have to overcome hardship or criticism while pursuing their interest in quilting and maintain a steady motivation to continue the experience. All quilters have unique abilities and skills but share many common experiences that can be

illustrated through the surface of the quilt as an expression of human culture, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

Chapter IV

Methodology

Research Methods

Participants

Ten quilters (five males and five females) consented to participate after receiving an explanation of the research purpose. Six of the quilters reside in British Columbia while four reside in Manitoba. I located these ten quilters through the knowledge of friends and family instead of relying upon quilting guild memberships. These ten quilters represent different age groups, vocational choices, educational backgrounds, and skill levels in quilting. Volunteers participated without payment and were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Associations, 1995).

Materials

I identified five different areas (medium, motivation, context/behaviours/habits, relationship to gender and quilting in school curriculum) that were important towards exploring the thoughts/perceptions and beliefs of quilters regarding their art/craft and discovering whether differences in perceptions were because of gender differences. These areas of interest were selected after considering the survey studies of the Pine Tree Guild (Langellier, 1990), the Minnesota Quilters, Inc. (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993) and the Canadian Quilters' Association/Association canadienne de la courtepointe (Woods, 1995). I then devised a series of 36 questions to be used as a basis for each case study. The area Context/Behaviours/Habits was perceived as indicating the most information about the individual experiences of quilters and was given more emphasis.

I: Understanding of Quilt Medium

1. What do you understand/mean by the word "quilting"?

2. Do you consider quilting to be a form of craft?
3. If given the label "craft," does quilting seem to imply an "inferior activity"?
4. Do you consider quilting to be an art form? Why? Why not?
5. How would you describe your quilting experiences?

II: Motivation for Quilting

1. What motivates you to quilt? Why?
2. Do current events influence your quilting?
3. How important is quilting to you? Please explain.
4. Does the activity of quilting affect your disposition?/ mood?/ frame of mind? In what ways?
5. Do you set a regular time aside for quilting? If yes, in what ways does it impact your daily routine?
6. Do you think that your family appreciates your quilting? What makes you think that?

III: Context/Behaviours/Habits

1. Do you do any other handiwork that supports your quilting?
2. How many hours do you quilt per week?
3. Do you always quilt during a certain time period in the day or night?
4. Do you subscribe to any quilting publications? Which ones?
5. Do you have any quilting books? What kinds? (e.g. "how to do" books, history of quilting, etc.)
6. Do you belong to a quilting group or guild?
7. Do any of your relatives quilt? If yes, do you feel that they offer you support?
8. Does your family help you quilt?
9. Do you attend quilt shows or exhibitions?
10. How would you describe your partner's/spouse's role in your quilting experiences?

11. Do you feel that you have your partner's/spouse's support for quilting? If yes, in what ways?

IV: Gender and Quilting

1. Is there, in your opinion, a relationship between gender and quilting? Please explain.
2. Do you see quilting primarily as a woman's art medium?
3. As a male/female quilter, do you feel that your own quilting is affected by your gender?
4. Do you feel that there are gender barriers that may prevent some individuals from quilting? Please explain.
5. Are you concerned about gender stereotypes in the context of quilting? Please explain.
6. Do you feel that there is gender discrimination among quilters? Please explain.
7. Would you encourage your daughter, niece, granddaughter, etc., to quilt? Why? Why not?
8. Would you encourage your son, nephew, grandson, etc., to quilt? Why? Why not?

V: Quilting in School Curriculum

1. Should quilting be taught in schools? Why? Why not?
2. Should both boys and girls be encouraged/taught how to quilt?
3. What would be the most suitable subject for teaching quilting? Why?
4. Do you think that girls may be more responsive to quilting than boys? Why?
5. Should quilting be taught as a historical or current art form?
6. What benefits would students (of both genders) receive from learning about quilting?

Procedure

I used Spradly's (1979) method for ethnographic interviews with the ten quilters who consented to participate in my research. The interviews were scheduled from June to October of 1998 allowing for both travelling time to Manitoba and the convenience of the study participants. Each participant was given a copy of the interview questions prior to

the scheduled interview. Each interview was approximately 1 - 2 hours in length and the responses to the questions were recorded by tape recorder and written notes. After concluding the interviews, all ten quilters were invited to share examples of their work for photographic purposes. These photographed quilt examples are included as an appendix to the thesis.

Analysis

I selected the data findings that provided the best representation of each individual quilter's thoughts and perceptions of their quilting experiences and presented these as individual case studies. I also included data findings that offered further insight towards understanding the perceptions recorded by contemporary quilting literature. Further analysis of the data findings were made by comparing each case study and identifying how gender influenced the perspectives recorded by quilters.

Chapter V

Study Findings

Introduction

I have divided this chapter into two distinct sections, each highlighting the perceptions of female quilters and the perceptions of male quilters (see Appendix C for examples of their quilts). As an introduction for each case study, I have provided limited background information about each quilter. The interviews are structured according to the headings used by the research statements and interview questions; therefore, the interviews are arranged as relevant to the topics of: understanding of quilt medium, motivation, context/behaviour/habits and gender and quilting. In addition, another section entitled quilting in school curriculum will be added for further discussion in the concluding chapters.

Perceptions About Quilting of Female Quilters as Recorded in This Study

Case Study #1

Rebecca is in her early thirties and is the oldest of two children. She is married and has one son. Rebecca is currently employed full time as a pre-press technician for a graphic reproduction company. She resides in a large urban centre and holds a university degree in English Literature. Rebecca received private instruction in sewing, knitting and crocheting as a teenager. She classifies herself as a beginner quilter. She took a course through night school as her first formal experience in quilting. Rebecca does not consider quilting as a priority in her life but hopes she will have the opportunity for more meaningful experiences in quilting in the future.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

As a beginner quilter, Rebecca does not conceal her inexperience regarding quilting culture. Although she professed unfamiliarity with the quilting medium, Rebecca provides

many insightful viewpoints concerning this newly acquired interest. Rebecca perceives quilting as a process of “putting pieces together” or “assembling a unit.” She indicates that factors such as colour, pattern, texture or overall composition influence the appearance of quilts. In fact these factors highlight the individuality of each quilter.

Rebecca recognizes quilting as having elements of both art and craft but struggled to explain her perspective. Upon much reflection she determined that quilting may be considered a craft as it “is something you do on your off time.” Yet, she acknowledges that quilting is “more than a craft” in its’ often very complex structure that requires a “fully integrated” perspective for completion. Rebecca thought that many individuals still attach negative connotations to quilting when they identify quilting as a craft. “They’ve got this look about them when they say it.” Rebecca also considers quilting to be an art form because the whole process is “subjective” and forces an individual to add their “own little touches.” Individuals contribute their “own artistic edge into choosing what fabric, colours, patterns, and designs” to use.

Though not of a quilting background, Rebecca knows that her love of colour, design and fabric will make her search out more quilting projects as time allows. She is still completing her first project and acknowledges that quilting does not take priority in her life.

Motivation for Quilting

Rebecca provides several reasons for her interest in quilting.

I love colour and fabric. I like sewing whether it be hand stitching or machine and I like putting things together. I like using my hands. And now I can use the sewing machine to further move it along. And to think that you finish something and can use it. That’s what I like.

Although Rebecca professed that current events did not motivate her participation in quilting she realized that innovations in quilting techniques and supplies influence all

quilters. “... Better quality fabrics, better colours, and better treatment of those materials which you’re going to use will obviously sport a higher price tag. In the long run I’m sure it’s better.”

Rebecca acknowledges that quilting is “not as important as sewing” is in her life at present. As a result, quilting becomes secondary to the other priorities requiring immediate attention.

I really like it but I’ve got other priorities so it’s not right up there at the moment. If I get the time, if it’s the right time of day (‘cause I really find quilting during the day is best for me — I like that natural light) then I’ll do it. I know that’s limiting and my work’s sporadic because of it. If I had a project that I wanted to get done then I would definitely go for it. But it’s one of many so I don’t have a priority on it right now.

But regardless of the status that quilting may hold in her life, Rebecca identified the influence that quilting has over her emotional well-being as further motivation for participating in the activity. “I’ve accomplished something even though it may be only six inches. I feel better after having completed a section of work.”

Rebecca shared that her family “are slowly seeing the outcome” of her first project. She believes that:

everybody is attracted by my choice of colours. The sheer vividness of the colours attracts your eye and the different patterns are really cool too. I know I’ve chosen a unique look and if people see it, they recognize it.

She hopes that once the quilt is completed her family will finally get to see it in its entirety on a daily basis.

Context/Behaviours/Habits:

Due to a demanding schedule, Rebecca quilts on “the average maybe twice a month.” She tries to set aside “an hour or two each time” she quilts but indicates that she does not

always achieve that goal. Although she does not belong to a quilting group at this time, she did comment that she has tried unsuccessfully to organize one. "I questioned two or three friends whether they might be willing to start up a quilt group but nobody seemed interested."

Rebecca's aunt is one of the more prominent quilters in her family, but due to distance the aunt's help is not always readily available. Rebecca acknowledges that her "mother probably would help if asked. She's a good hand sewer, so the quilting techniques that I can pass on to her would be taken up easily enough." The rest of her family help if asked. They would "stretch this out or move this around or roll this up for me — they do help that way and they touch the fabric in an unfinished state."

Rebecca's husband does not participate in her quilting experiences. In fact she describes his role as being "extraneous." She believes that "he does take an interest in knowing what" she is quilting. He seems very interested in the modern, abstract quilts that were shown in one book Rebecca brought home. "I was quite surprised that he found them appealing and because of that sparked interest I will definitely ask for his help to construct one of those quilts." Rebecca's husband will continue to support her quilting "unless the price tag goes up too high." But all in all Rebecca appreciates the words of encouragement he offers towards her efforts.

Gender and Quilting

Rebecca associates quilting with women, not due to historical influences so much, but because she's "never seen a man quilt yet." She does not deny that men are capable of quilting for she has "read about male quilters in glossy magazines that come out from Europe or back East." Rebecca has noticed that "generally you don't see men doing it. They just don't take the time to do it or to have any interest in it."

Rebecca considers the different perspectives of quilters based upon individual

preferences rather than gender distinctions. Although she confesses that she wouldn't "know how men would look at quilting," she does not believe that she represents all female quilters. She maintains that

everybody has their own preferences and there's enough fabrics out there that you could probably find something to choose that you find appropriate at the time. It's more up to the individual than whether they are male or female. If a man were to make a bedspread composed of pastel colours and put his name beside that quilt he may get ribbed by his friends. He may feel more pressure than I feel because he's a man as to what colours and fabrics he does choose. Once you get into the creation of a quilt almost anything goes.

Rebecca believes that some men would be concerned about their masculine image if confronted with the medium of quilting and inadvertently reinforce possible gender stereotypes.

If men were interested in doing quilting and really wanted to do it they could. My husband can use my machine and sew but it's only to replace a knee pad or quickly fix something. Most men have no desire to stitch.

Rebecca would not dissuade any individual from quilting because of their gender but notes that participating in the activity of quilting is "easier for a woman and harder for a man" in current society. She acknowledges that quilting culture is focussed primarily towards women.

When I go to the couple of stores that I've gone to — to look at fabrics it's all women. If any man is there, he's there to repair the sewing machines or repair or stuff like that. I hope that if any man came to buy fabric he would receive help without bias. Sales are sales. I'm sure most quilters are aware of the work involved and if a guy showed up at a class they would be pleased and pleasantly surprised.

Rebecca would encourage any individual, regardless of their gender, to quilt and recognizes that observation of the activity is just as important as hands-on experience. Rebecca also maintains that the entire process of quilting is important. She presents quilting as one activity that provides a good learning strategy from start to finish.

For a child to, for anybody to embark on a project, I think it's great. To complete it — that's the other big part. Even if you work slowly you can get it done. It would be a whole learning experience that's not always easy with the steps involved. It's just like building a house. You see everything happening. Some people just want to walk in at the end when everything is done ... I don't want anybody that I know to just see the final product and not be aware of what went into it. Everything's ready for use. That's what we see too much of today. We don't appreciate how products are created and nobody knows unless you're in on the process. Processes still exist, except you don't see them anymore. Now if you can do it yourself — I think that's what's important ... Quilting is a good — very good illustration of a process from start to finish.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Rebecca believes that her knowledge of school curricula is outdated. She also questions what the objectives are for student learning. Rebecca cautions educators about introducing quilting if they themselves do not have an interest in the medium.

I haven't been in there for a while as regarding what they teach kids ... If people aren't getting certain experiences at home, you hope then they get them at school. Quilting could be one of them. If I were a teacher and keen on quilting and there was the problem of expense, I would get people to give me all their scrap fabrics and we would just put something together that way. So many things are presented in an awful, mundane way that the level of interest drops off for both the teacher and the student ... Only two or three teachers stand out in my mind. One of them was an art teacher

who inspired the whole class. We succeeded in her eyes and we presented our projects to other kids in the school and we had a great time knowing that we did this ... It calls for a pretty special person to present a very special idea — i.e. quilting or some different form of art that is not usually there. So it would be a challenge on the teacher's part and the students' part to make quilting succeed in the schools.

Rebecca maintains that both boys and girls should be encouraged or taught to quilt under the subject heading of art:

You would have materials in art to do things with ... I think it could be mentioned in passing in life skills or social studies but I think the real emphasis comes with the doing of it — a more hands-on situation.

Although Rebecca insists that both genders should learn about quilting she realizes that girls might be more interested in the medium as a result of history and social expectations. "Again because it's seen as girl's work, women's work. I guess I say that because I don't see enough men doing it." She admits that "there is more a tendency for girls and women to do quilting than men."

Rebecca perceives the continual evolution of modern techniques and equipment as important in acknowledging quilting as both a historical and current art form. With the increase of innovations in quilting comes the increase of deliberate and often incidental benefits for students. She believes that students of both genders would realize the ability to use their hands at creating something, mapping a road so to speak by joining pieces together. Quilting is just a different medium. They'd learn that they could do it as with any other skill. They can experience colour, texture and pattern in their choice of fabrics. What freedom!"

Rebecca insists that students should learn the fundamental basics of quilting history to appreciate the art form in its broadest sense: "I think it's very important to know the

history of quilting. Once you do, then you know where it has come from and where you can take it.”

Case Study #2

Laurel is in her early forties and is an only child. She is married and has one son, one daughter and one grandson. She is employed as a banker and resides in a large urban centre. She graduated from high school and has completed several job-related courses. She considers herself to be an experienced quilter. She had her first formal instruction in quilting from a course offered through a quilting supply store. She eventually wants to have a quilt displayed in each room of her house as decoration to create a more homey environment. Through quilting she believes that she can include qualities of warmth, visual and emotional comfort to her home as well as represent how quilting has connections to past and present society.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Laurel describes quilting as an effect possible on a fabric surface. In fact she offers the word, “puckered” as a further indication of the appearance upon a fabric surface. For Laurel quilting represents elements of both art as well as craft. Quilting is a craft because “you put your own skill and time and expertise into it.” You assemble “a number of different pieces of something to end up with a finished product.” Yet referring to quilting as a craft does not designate an inferior activity. Laurel explains that “the same skill and expertise” necessary for quilting is also necessary for other recognized artistic activities. She also indicates that an individual can choose how far to stretch the boundaries of a craft to achieve personal satisfaction. Quilting can be considered both as an art or craft form because of the level of difficulty represented, the introduction of or inclusion of original design elements and the amount of planning involved in the project. She maintains that “the finished product to look at is an art form.”

Motivation for Quilting

Laurel indicates several reasons for continuing quilting.

I spend a lot of time quilting. It relaxes me ... It's relaxation and again you get that feeling that you've accomplished something at the end. It's probably the only activity that really gives me that sense of accomplishment. And there's a lot of personal accomplishment at the end of it ... Though it's a feeling of satisfaction I also joke that this is my heritage that I'm leaving behind but seriously I hope that someone a hundred years from now will hopefully have my quilt and know that someone a hundred years ago made this quilt.

She proceeds by describing quilting as an "old fashioned type of craft or skill."

I like old fashioned things. I love antiques. I like homey things. And my goal has always been to have something that I've quilted in every room of the house eventually. Just to give the feeling that I like when I see a quilt. And it's sort of — the old days well, were deemed to be better than the present day. Though it just motivates me to get that feeling in my home. And to give it to me as well personally.

Laurel realizes the importance that quilting plays in her life. "If I ever, for example you know, had arthritis in my hands I would feel just so restricted. So it's very important. I think we all need that [relaxation and sense of accomplishment] in our lives."

Laurel also suggests that nearing the completion of a project provides further motivation to continue quilting.

I feel satisfied. That I've done something. Especially when it's finally finished ... So the closer you get it's almost elation. You know you're getting closer — there's more motivation to get in there and to get it done. And also pride when it's finished. And everybody is just astounded when they look at the finished product.

Laurel is encouraged to continue quilting whenever possible because of the positive

response of her family. "They like the finished product. Whenever friends and family come over you know they're also admiring anything that is out even if they've seen it before." She has received appreciation for her quilting from acquaintances and friends also. "If someone comes to our house for the first time that's one of the things that they usually really notice." This admiration serves as a further motivation for quilting additional decorative accents for her house.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Laurel is not able to maintain a regular time for quilting.

There is no such thing as regular time for quilting ... In the winter it's done on the couch where we watch T.V. and where the fire is. And it's always there. I always make sure by the winter that I've got something that is at the hand quilting stage. So it's something you can pick up whether you've got five minutes or whether you've got three hours. And it can be put down at a moment's notice. So it is not restricting that way. There's never any planned time. Sometimes I feel guilty when I can't fit it in because we've all got things that we want to do. And sometimes unfortunately the quilting will be at the end. Sometimes in the winter I almost hope that it rains all day so we have an excuse to stay home and do those home things. And then that's when the quilting would have a part. But it's generally an evening after everything is done kind of a thing.

Laurel notes that the majority of her quilting is accomplished during the winter months. Although she indicates that she can usually quilt for "a minimum of ten hours per week" this may vary depending upon circumstances. Laurel also realizes that available time does not guarantee that quilting will be accomplished.

You know you've also got to feel like it. And you've also got to be in a position to do it. If I haven't put enough thought into it and haven't got myself to that stage where I

can do it. Because it takes a lot to plan it, and cut it, and piece it and design it. And it depends how big it's going to be. And you'll often get stuck at that stage. And if I'm stuck at that stage in the winter I'm in trouble. Because then I'm not doing anything. You can always quilt. You can't always plan. Because you do get mental blocks when you're planning a quilt. Or sometimes you need that right fabric that you haven't found yet. 'Cause you don't always buy all your fabrics at once. Whereas quilting you don't need to think. You can pick up the needle and you do it.

Laurel usually quilts during the evening unless weather conditions encourage otherwise.

She always quilts

after eight o'clock at night. That's usually when I have the time to sit down. And everything's done. Very rare occasions in the winter maybe on a Saturday or Sunday in the daytime if the weather's really bad and we're stuck inside. In the winter I never watch T.V. unless I'm quilting. So I can watch as much T.V. as I like as long as I have something in my hands. It's sort of a rule.

Laurel indicates that she imposes other rules upon her quilting experiences.

I'm not allowed to work on more than two quilts at once. And I can start designing a third. But I've got to make sure then that I finish one of them. Because you hear about these quilters that have ten to twenty quilts on the go. And they never finish them. So there's a rule. Discipline.

Another rule she reinforces is to not purchase any more quilting publications whether in magazine or book form.

I have too many quilting books already. And I have probably almost every magazine I've ever bought concerning quilting. Because you can't get rid of them. You might need that idea one day. So there's almost a rule. No more. No more stuff like that.

Laurel confesses that her favourite publication has two distinct features. "It can inspire

you or depress you.” This particular book has illustrations presenting the same home during the different seasons of the year. As she describes:

it’s almost a decorating book [more] than [a] quilt-making book. So when I’m in between quilts and just want to look at something I can just grab any one of them, and leaf through it and get ideas. And one of the ones that I have, it shows the same house in the four different seasons. Where they’ve changed everything in their house. They’ve rolled up the rugs and then of course they’ve quilts to come out for the different seasons. So, that’s almost depressing. I have a spring quilt and a Christmas quilt that go on the living room couch. And then the spring turns into summer of course. And I’m making a fall one. So that we’ll go from spring and summer into fall. So I have kind of that concept on a small scale. But it may take many years to accomplish that.

Laurel belongs to a ladies craft group instead of a quilting group or guild. This group meets approximately once a month to share their creative experiences. Not everyone in the group quilts but she enjoys the companionship of the other members. As an aside Laurel acknowledges that their group tends to talk more than create but hopes in time that her schedule will allow her to join a quilting guild within her area. Laurel receives support from her friends and family more through words of encouragement.

Laurel often goes to quilt shows locally if aware of their existence. She indicates that: there are not too many that come our way. There’s an annual one in Munroe, Washington. And there’s a quilt bus that goes down once a year so I’ve been to that a couple of times. And of course there was one at U.B.C. earlier this year. So there’s been small ones on a small scale.

She and her friends rely upon one another as further sources of information about the location of quilt shows.

The only way that you really find out about them is that they put the notices in the quilt

shop. So if you've been to the quilt shop you find out about it ... And if you don't go there for a long time you miss it.

But Laurel realizes that "advertising is not extensive" as quilters are a "very select audience." Realistically "they're posting those notices where they think quilters will go."

Although Laurel's family will not participate in the actual quilting, she does receive their assistance in maneuvering projects or providing advice.

My husband holds things sometimes when big and lays things out or gives an opinion if blocks are being placed. I remember the last quilt that I was placing — one of the last ones. There was like six of us. Everybody was over for dinner that night — the family. And we were all in the bedroom and had it laid out on the bed and everyone was giving their opinion until we moved them all around and got them to the spot.

Laurel indicates that her husband's role in quilting is very "small." In her own words "he just reaps the benefits." He complains when another quilt is started for he believes that enough quilts have been made to cover the beds in their house.

Laurel simply reminds him that quilts are not always intended "for the beds." "They're for everywhere. They're to be draped gracefully over the chair. They're to be on show at Christmas. To stay on the quilt stand. 'Cause they don't have to go on the beds. So they're a decorating piece." Laurel believes that her husband "likes the end result."

Gender and Quilting

Laurel has determined that quilting is still associated with women and women's history because of previous social standards.

Again it goes back to the old days. It's one of those stereotyped things and unfortunately the women stayed in, the women did these kinds of things. And it's not been something that has been passed down at all to men. Or that men have ever made an opportunity to learn or to do. It just has not been there.

Laurel believes that the increased male presence at quilting shows as observers and participants will alter the portrayal of quilting as primarily a woman's art medium.

Laurel considers her gender as being important in the development of her interest in quilting.

I don't think I would have been in the same position to become interested in it had I been a male. And I don't really think that men have the same sense of homemanship [sic] ... I think that men are glad to see the home look homey. And they'll take pleasure in all those things but I don't think a lot of them consciously make a decision to do something in that respect. You know they might put a new roof on but they might not take the time to think this far.

Although Laurel, herself, is unconcerned with gender stereotypes in the context of quilting, she concedes that some men may be uncomfortable working with such a medium. Men pursuing an interest in quilting must encounter situations that cater almost exclusively to women. For example fabric shops are "geared towards women because women go there." She believes that "a lot of men wouldn't be able to handle that" nor would "a lot of men put themselves in that position" but sincerely hopes that any individuals who have an interest in quilting will discount possible obstacles in their path — even gender.

Laurel taught her daughter how to quilt. She showed her daughter quilting techniques and was proud of the perfectly straight stitches produced. Both mother and daughter have now produced queen-sized quilts. But Laurel maintains that the individual has "to be interested." For everyone has different talents and "not everybody's a quilter."

I've got a friend that would just love to quilt and just does not like it. She does counted cross stitch. Which I cannot stand. I tried it once and it drives me nuts. She's the same with the quilting but she really wants to make a quilt for her own home [but] finds she doesn't have the patience and yet has the patience for counted cross stitch. So I would

encourage anybody but if they don't have it, they don't have it.

In the final analysis, though, Laurel admits that she probably "wouldn't encourage a male as much as a female" to quilt.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Laurel believes that students, both male and female, should be made aware of quilting by the introduction of small projects in the subject of history.

An actual quilt is too much for most people. Also too expensive. It's very expensive to buy all the fabrics and batting and backing and everything you need. And the time involved. And you don't want to see people putting it aside. They should be made aware of it. It's part of everybody's heritage.

As part of everyone's heritage, Laurel also believes that quilting should initially be introduced as a historical form. After students have learned about the historical aspect of quilting then the influences of contemporary practices could be explored.

Laurel thinks that girls would be more interested in quilting as they would be visualizing their future homes and the possible items they wish to possess or to use as furnishings or decor items. Quilts could be important to the visual appearance of each room. With the knowledge of the traditional patterns or original designs of quilts possible each home could be completely different in character and reflect the personality of the individual homeowner.

Laurel suggested several benefits that result from quilting:

There'd be a sense of accomplishment. Something that someone could do. It's like anything. I think most people should try everything once. If it's not for you fine, you've tried it. But at least you know. You shouldn't reach a certain age and realize that you haven't done a lot of things that you had wanted to do. So the benefit is simply that you would be exposed to something else and that you might find that it's for you.

Case Study #3

Joanna is in her early sixties and is the youngest of two children. She is married, has three sons, one daughter and four granddaughters. Before retirement she was employed full time as an office secretary for a large shopping mall. She resides in a large urban centre, completed some college education and received extensive on the job secretarial training. Joanna received private instruction in crocheting as a teenager. She classifies herself as a beginner quilter. She took a course through a quilting supply store as her first formal experience in quilting. Joanna has fulfilled her desire to learn how to quilt and tries to accommodate this activity with her other varied interests.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Joanna indicates that her understanding of the word quilting has undergone a dramatic change. She initially perceived quilting as “a bunch of material put together and hand-quilted.” After reading through quilting publications she realized however, “that there’s a lot more to it than just that.” Joanna considers quilting to be both a craft and an art form but acknowledges that every individual will have a different perspective. She realized that quilting was also an art form after attending a past quilt exhibit.

I went to see a quilt show a few years ago. I think it was a Mennonite quilt show. All of those were hung up. Oh golly, they were beautiful. I’d never seen such a display of art in my life. You know — just fantastic.

Motivation for Quilting

Joanna can not identify the origins of her interest in quilting. She does not remember any quilting being accomplished by her family during her childhood. Nor can she recall the presence of quilts on her bed. Joanna identifies her daughter as the actual motivator of her quilting experiences. She also acknowledges her husband’s role of encouragement.

My daughter was in Ottawa and one of her roommates was a young woman whose

people had always quilted. And so she thought, 'This is a good idea — to learn what it's all about.' And so she got busy and started making me a quilt. An Irish chain. Well it's all those squares that go into different ones. It's upstairs on my bed actually. She got that finished and brought it out. Well, that really spurred me on to learn how to quilt. So when she came out that Christmas we went to a fabric shop and we went and got fabric to make that particular pattern that I had got about ten years before ... I was looking and George spied something that said quilting lessons so on the spot he bought me quilting lessons. So I went out there and that's how I got started ... It was all different samplers you know, appliqué and patch and everything.

Joanna describes quilting as time-consuming as well as physically demanding. Yet she continues to quilt because she enjoys it. She discovered that these qualities of quilting seem insignificant when participating in a group setting. "You don't really notice how you're feeling so much. You know? We're chatting. When you're on your own you've got your thoughts in your mind and a lot of them are — I'm getting tired. I better stop."

Although Joanna identifies herself as a beginner quilter, she realizes that quilting had been of interest to her for several years.

What sort of started me off was when we had a thrift store in the basement of the church. Well, in there — there was a real old quilting batt that was for sale. An old cotton quilting batt that had the pattern with it. Well, I bought that. I was still working. I didn't have time to do that so it sat in the cupboard for years. Actually I only just used it last year, I could never figure out the design that came with it. It was too complicated for me. But that has always niggled in my mind. That I was going to do that one day.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Joanna acknowledges that quilting is important to her but has to fit within the context of her other interests and responsibilities.

There seems to be so many other things around the house to do and they seem to come first. Like baking and the little kids and so I kind of get frustrated sometimes. If I can't find a time in the morning and I have to do it in the afternoon. I can't do it at night. The light isn't good enough. And it's just best in the afternoon or the morning. But you never can find the time. Right now I'm not into a quilting phase. But I have a lot of material that I've got to get used. So I'll have to get going on something.

She also indicates that quilting tires her because she doesn't know when to stop or to take a break from the process.

Well, I like to do it but I can't do it constantly like Marion does. Because I just can't be in that kind of a muddle all the time. 'Cause quilting is a muddle. When I'm doing it it's everywhere. When I made this wall hanging it was hanging on the wall in its raw form on a fleece thing. You know. All the little squares — it was just hanging there ... It was hanging there for six months. Then you'd fiddle with it. And then I finally got it sewed together. And then it hung again while I was trying to figure out what kind of borders and how to do that. And you're busy too. I can't just devote myself — there are other things. Yet it's on your mind — thinking about it. Things like that niggle at me all the time. I hate it.

She enjoys the completion stage of each quilt but perceives the other stages of her quilting experiences as mentally challenging.

Joanna indicates that her other interests of cross stitch and crewel embroidery help improve her "hand-eye co-ordination ... It sort of goes together maybe. They help each other." But lately Joanna hasn't been able to devote much time towards quilting. In fact she hasn't quilted since last spring. Joanna further explained that quilting is not always a regular part of her daily routine.

I'm not one of those kind that does it constantly. I just get a bee in my bonnet and do it.

When I am working on it, I work fairly steady. When I was making that wall hanging it took a long time to cut out all those little squares. And put them up on the wall — and it took a long time to find fabric — like for the sky ... But it took me a good 6 months to get it finished. I guess an hour here, a couple of hours there. And it's not very big. And then I just got it quilted. I did machine quilting like they suggested. And I'll never do that again. I found it very hard. I thought it would be easier. I found it very difficult to do. I would never do it again. I would do it by hand.

Joanna confessed that quilting publications provide more moments of frustration than inspiration.

I see too much and I want to do them all ... Just occasionally I'll buy a book. Pretty well I keep away from them because I know I'll just be frustrated. And I figure I've probably got as much here as I need plus what they gave me — you know all the different patterns and stuff. You know I'll never get through them. I have to watch that I don't get myself too overwhelmed by it all.

She also mentioned that the majority of her books all have “a bit of history and patterns.” Joanna also brought attention towards “the book with all the instructions and templates.” She mentioned that this is what she consults when experiencing difficulties in quilting.

As Joanna stated earlier, her daughter encouraged her to quilt. But she can not recall the presence of quilts from her past memories.

I don't ever remember seeing a quilt. There was never a quilt on any of our beds. My grandma's or any other relatives I went to stay with. Oh they were great crocheters and knitters, but I don't think they were into bedspreads. I think it was all those fancy doilies and runners and you know that sort of thing. But I never saw a bed spread. I never realized — I didn't realize you could do a bedspread until I started doing crocheting. I learnt from my mother but I didn't do it when I was younger ... No,

there was never any quilting as such. Just knitting and crocheting. That was all. I never was inspired by quilts because I never really saw quilts to speak of.

Joanna's husband plays an important role in her quilting experiences.

He helps me choose colours ... I never asked him to sew. But he helps in the planning.

Oh he likes doing that sort of thing. And figuring out how much material I need. I'm crazy when it comes to figures. I'm not good at estimating ... He always encourages me. And he comes and takes me shopping and tries to find the materials that we want ... It's quite expensive though. He helps financially but I think twice before I spend \$150.00 for a quilt. You know, that's a lot of money just to fool around with the sewing machine.

Joanna has given each of her granddaughters a quilt as a gift. They seem to enjoy having them but Joanna doesn't know if they realize the effort required for the completion of each quilt. She hopes that they remember her when using their quilts and that their quilts become more important to them in the future.

Gender and Quilting

Joanna notes that society has presented quilting as "women-orientated." She believes that such a perspective can be changed if given enough examples of men participating in quilting.

But I think probably it's like that man [Kaffe Fassett] that knits those gorgeous sweaters. And now I understand he's into needlecraft and all that sort of thing now. He's into quilting now. I think you'll find a lot of men will follow into fabrics and that sort of thing. You know, they're in designing of materials and all that — the next step.

Sometimes you see on travelogues on the T.V. in India. A lot of the men have their little sewing machines — little treadle ones on the street and they're doing their sewing and everything so ... depends on what culture you're from.

Although Joanna doesn't believe that definite gender barriers exist she acknowledges that men could be "intimidated." She feels that society might perceive men quilting as lacking masculinity but wonders if that attitude might be as "prevalent now as it would have been 20 or 25 years ago." She feels that every individual should pursue activities that are of interest regardless of gender. Although Joanna does not believe that gender discrimination exists among quilters she acknowledges that a man participating in their quilting bee could change the overall atmosphere.

If a man joined our group we would still continue chatting and laughing. But you couldn't talk women talk. Maybe that would be it. You would have to be more — you know — you wouldn't talk about how sick such and such was so much. You know what I mean. You'd have to talk world affairs. Quilting bees are not always a time to share gossip but more personal stuff that you might feel more uncomfortable sharing with a man. I guess it depends on the man.

Joanna would encourage any relative to quilt, male or female. She believes that "gender wouldn't matter." In fact she would encourage any individuals "if they were interested in it."

Quilting in School Curriculum

Joanna would limit quilting experiences in schools to small projects and class quilts. She acknowledges that such activities are usually the first to be removed as a result of funding restraints. She believes that both boys and girls should be encouraged to quilt because they would enjoy the experience. Joanna also considers all school subjects suitable for teaching quilting because of the versatility of the medium. "I think it could be used in any subject, even French."

Joanna thinks that "a feminine attachment to quilting" continues to encourage more girls than boys to be interested in the medium. Yet she acknowledges that both boys and girls

could receive benefits from quilting. She feels that not only would students learn “satisfaction” and “patience” but “if they’re working together in a group it would teach them co-operation and that sort of thing.”

Case Study #4

Mahaly is in her early eighties and is the third oldest of six children. She is a widow, has two daughters, two sons, three grandsons, five granddaughters and one great granddaughter. Before retirement she was employed by a rural school district as an elementary teacher. Mahaly resides in a small rural community and achieved a teaching certificate. She classifies herself as an experienced quilter. Her mother and aunts were professional seamstresses and provided her with instruction in sewing and quilting at an early age. Quilting is a undeniable priority in her life and it is considered a family tradition. Mahaly is afraid that time will not permit her to complete all the ideas she wants to transfer from her imagination to fabric.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Throughout the entire interview Mahaly demonstrated great enthusiasm for quilting. Although Mahaly determined that quilting meant “a wonderful hobby” she did not limit her reply to that single statement. Mahaly continued by stating that quilting is “creating something beautiful with my hands.” Her definition not only indicates the importance of physical/mental involvement in the quilting process but anticipates that beauty could be achieved through a finished quilt.

Mahaly perceives quilting as both a craft and an art medium. Quilting is a craft because it requires skilled hand work or craftsmanship to accomplish. However the label of craft never implies an inferior activity. “I don’t think it ever did because I admired my mother’s quilts so much.” Mahaly was encouraged to perceive craft activities as connected to art and further defined a craft as “something that art creates something beautiful and worthwhile

and useful.”

She provides an interesting definition of quilting as an art form.

I never thought very much about that until I had a friend who said it's a form of art. So I'm beginning to think that it is. You can change it around, use patterns but still create your own ideas. I don't know how to explain it except that a craft is something you do with your hands. You create something and art — you're also creating something but you're thinking of it appealing to other people. And it's more of a thinking process.

I have one quilt that someone looked at and said 'it's just like jewellery.' That tells me it's an art when you have something that appeals to people like that.

Motivation for Quilting

Mahaly recognizes that her early observations of quilting have influenced her own quilting experiences.

When I watched my mother and I never quilted very much on her quilts but I did enough of it to know that I wanted to do that someday. I've really always enjoyed it when I quilted with friends who were much better quilters and had started a long time before I did. I really enjoyed quilting and liked to be invited to the quilting parties wherever they were.

She also recognizes that the most important aspect of quilting parties is the social interaction.

The arrival of Mahaly's first baby prompted her to create a crib quilt. However this was just the beginning of her quilting experiences. Upon reflection she was able to identify other reasons for her continued efforts in quilting.

I guess it's one of the things I like to do best as far as working with my hands is concerned. I don't know — I think I grew up wanting to work with my hands. It's something that I just have to do. I have to be making something to feel that I've spent

my time in a worthwhile manner. It's important because it's something we (my sisters and I) inherited I believe, from our mother and from her sisters. And we're carrying on a family tradition which is very important to me.

Mahaly expresses pride in her family's reactions to her quilts. In fact she takes pride that she doesn't have to worry about locating a home for each quilt because they are so popular.

I haven't made a quilt yet that they aren't wondering who's going to get this one. Two granddaughters — two sisters, the older one said 'Why has Tracy got three quilts and I only have two?' So I haven't made a quilt yet that somebody hasn't wanted. They're thinking about the ones I'm keeping and who's going to get them and we'll have to soon decide. They like them. They really do. I think they are proud. It used to be something they took for granted. But I think they really are proud of it now. It's because some of the quilts I make I know they wouldn't win a prize. They're just very ordinary quilts. So as one granddaughter said, 'I like any quilt you make grandma.' Some of them are made to be used — I'll show you some of those. And some of them are — I would hope they might keep them — you know, use them and keep them as nice as they can.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Quilting has always been enjoyable for Mahaly unless, as she pointed out, minor difficulties occur. However these difficulties can not dispel the overall enjoyment that she experiences through quilting. She even admits that quilting can easily become an obsession that upsets her normal daily routine.

I never have set aside a regular time for it. I maybe will take a notion to start a quilt and work a lot at it for while until I get a top made or something like that, sort of in spurts, I can leave everything and quilt. And that's sometimes the only way you can do. You

have to leave things. You can't be quilting and cleaning your house or tidying. You have to be quilting. You want to get something done and you really enjoy doing it. And then I get a little annoyed when I come back and find that — look around and maybe everything isn't done up that should be done in the way of dusting, and so forth.

Quilting is not the only handiwork that Mahaly accomplishes. She feels that her other handiwork may influence her quilting on a subconscious level.

I crochet. I knit some. I like to make things ... making decorations. We made several angels for Christmas time. I like doing any kind of crafts. I used to make a lot of my own clothes. I don't anymore. I like sewing small things, you know, that don't have to be fitted. Well I guess things transfer from one area to another but not consciously. When I was making crafts I had a great idea if I'll ever get it done. It's to use some of my crochet work applied to quilt blocks with buttons and ribbons and make a wall hanging.

Another indication of the importance of quilting in Mahaly's life is the extent of the quilting publications she owns.

I have copies of ever so many different kinds. And quilt books. Piles of them. One of the ones I got first was 101 Quilting Patterns ... There's a pile of them in there. I can't just give you names off hand. I have so many. And I have Quilt World and I don't know how many different magazines that I have bought. And have subscribed to the odd one. Usually I just buy them at Brandon or elsewhere when I see them ... Hard cover books too. I have quite a few of them. A good many start out with how to quilt. I think there's one that has the history of quilting. Most of them have a little bit of that. I don't suppose I'll ever make a quilt pattern from each of the books I have. It would just be too many.

When asked if any of her relatives quilted, Mahaly spoke of her grandmother, mother and aunts. She also mentioned her sister's support stating "my late sister was my number one fan. Whatever I did was beautiful and if I was criticizing it she always had something good to say about it." It's evident that she misses the companionship and shared quilting experiences that her sister provided.

Mahaly indicated that she attends quilt shows and exhibitions whenever she can:

We had a wonderful trip out to Melville, Saskatchewan to a big quilt show. My sister and myself went with a friend. A young lady asked the two of us to go. We had a wonderful day looking. It's the biggest quilt show I've ever been at. It was held in a skating arena. They just used every available space for quilts. I was at one at Grand Forks, British Columbia — not nearly as big but very, very nice. I put quilts into the local fairs. I have entered in Boissevain, Ninette, Killarney and Crystal City.

Her husband played an important role in Mahaly's quilting experiences.

He definitely gave me his support. He took me if I wanted to take my quilts to Ninette or to someplace to show. He'd take me and go and pick them up and tease me that I didn't make enough out of it to pay for the gas. But still I think he was proud when I showed the quilts.

Mahaly acknowledged that his interest in her quilting increased after his retirement.

Her husband provided support in other forms other than transportation to quilt shows.

He was awfully handy to have around to make quilt frame stands and alter quilting frames for me. I educated him about how to help me when I was rolling the sides of the quilt. He got to know how to do that pretty well. And he was always — well he'd make a meal if I was quilting. He'd think up something for a meal so that I could get more quilting done that way. He had his golfing if he wanted to get away. But no, he never minded. As long as I was happy — he was happy. And he seemed to like to

look at them and have other people enjoy them too.

Gender and Quilting

Mahaly has never considered her gender as being influential in her quilting experiences. She chose quilting, not as a female, but as an individual interested in the activity. She has come to realize that quilting should not be restricted to any one gender but instead available to anyone who shows an interest in it.

I think some men who are good with their hands — if they wanted to, could do it. I'm just thinking of my own sons. But I'm also thinking of my brother. I was explaining to him how you do a certain kind of piecing, a new form of piecing. 'Yes, I see' he says. So I said to him 'You'd catch on to this in no time. I bet you could do it too.' But he just laughed. I don't think he ever tried it or anything like that. This is just lately and just because he was so interested in what I was doing. He caught on, I think, as quickly as anybody would. It wouldn't take much to show him what to do. It's something you have to want to do. It's just like some men like woodwork. If they want to do that they'll do it. They'll learn mechanics and anything they'll do it with their hands. And so they should be able to quilt.

Mahaly wonders if she should have taken the idea of men quilting more seriously and whether she would have encouraged men in her acquaintance to participate in her quilting experiences.

We had friends, a couple, and the man kept telling me, 'I used to quilt. I quilted on my mother's quilts.' I asked him to come and quilt and he never did. But of course he was a farmer and probably had things to do. I used to kind of take it as a joke. I don't know. Maybe I didn't know whether he was serious and he didn't know if I was serious. I really could believe — he was of a big family and his mother probably made dozens of quilts. And he probably did help when he was a young lad. But then he

never did it that I knew of after. I guess Doris and I never thought of asking our brother to quilt with us. And he never showed any interest any more than he was interested in what we were doing and liked to look at the quilts. But I never thought of him trying it or asking him to try it. I guess if he had shown a real interest we might have shown him how [to quilt]. But I'm not sure of that, but I can't imagine why I wouldn't.

Mahaly also hopes that her daughters and granddaughters will carry on the family tradition of quilting, but has never thought about encouraging her sons or grandsons to quilt. Although she acknowledges that girls mostly learn the skills of handicrafts such as sewing, knitting and quilting, she felt that she would encourage boys to participate in those activities "if they showed an interest." She acknowledges that she would never force a child to learn a skill they were uninterested in.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Mahaly supports quilting as a valid school activity, but suggests that small projects are more appropriate for encouraging student participation. She notes that although girls might be more interested in quilting, that boys in elementary school "often take an interest in things that they can do with their hands." As quilting is a hands-on experience she believes that both boys and girls would probably enjoy learning how to quilt.

I think that a little bit of it wouldn't be any harm. Teach them to use a needle and thread. I did a little of it, with small things like pot holders when I was teaching. I think it would be nice. I think small projects would be all right. I know of one teacher in Killarney who used to have her class — each child do a block and then they put it together. I don't know who quilted it. I think that would be a worthwhile project.

Mahaly struggled to decide where quilting should be included within a school curriculum. She soon realized that quilting could be a useful educational tool in many different subjects.

I was thinking of it being in the arts and crafts department but it could be in any of the others or in all of them. It could be brought into their study of the pioneer and the history of our country. And what people did in the what they call the 'old days.' Again that comes back to working with your hands. Doing something with your hands. At the same time it would be — they could be learning it was a part of our history and culture.

Mahaly recognizes quilting as both a historical and current art form.

It's a link with the past. And it's an art form that can be carried on into the future. And something to sort of tie the generations together ... So many of the old, old quilts were made with what they had at hand. They were made with scraps they saved from their sewing projects. They didn't go out and buy new stuff to put into them. Some have been colour co-ordinated and put them together more beautifully than others. Some were strictly put together to make use of the scraps and to make a warm, comforting blanket. So that, just like modern ones, some would appeal to you more as a beautiful thing than others.

Of the different benefits that quilting would provide for students, Mahaly feels that learning to work co-operatively with others is the most important. "They could learn to use their hands and learn to appreciate the work of others and the history behind it. People can't work together making a quilt and be on unfriendly terms. They learn how to work with others."

Case Study #5

Ruth is in her mid fifties and is the third oldest of 6 children. She is married, has two sons, three daughters, two grandsons and one granddaughter. She was a former hospital worker but is currently a homemaker. She resides in a small rural community on a farm and finished public school at grade 10. She classifies herself as a beginner quilter. She

received her first formal experience in quilting through quilting bees held at her church. Quilting is important to her but must be accommodated in her routine throughout the four seasons of the year.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Although she realized that I wanted her candid responses to each interview question and was not looking for a correct answer, Ruth clearly struggled to resolve the meaning of the word quilting for herself. After considerable reflection, Ruth described quilting as “sewing. Using a needle and thread ... The designs — the stitches — when you go along that pattern that you have made.” She referred to her bedspread as an example of quilting. The silver polyester satin bedspread that she indicated depicts a large fan with roses all produced by decorative hand stitching. The pattern of the fan was carefully transferred to the fabric by use of a large template.

When given a choice Ruth considered quilting to be an art form rather than a craft. “I consider it more a form of art because it’s what you are putting into it. It’s your designs, your ideas ... Each one has a different eye for different things.” However she felt that referring to quilting as a craft did not imply an inferior activity.

If you go to a craft show and there’s quilts, you’re always going to see people around it. It attracts a lot more people than a lot of other crafts do. And I’ve noticed this time and time again when I have gone. If there’s quilts displayed it attracts a lot of people. It is more — just like a lot of painting does. When someone does painting, it attracts — those tables attract a lot of people. And so does quilting.

Although Ruth considers quilting to be an art form, she does not categorize art as being frivolous. “I consider quilting to be an art form. It’s beauty. It’s also a usable thing.” The usefulness of the quilt is very important to Ruth and the members of her family.

Motivation for Quilting

Ruth identified several factors that motivated her to quilt.

I love fabrics. I love colours. Whatever I see. When I look at a magazine and there is a quilt. You walk through any craft shops they always catch my eye. Always. I put my own ideas into it. I take just bits and pieces from one and another one and put it into your [sic] own.

She appreciates the opportunity to explore new patterns and ideas from what she has experienced visually. She considers quilting as a pleasurable activity that complements her other activities and interests. She also believes that quilting relaxes her and allows her a distraction from the stress of a hectic day.

Her family knows when Ruth will set aside time to quilt. “News Time. 10 o’clock — 11 o’clock at night. Then I will go watch the news and sit down and quilt. I will do other times too if there is something I want to really watch.” But if the quilt is already set up, Ruth can find other reasons to concentrate on her quilting.

‘Cause you can leave it and then come back if you have a bit of time. Well if I go downstairs and get something I often do two or three stitches or four stitches. When I walk by it I will often pick up that needle and other than that — it’s really a pleasure when I watch the news or watch something on T. V. Or when it’s very hot — I’ve had one up — like my bedspread — I had up in summer time and when it was so extremely hot (because I have it in the basement and we don’t have air conditioning) I go downstairs and I quilted.

Her family’s appreciation for her quilts has also provided ample motivation for her to continue quilting. Each of Ruth’s children and grandchildren have received a quilt as a gift. These quilts have become treasured family heirlooms revered for their age or appearance. “Like Matthew said, this one I made for him when he was a little boy and it will stay his.

It's not going to anyone else. It's his."

Context / Behaviours / Habits

Ruth explained that the season of the year determined the amount of time reserved for quilting:

Well it depends on your seasons because we're on a farm. In summer time it would be very little. Unless it's a very hot day. It would vary. And I can leave my quilt. I can leave it sitting there. Or stand it up against the wall and leave it for a couple of months and then go back to it. So winter time when I do quilt, it'd be an hour, a couple of hours — two hours a day. Seven to fourteen hours a week. And if I'm going all day — I won't be doing anything that day. So it's not a regular thing — it depends on the ... day. Some days I'll spend the time — some days I won't.

Although Ruth does not subscribe to any quilting publications she professed an interest in quilting magazines. "If I see a magazine that I'm interested in I will purchase it. Or if you find it in magazines that you subscribe to and there's an article on it, yes, I do keep them." She was surprised to find that she did not own any hard cover quilting books. But Ruth knows that she will eventually purchase a quilting book for her enjoyment and use. "I thought I had one but I don't. I will get some, I know I will. Because I like the patterns. I like ideas. But at the moment it's not important because I'm too busy with too many other things."

Ruth does not belong to a formal quilting group but participates in quilting bees organized by her church group.

That is where I learned [to quilt]. And that is where I get a lot of ideas ... We don't have a quilting bee on a regular basis but more in winter time. And we quilt for fire victims. We quilt also for the MCC auction sale in Brandon and we make some beautiful quilts. And one year the ladies (there are about 20 of us) we quilted a quilt

for each one of us. And then raffled them off.

The quilting bees through her church group are Ruth's only experiences with quilting. She does not remember any of her family members quilting.

Way back maybe my grandmother did. But I have no brother, no siblings, no sisters, no sisters-in-law that do any quilting. Not one. I don't remember my grandmother quilting. And it was really when I moved out here — west — and got involved with families and friends that ... I took an interest in quilting and I started quilting.

Although Ruth suggested earlier that she will quilt during the late night news program, she indicates that, "I have trouble not doing something with my hands. I just do. It helps me relax very much so. To unwind." Her family understands that news time is Ruth's quilting time. But only her oldest daughter will fully participate with Ruth in her quilting experiences. As for the rest of her family:

They don't really help me quilt. But they will all help me when it needs to be turned or needs something — they will help me with it. Or when I put it on and I need someone to hold it or to help me tack it down and put it together. Yes. They will help me there.

But not the actual quilting.

As for her husband, his only objection is the amount of space that a quilt takes up when placed in the quilting frame. He will help Ruth with maneuvering the quilt if necessary and does support her efforts in other ways. "He takes an interest in what I produce ... He provides his support for my quilting. He doesn't object. He has no problem with it. If I enjoy that then there's no problem."

Gender and Quilting

Ruth decided to consult her son as to whether he perceived any type of relationship that may exist between gender and quilting. "I asked my son now 'Would he ever quilt with me?' And he said 'No.' And I asked him why. He says, 'Mom, because I can't use a

needle and thread properly.” Ruth is not discouraged by her son’s lack of confidence using quilting equipment. “I’m going to try to encourage my son to lose his intimidation of quilting. He should try.”

Ruth would encourage any member of her family, male or female, to quilt if an interest was shown. This is because Ruth herself came from a family where distinct male and female tasks were not strictly designated. She feels that by setting an example she can eliminate any gender stereotypes in quilting.

I grew up in a home where my father did a lot of things ... When my mother made (she never really quilted quilts) but when she made blankets my father always helped. And

I grew up like that. Seeing that. And I have brothers that would do it.

Ruth believes that her son learned from her husband’s example of avoiding characteristically feminine tasks. Because of her father’s example, Ruth considers both men and women as being capable of quilting. Ruth believes that the choice to quilt and subsequent differences in quilting styles is determined by individuality — not by gender. “I pick different things because everybody’s an individual. It’s all my choice. Gender doesn’t enter into it.”

Quilting in School Curriculum

Ruth supports the opportunity for quilting experiences in schools.

I want to say something about one of our teachers here in school. She would, for years, she was a grade five or six teacher, she would make one quilt with all her students. And let them draw a picture onto a block that she would put it together. And they would quilt, each their own block. And then she would raffle it off among those students and one student would get it. And those kids just loved it. It was always on display. And they looked forward to it. Boys and girls. And some of them — she would do it with liquid embroidery so that their block was painted whatever picture they

wanted. And yes, I do think it should be taught in schools. It's relaxing. It is fun. They are creating their own thing. And in the end they have something that is useful. Like I mean they can use it. And they take pride in it.

Ruth believes that both boys and girls should be taught quilting. She also mentioned that "some girls were very good at it and at the quilting itself some weren't. Some boys were very good at it. Some were not. It didn't matter whether they were boy or girl. Some were good and some just weren't." She also believes that girls would be more responsive to quilting than boys.

It was women that [sic] made the quilts because they were concerned about their bedding or their winter blankets or whatever. They had to make the time. Quilting was done by our ancestors as not really art. Or it was more of survival. They needed to have blankets.

Ruth provided several benefits that students of both genders would receive from quilting.

They would learn a trade ... And it can be used for extra money on the side ... The value that you can make things ... Appreciation. Appreciation of each other.

Appreciation of each other's work. Some are better at it. Others aren't.

Perceptions About Quilting of Male Quilters as Recorded in This Study

Case Study #6

James is in his late fifties and is the second oldest of six children. He is married and has two daughters. He is a former school teacher and is currently employed part time as a manual labourer for a building warehouse. He resides in a large urban centre and holds a teaching certificate. He received his first formal instruction in quilting from observing the various individuals of his family. He prefers to leave the finishing stitches to his wife while he concentrates on the colour selection and piecing of each quilt. He prefers to

observe the workmanship revealed on the back of a quilt rather than examine the completed pattern front.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

James indicated that quilting can refer to both the decorative hand stitching and the entire process of creating a quilt. “Now I realize quilting involves the whole process, but to me the beauty and the art of quilting is the actual hand work that is done that shows at the end of the project.” Quilting also combines elements of both art and craft.

You’re designing so that it’s an art form when you design your quilt. Because yours is different from everyone else’s and if you’re making your own pattern as well then it’s totally unique. The craft is when you perform the actual function of doing it.

James does not believe that referring to quilting as craft implies an inferior status.

Craft is not inferior to any other type of art form. I don’t have that problem that if a woman does it, it means it’s inferior. Sometimes a woman does it and it is lousy and sometimes a man does it and it’s lousy and vice versa. It’s the actual product and not who’s doing it or what it is. Not the whole activity — the end result. Because if you’re drawing a picture and you’re a five year old and you perform and you draw well as far as your ability goes then it’s done well. So it’s not inferior. But another five year old may do something inferior because they just didn’t take the time — they just scribbled.

That’s an inferior product. But if that’s all they were capable of doing it’s not inferior.

Motivation for Quilting

Although James describes his quilting experiences as limited he declares that quilting has always been a part of his life. He also indicates how quilting can be shared with younger generations.

Both my grandmother and my mother quilted and my wife quilts so quilting is not a new thing. And yet I myself have designed several — cut out different ones — have not

done a great deal of the actual sewing or the stitching — done a bit but not a great deal. I've enjoyed them; they're a fun thing. And I've also used them as an educational tool in Sunday School ... This created an enjoyable and a learning experience for the children ... I think some of the children were quite inspired because they were quite awe struck when we first had it completed. Because they had watched it gradually being built and then when it was all put together all these separate blocks suddenly had a meaning.

James readily identifies the enjoyment of different colours and textures as being a primary motivation in producing quilts. He also confesses that steady donations of fabric for the creation of quilts for the church encourage him to continue quilting. Yet he provides other reasons for participating in quilting experiences.

It's also an out for activity ... I quite enjoy the fact that you can lose yourself in it. It's one of those things that you can get involved in and you kind of lose track of time. So it's important in that respect. I find it relaxing.

For it has "a kind of calming and freeing effect. Sometimes it's a little frustrating when the fabric piles up and you have an awful pile to do and the time is short."

James knows that his family appreciates his efforts "because they have requested quilts." He acknowledges that "one always feels a little bit of pride when they ask you for something that you've done."

Context/Behaviours/Habits

James indicated that some of his other handiwork supports his quilting.

I enjoy painting. I enjoy making craft ornaments. I have some scraps of fabrics leftover from crafts but they often aren't suitable for quilts. But you'll often get the colour schemes from other work. Especially like the painting. You'll often get the different colours then expected — 'Oh yes, that would work in this type of set-up.'

Quilting is not always a part of his daily routine. James identified spurt times when he might spend 5 - 6 hours a day working on a quilt. He also stated that "it's not unusual to basically work most of the day steady and do a whole week or two working on some project."

Although quilting magazines are not a priority in James' life he owns several quilting books.

There's some on history. Some on the actual techniques. Some that have the patterns. We have quite a variety ... If you're interested in doing a particular type of quilt then you should have the history so that you know what you're doing.

James says that his relatives introduced him to his quilting experiences. They have continued to provide him with support. "We get a lot of our desires from our history. And as I said my grandmother quilted. I remember when she quilted. And then my mother quilted and my wife quilts."

James will quilt at any time — morning, afternoon or evening. But he acknowledges that inspiration may come at unusual times.

Often creating a new pattern comes somewhere in the middle of the night but you never know when. I figure, well if I think of it during the night, I figure well now if this is going to be any good I'll still think of it in the morning. And if it isn't any good I may as well forget it anyway. And often you'll still remember it the next day — your basic plan of what you were doing.

He is thankful for his wife's role in his quilting experiences. In fact he describes her role as "paramount" as she provides

a lot of the man power. Or woman power in this case. Because we often work as a team but it's not a one man job ... She'll say how many blocks she wants of this or that if she's designed a quilt. And I often will cut them out for her and vice versa. We will

work on colours and what not together. So it's kind of a sharing. There's not really an out right definite who's who type of thing. Then we'll look at it and maybe change it two or three times to — so that it suits our eye.

James believes that quilting has to be an enjoyable experience otherwise there's no reason for participation. "We've reached the stage where if we don't enjoy it we don't do it anymore. Other than basic necessities around the house."

Gender and Quilting

James has never considered quilting as only appropriate for women. He acknowledges that gender restrictions experienced by individuals are often self-imposed.

For many people it's considered a woman's activity but I don't consider that there's a relationship. The only reason that relationship to me exists is because going back women were more in charge of the household activities while the men were working outside in the rural area. So caring for the household items became the woman's job. Not that she was necessarily any more equipped to do it than a man or vice versa it's just they fall into that role. Of course I'm a strong believer that anybody could do anything regardless of their gender. There are very few things that limit us because of our gender. Mostly it's in our minds. The activities we do are limited more by our thinking than by our abilities. By growing up and also having daughters — trying to impress upon them the importance that everything is still open to them regardless of what the job might be or the ideas. Nothing is limited.

James' decisions in quilting experiences are different than those of his wife but he stresses that these differences are a result of one's personality and character, not gender.

I would definitely choose different colours than my wife would. Different ones at different times. But that's more us being individuals than being male or female. Today I might choose a pattern that she might choose two or three months down the road or

vice versa if we were looking at different patterns. Because a lot depends on the mood you're in as to what type of pattern or what type of colours and fabric that you want to work with.

Early in his life James observed male relatives participating in activities favoured by women. As a result he has never paid much attention to stereotypes encouraged by society.

I think we've passed the stage where we need to be worrying about a stereotype for anything. At least I hope we're getting past there. All of society has not lost it but a lot has to do with one's self as to whether they're free to say to heck with that stereotype. If I wanted to crochet so be it. I would crochet if that was one of the things I liked to do. I guess some of that comes from — I did have a couple of uncles one on each side of the family who were very involved in embroidery work which at the time others felt was probably very feminine-type but mind you both uncles are now long gone. But they did beautiful embroidery work, so stereotypes sort of lost their meaning early on for me. They were not afraid to step over the bounds.

James believes everyone should learn basic household skills and pursue activities that stimulate interest; however, he would restrict quilting to those individuals who have the time and interest. He feels that individuals should understand the time commitment involved before participating in quilting experiences.

It's a time consuming thing and you can get very wrapped up in it. And one must be aware that it does take a lot of time if you go into it. So that when you're working you have to be conscious of the time element. It's one of those things that are enjoyable to do and if you like it — go for it. If you don't leave it alone.

Quilting in School Curriculum

As a former teacher, James understands the demands, pressures and expectations placed upon the teaching profession by society. He feels that quilting "is a leisure activity" and

not “a regular subject” because it would take too much time away from the basic requirements of contemporary education.

Teachers already have more than a full load of things to teach. Maybe if it was advanced in high school as an alternative that might be all right. In elementary I’m strongly opposed to adding anything extra. They have more than sufficient to teach. I could see it becoming a part of a course in high school. But it would definitely have to be one of the alternatives. As to probably somewhere along the line of introduction to leisurely activities.

Although he believes that quilting may prove invaluable as “an educational tool” he indicates that not all educators would feel comfortable with introducing the medium for classroom use.

I’m very conscious of all the things we’re asking teachers to do. I just don’t feel it’s fair to require more. And the thing is, once you put it in, then you create a situation where teachers aren’t interested in this art form. Then they have to teach something that they really don’t care about. And so, it may be all right in some classes, and in other classes it would be a total disaster. There’s no sense adding another problem for the teachers — they have sufficient.

James maintains that including quilting as a class project would require instruction given to both boys and girls equally. Otherwise “it’s not actually creating anything for the future it’s merely segregating your boys and girls.” Yet he would not be surprised if girls showed more of an interest in quilting than boys. However he believes that a good teacher would go beyond social stereotypes and encourage all individuals to participate in any activity that holds their interest.

James hopes that educators would not “have to make a choice” between teaching quilting as a historical or current art form. He feels that both descriptions would apply to

quilting. James indicates that both boys and girls would receive several benefits from participating in quilting.

Both genders would learn how to sew so that they could then sew on a button or something else or mend their own clothing. So that a slight tear would then be able to be fixed by anybody. So this would be a side effect. Probably an appreciation of quilts. When they see one they would then realize the beauty of it and may realize how much work is involved. Although, until one does one I don't think they really realize all the work involved. They may or may not learn patience. Children don't always learn what you set out to teach them. They may learn some things you didn't intend them to learn. Because some would be very frustrated. They would find it a very frustrating activity. Others may find that they really like it and it would encourage them to carry on. You can always appreciate something even if you can't do it. So like that's a benefit that you might learn having seen a beautifully created quilt. Now anyone can appreciate beauty when they see it. Everybody doesn't but you can. So that's a benefit that they might see. Another benefit would be experiencing the detailed work involved. The ability to stick with something. This is a possibility that you would learn to start something and carry it through. Although it will take you a great deal of time to complete. This isn't instant production. Unless you're doing everything by machine including the quilting.

Case Study #7

Edward is in his mid seventies and is the fourth oldest of twelve children. He is married, has one daughter, three sons, four grandsons and six granddaughters. He is a retired farmer and presently resides in a small rural community. Edward has a grade 10 formal education. His first experiences in quilting happened under his wife's tutelage. He acknowledges that he started piecing (assembling quilt blocks) to help his wife but

continued because of the sense of accomplishment he received with the completion of each quilt.

Understanding the Quilt Medium

Edward acknowledges that society often uses the word quilting to refer to the whole process of creating quilts. But according to his own perceptions, “quilting is the finishing off stitches” that his wife does to complete each quilt.

The word quilting to me was her part of it — the sewing. The ladies have a quilting bee you know and that’s what they do — they have a quilt there and all the ladies stand around — they’re all quilting it. She does the quilting ... The rest is making quilts. Edward makes a clear distinction between these two terms.

For Edward the categorization of quilting as a craft is a recent occurrence. According to Edward the word craft implies “something you do to pass the time.” Edward indicates that quilting had originally been considered a domestic necessity and not a leisure activity. He also indicates that his own perception of quilting has altered as a result of this interview.

In the old days it was something the women did to get a covering for their beds. They’d take maybe used clothing that they weren’t using any more and they would cut it into little patches. And they would make a covering for their bed, you know. ‘Cause things weren’t as available then as they are now.’ But now it probably is a craft ... I looked it up the word “craft” in the dictionary and I guess it is a craft — I was gonna say no it isn’t but ... Quilting is using different skills.

Edward does not perceive quilting as an inferior activity if given the label of craft.

It is something you use everyday. The painting on the wall is just something you look at where the quilt is something you put on your bed and you sleep under it. It’s much more than a picture because it’s useful.

Although Edward does not refer to quilting as an art form, he recognizes that other

quilters perceive quilting from such a perspective.

You see some pretty nice stuff — figures and things on the quilts of these real professionals you know, while ours — we just look in a book, and, and make it according to what the book says. The quilts for our grandchildren — a lot of the artistic part, I got somebody else to do it if you know what I mean. Because I'm not an artist of any sort. We have a couple of the kids that are gifted that way so I use their talent as much as I could [sic].

Motivation for Quilting

Edward describes his quilting as being “very rewarding.” He also indicates that observing a finished quilt provides a “sense of accomplishment.” He notes that the excitement of starting another quilt compels him to continue quilting. Edward identified several reasons for his commitment to quilting.

It's something to do and I think about the kids that are going to enjoy it after we have it done ... In the winter time it's quite important. I would miss it if I wasn't making quilts. You feel that you've accomplished something. And I enjoy doing it. I enjoy putting these pieces together and making the mistakes. And the smoke comes out of the house sometimes after you've made about three or four mistakes and you have to tear it all out again but it's all part of the deal.

The frustration can be a result of his mistakes such as not co-ordinating the colours of the quilt properly. The happiness occurs for him after the first block is completed and looks visually appealing.

His quilting experiences are limited to the season of winter.

We generally try to get one done before Christmas. And we used to do two after Christmas. But this last year only one after Christmas. It's probably because we're getting older and slower. We set aside winter for quilting because there's other

things to do during the warmer weather.

Edward's family clearly appreciate his quilting. In his own words "they just love them." Edward purposely chooses patterns that appeal to his family members so that they will enjoy the quilts. For example,

If one guy liked the tractor and the machinery, well he got tractors and the machinery on his. And the other guy who liked cattle and horses he got cattle and horses on his. I know they treasure them. They've all got one now. [the grandchildren] We've made two for each of them now.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

The only handiwork that Edward ever participates in is quilting. He has never been talented at hobbies such as "woodwork or anything like that." During the winter season Edward can accomplish 5 - 6 hours of quilting during one week. In his estimation "to make a top for a quilt would take about 2 - 3 weeks depending on how hard we went at it and what else comes up in the meantime." Edward participates in quilting experiences during the day for a few hours. He stops and takes a break when required.

Edward has a number of quilting books that "show the patterns and have the templates" included. He enjoys reading information about "old pioneer stuff and that" but considers these pattern books as being more useful to him at the present time. He and his wife have used these books to create several quilts during the past few years.

Although they do not attend quilt shows or exhibitions they were pleased to display their quilts recently. They realized that sharing their quilts with the public brought unexpected results.

The lady that has the shop down there and sells things. She wanted all the people who made quilts out of her cloth to take part — so that it drew an advertisement for her. It was a nice opportunity for us and we saw what everyone else had been doing. And we

could sort of compare ours. And sometimes there were good comparisons and sometimes there weren't.

Edward considers his wife's participation in his quilting experiences as essential. For "if it weren't for her they wouldn't be done. 'Cause no way would I sit down there and quilt. So it's quite important." Together they "decide to make a quilt" and acquire the necessary supplies to complete the project. Edward began quilting to help his wife but now realizes that they "help each other."

Gender and Quilting

Edward definitely believes that a relationship exists between the female gender and quilting. But he indicates that is the result of historically-based events such as the organized quilting bees.

Probably it's due to the past ... You never hear of men having a quilting party to start with. And I don't think you would ever find a man at a quilting party. Men just don't do those things I guess except me. Oh there's a few others — not very many men who quilt. My brother said to me one day, 'You're the last guy in the world I ever thought would be making quilts.' I don't know why he said that. Maybe because I was a rough old farmer and never had time for such things ... I just don't think most men would be interested in doing it. I think it's really a ladies' pastime or what ever you want to call it.

Edward challenges the relationship between gender and quilting by participating in quilting experiences. "I started doing it and the first thing I knew I was enjoying doing it. Oh, I've heard of men that make the whole quilt ... So I'm not alone." From his own experiences Edward realizes that quilting does not have to be an activity that is restricted to women. "If a man likes to do it — why not?" He believes that the gender of the quilter doesn't make "a bit of difference" in the creation of a quilt. The only prerequisite for

participating in quilting is to be interested in the medium and to enjoy the experience. Although Edward enjoys quilting he would only encourage his children and grandchildren to quilt if they showed a genuine interest. Edward identifies quilting as a hobby that enables him to use “a sewing machine and a pair of scissors.” But he realizes that not every individual will have a talent in creating quilts. Therefore he would not force anyone to learn to quilt unless previously interested.

Edward believes that a lot of men encounter barriers when challenging activities considered feminine in characteristics. Interestingly enough, he indicates that barriers can originate from within the individual. “I don’t know of any men that would do what I’m doing. But it doesn’t hurt me a bit. No I’ve enjoyed doing it. I think if there are any barriers it’s the man’s own barrier. Not the society.”

Quilting in School Curriculum

Edward quite adamantly states that quilting does not belong in any school curriculum as a separate subject requiring instruction. Quilting is no longer considered a necessity for survival in the twentieth century when adequate education is a sought-after commodity.

There are too many other things that kids need to learn. That’s a thing they can learn at home. Better than they can learn it at school. I just don’t think they should use up their time at school learning to quilt. Because quilting is not a thing you’re going to make your living at. It’s just a sideline or a pastime.

Edward does not mind if quilting is used strictly as an educational device to stimulate learning so long as it “doesn’t take away from their learning.”

If quilting was taught in schools, Edward would hope that boys and girls would have an opportunity to decide for themselves whether or not they wish to participate in quilting experiences. He believes that girls would be more responsive to quilting because it has been characterized as a feminine activity. Regardless, he does not want any child, male or

female, to be forced to participate in an activity that does not interest them. He has witnessed subjects being forced upon local children that will not support their career choices in the future. But Edward also realizes that there are two ways of perceiving the same situation.

In our school the kids are forced to take a year of music. And to me that is a waste of time. But there's another way of looking at it. Maybe they've got it in them and don't know it. So maybe that year is not wasted. So this could be the same thing with quilting.

Edward struggled to decide which subject would be the most appropriate for introducing quilting to students. He professed to be at a disadvantage because he had "been too long out of school." Eventually he decided that Home Economics was the most suitable area because he felt that quilting was an activity that closely related to the home.

The benefits are twofold from learning about quilting. Not only would students "learn to work together" but they would perceive quilting as an accessible activity for both genders.

Case Study #8

Jasper is in his mid sixties and is the second oldest of four children. He is married and has three daughters, one son, four grandsons and one granddaughter. He is a retired farmer and lives outside of a small rural community. He finished public school at grade 8. He received his first formal instruction in quilting at home from his mother at an early age. He continued with quilting as an adult and provided instruction for his wife. He feels that quilting is a family tradition worth continuing regardless of the gender of the quilter.

Understanding of Quilting Medium

Jasper consistently provided responses that were brief and full of humour throughout the interview. Quilting has been a part of his life for a long time and his responses reflect

the abundance of his experiences. For Jasper quilting means “the action of sewing items together for thicker blankets.” He indicated that there was no other description possible.

Jasper considers quilting to be both an art and a craft medium. Quilting is a craft because you’ve got to have so many stitches to the inch and then there are so many different patterns that you could pick. It takes a lot of skill. In some cases that’s where you make the big money if you want to really get down to the nitty gritty.

Jasper considers quilting to be an art form because “there are so many different designs or patterns that you could blend into it. It doesn’t matter. It’s still the effort and what you put into it.” Jasper believes that quilting when referred to as a craft has retained an inferior status. This is the result of the activity being restricted to women and kept within the home or church setting. Because quilting was “just not something that was brought out in the open” society perceived the activity as unimportant.

Motivation for Quilting

Defining the motivation for participating in quilting was simple for Jasper. If you enjoy the experience you continue, if you do not then you choose another activity that holds your interest. Jasper admits that his own motivation for quilting originated as a young child and might be different in comparison to other quilters. He was unable to attend school due to illness and needed an activity to maintain his interest.

It’s just something to do ... My mother got me started — you didn’t have T.V. then. It was something to do during the daylight hours. They had the old coal oil lamps or the Aladdin lamps then and they weren’t safe to be around lots of the time. Especially not around a sewing machine. A man likes to have something to do. When we made a lot of these here a lot of these [quilts], well — all, she traced them out and I did the cutting out and she sewed them together.

Jasper used the phrase “sore fingers” to describe his quilting experiences. His

description, while expressing incidental information about quilting, also indicates a balance between the negative and positive qualities found in quilting. Jasper also reflects upon the enjoyment quilting has brought to his life during the winter evenings. Quilting can be combined with conversation or companionship as well as accompany television programs. Above all quilting represents memories, accomplishments and acts as a catalyst for bringing individuals together.

Through quilting Jasper can share his enjoyment of life with others.

I look forward to making them for the act of giving. I think that's the reason we enjoy making them. Because as she said we've made them for nieces and nephews for weddings what have you. Well you look forward to the looks on their faces and sometimes it kind of makes you feel good here [in your heart].

Jasper has maintained an interest in quilting throughout his life. He realized how important his quilting experiences had become after not finding the time to quilt for the past few years. Jasper has begun to identify quilting as an important family tradition that requires a constant presence in his life.

I would miss it if it wasn't in my life. I miss it because for the last couple of winters we haven't done one. Yeah. And in the past we usually had a quilt or two in the winter. And I missed it last winter because I didn't do one. It's a change and let's put it that way ... It's still something I want to keep in my life. I don't know if it's because it was something I learnt to do when I was younger or because it's something I like doing.

Jasper comments that although quilting is important he does not schedule it regularly into his daily routine. In fact many factors such as the weather, the amount of light available from natural and artificial sources, or other tasks that demand attention, determine whether or not the activity of quilting is introduced. Jasper indicates that once the quilt is

placed in the frame he continues to quilt until it is finished. Yet he insists that short breaks are necessary from the activity of quilting even if “obsessed” with the completion of a project.

If I’m quilting I put other things aside because you like to do it. You like to get it done. And so it’s not in the middle of the room here yet. I guess it drives you if you don’t have a better word for it.

The “obsession” of completing the project encourages Jasper to quilt between 8 – 10 hours. He stated that two days is usually enough time to complete a quilt. “Everything else gets left behind. The idea is to get it and get it done. I really go at it.”

The support and appreciation that Jasper’s family expresses towards his quilts encourage that overwhelming desire to complete the quilt as soon as possible. “I like to say that they appreciate it because I’ve made it but let’s just say that they appreciate it anyway ... They’ve never said no to accepting one anyway. At least our immediate family.” Jasper encourages his family to use the quilts he makes for that is one of the primary reasons for quilting. He admits that the quilts often are “just put away for just temporary” but eventually they will serve the function for which they were intended.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Even though Jasper participates in other handiwork such as knitting and woodworking he has never considered that the skills used in these areas might transfer to quilting. In fact he tries to “keep them separate. It probably helps my quilting because a change is as good as a rest. I quilt and then start something else.” Jasper indicated that quilting has been a long standing family tradition beginning with his mother and continuing with other relations who are growing older. It has continued with his

two half brother and their families. Their wives did it. They themselves didn’t do it.

My two daughters quilt. If the one had their [sic] way they’d keep on sending it (quilt

tops) down and we'd do it and send it back. It keeps the sewing machine going every once in a while. My mother is proud of me still quilting. She feels that you can always use another quilt. Or if you don't like give it away and do another one.

Jasper will usually travel to the local fairs to observe quilts.

If there's quilts — different places that I've gone to I look at them. But as you say they're usually in plastic and something. But just to see the different patterns and the way they're stitched. Some are them are appliquéd, some are pieced together. But I'd go to a show in Brandon or Winnipeg — I've never been driven to go to something like that. But I don't mind seeing them.

But distance is a factor that restricts his attendance at these exhibitions to the surrounding area.

Jasper indicates that his wife plays an integral role in the completion of his quilts. He insists that "things get done faster" because she maintains the pace of the quilting. His spouse also provides "company, companionship, co-operation," collaboration and inspiration for pattern choices. Jasper's spouse often provides advice and supports the continuation of his quilting experiences. In other words Jasper identifies his spouse as his "personal critic." She is never afraid to offer constructive criticism about his quilting efforts.

Gender and Quilting

Jasper had never thought of a relationship existing between gender and quilting. As a young child he was never given "the idea that quilting was something that a boy shouldn't do." His mother encouraged him to do the piecing of quilts. Jasper discovered that he enjoyed observing "the patterns, different arrangements of the blocks and that." He presently believes that any individual should quilt regardless of their gender as long as they enjoy the process surrounding the experience. Jasper believes that change is possible to

alter quilting from a historically recognized women's activity to a human activity.

Jasper recognizes that society has encouraged many of the barriers that could restrict individuals from quilting. "I think it's society that's part of it. If you didn't go along with what they thought — it's like years ago women didn't have a vote for a long time. And were discriminated on [sic] and this got to be normal." He continued his response by presenting an example that contradicted the restrictions of society. He remembers that at a Sanitorium near his farm, TB patients both male and female participated in activities such as knitting and quilting. Often these activities were taught as part of their therapy. The staff of the Sanitorium never discouraged male patients from participating in any activity. Their recovery was more important than the restrictions of society. He admits that quilting was often used more "for therapy than a skill they were to continue on with" later in life. He wonders if patients had received inspirational instruction whether they would have continued quilting after their release from hospital.

Jasper has never worried about gender stereotypes with regards to quilting. Whenever people express surprise or ridicule they later accept his participation in the activity of quilting. Often they are the same individuals who want something made for their specifications. He would teach anyone in his family how to quilt as long as "they showed some interest." He sincerely believes that "if you haven't got it in your blood well you might as well leave it alone." Quilting can not be an interest that is forced upon anyone. Instead Jasper insists that an individual requires "the incentive to do it." Jasper will be content "as long as someone in the family (male or female) keeps it going."

Quilting in School Curriculum

Jasper believes that quilting should be taught within school curricula. He notes that students don't always have enough work to do and that quilting could allow some students to identify their talent in the medium. Jasper recalls how both boys and girls were once

taught simple domestic tasks such as replacing buttons and mending garments.

Grandfather and father in the old country were taught to sew on their own buttons and to mend their little darns or whatever. They were taught that at the boarding school they went to. And they don't do that now. It would be a good skill to learn. Both boys and girls should be taught that skill.

Although Jasper acknowledges that Home Economics or History would be the most appropriate subjects to introduce quilting in schools, he wondered why the 4-H programs in rural areas did not also include quilting in their instruction for the wider community.

Quilting was never a thing that was brought up. There was dress making or woodworking. But not quilting. There should have been. It wouldn't have hurt. Maybe it would have come in handy later on in their life down the line.

When introducing the medium to boys and girls, Jasper insisted that quilting must be taught as both a historical and contemporary art form. Although he has a definite purpose for quilting in his life, he realizes that other individuals may perceive quilting differently. Only through exploring quilting as both a historical and contemporary art form can students make their own decisions about the medium.

Let's go back to the pioneers and how they made it. And how things have changed. Before they used to have lots of sheep's wool to put in it. Or they saved the feathers for feather ticks. Well nowadays a lot of quilts you buy are just sewn on the machine and there's no craft to it at all. Those hanging in galleries are just made for somebody to pay big bucks to own it. And put it in a plastic bag and hope that the plastic bag doesn't get too tarnished. If you make something it's supposed to be used I think. They should be used today. But let them decide for themselves what kind they would make.

The benefits that students would receive from quilting range from the practical skill of

“learning how to sew” to understanding the virtues of “patience.” Jasper hopes that students would achieve the same “sense of accomplishment” that he receives from his quilting experiences. He believes that only through hands-on experience with quilting would students “appreciate the work that goes into it.” Perhaps this appreciation could be transferred to other areas of learning.

Case Study #9

Adam is in his early twenties and is the oldest of two children. He is married and has no children. He is employed as a music instructor and is currently a fourth year university student. He resides in a large urban centre, holds a degree in Music and is completing a degree in Music Therapy. He received his first formal instruction in quilting at school in grade eight. He continues to pursue quilting as a developing interest and hopes that more opportunities for quilting experiences will arise in the future.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Adam considers quilting to be both representative of art and craft. He indicates that quilting could be perceived as a craft characterized by three layers that many individuals enjoy “in their spare time” and refer to as a “hobby.” Adam explains that individual “artistic nuances” within the medium of quilting are possible and allow the activity to be identified as an art form. As Adam considers the labels of art and craft in reference to quilting to be “synonymous” he does not have any negative connotations about labelling quilting as a craft.

Adam experienced the activities of sewing and quilting “in high school.”

And I was never pushed to do it, but I just like to make things with wood or fabric or whatever it may be, and I like putting things together that are practical, from an apron to shirt to pants or sweaters down to quilting. So personally I’ve done things just for enjoyment.

His mother's choice of pursuing quilting as a career "for over 20 years" has also been an important part of his own developing interest in quilting.

Motivation for Quilting

Adam's motivation for quilting is usually connected to his moments of inspiration but can not always be accommodated into his busy schedule.

I usually have a project that I want to finish. Or something that I want to complete.

Motivation is — I mean it comes when I'm inspired with a media that I want to carry out. But also it depends on whether or not I have time. So I usually do most of the sewing in the summer. It fits better into my schedule.

Adam also indicates that the "sense of accomplishment" experienced with the completion of each project provides adequate motivation for continuing quilting.

Although Adam considers quilting to be an important "mode of expression" he regrets that at present, it is not given a high priority in his life.

I may only quilt twice a year when I have the time. I think in the future I'll get into it a lot more when I have a steady job and I don't have homework. You know being a student — it's time consuming to do that. So I love it and it's a passion. And when I go — when I jump into something then I put all my energy into it and I'm totally obsessed with that project until I'm done.

Adam does not set aside a regular time for quilting. Instead he "will just have in mind a project and then devote all necessary time until it's done. And neglect everything else." When involved with a given project, Adam focusses all his creative energy on the task at hand.

When I'm doing that I mean that's all I do. You know I'll just do it for 48 hours straight. And stay up till five in the morning and I mean, you know, it sucks you in. It sucks me in. And I then have energy to do it and I obsess over it until I finish a project.

When I do things I definitely have a plan. So I think of what I want to make and how I'm going to do it. And then I just take the steps. You know, one step after the other. And I love doing complicated things that are huge projects. And I love the sensation of just taking a step at a time. Once you've set out on the path, I mean, [you] don't think much about your final project. Because you'll boggle yourself. Just take one step at a time like I said and you'll get there.

Although Adam's family may have initial doubts concerning the difficulty level of each project chosen, appreciation soon follows the completion of each project.

They love what I do. When I'm in the process of making something they think 'This is amazing.' And they'll often [say] — 'Why are you doing that? It's awfully complicated. You're not going to finish it. There's no way.' And then when I do they're just ecstatic and brag to all their friends about it. And they show all their friends. Things like that. And so they tell me.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Adam provides a unique experience that has influenced his quilting abilities.

This may sound a bit funny, but I think the biggest hobby I have that taught me about quilting was playing with Lego as a young child. In the sense that it's an amazing developmental learning tool. To learn how to structure things.

Adam also considers his musical background as an important factor in his quilting experiences.

I think the creativity that I get from being a musician definitely comes into place.

Working on that side of my brain definitely frees things up. I think math helps. And music theory. Sure I think about things when I do theory that apply to lots of other things.

The obsession that Adam experiences when quilting encourages a short duration

between the planning and completion of a project.

The average project takes me maybe about four days. So in that week I would probably do, I don't know, let's say 12 hours a day ... So, 48 hours in a week ... I just do it until I'm done ... I generally go straight through the day. I'll sew until my wife tells me to come to bed. Or until my eyes start going on me.

Adam realizes that his hectic schedule hinders his further development as a quilter. On the condition that his interest in quilting develops he hopes eventually to be able to join a quilting guild as well as attend local quilt shows and exhibitions. Although he would not be interested in subscribing to quilting magazines, he would possess or borrow quilting books for his own reference if quilting on a more regular basis.

I would never be interested in subscribing to any quilting publications ... I think I'm quite independent and I've never — I mean I took the basic fundamental techniques of sewing you know for grade 8 — whatever that was. But I've sewn tons of things. Different varieties of things. Both clothing and functional things and I've never studied it. That type of thing. I just seem to understand how to do it. So in terms of maybe for inspiration it might be a good thing to look at a quilting book. But I think I'll just go to the library.

In Adam's family, his mother and grandmother quilt. They offer encouragement through their actions and verbal responses.

Well my mom lives in India you know, so I think just in the sense that she does [quilting] is encouraging. You know 'cause there's a curiosity about what kind of stuff that she's doing. Her things are you know very current and she's always pushing her envelope [sic]. So I guess it's encouraging to know that ... I show my grandmother the things I make and she thinks they're great. I've never received any negative comments. Adam prefers to work on his quilting projects without interference from anyone else.

He will consult the individual for whom the project is intended as to colour preferences, size, or additional features but will limit their input to those areas.

I like being independent. When I do it, before I start anything, I know exactly how I'm going to do it. You know, before I made this instrument case I spent three nights falling asleep thinking about how I was going to make it. And I knew every stitch that was going to have to be made before I started it. And then when I started it — it was just a matter of putting it together. So no, I don't think that help would be good. I mean, they would, I think, just get in the way. 'Cause they wouldn't know my plan.

Adam's wife always provides support for his quilting experiences.

She gives me space to do it when I'm doing it. She appreciates what I'm doing ... If I'm making something for her or if I'm just making something she's just happy that I'm making it. And she'll give me the time to do it ... She trusts that I can do whatever that I say I plan to do. And she thinks that it's great that I do it. And that's the feeling that I have.

Gender and Quilting

Adam questions whether “quilting should necessarily be a male or female” gendered activity. Although history has interpreted quilting as an appropriate activity for women, Adam doesn't believe “that women would necessarily be genetically predisposed to quilt.” Adam himself does not “feel bound by any gender issues or competence issues or things like that to be able to quilt.” Gender has never been a factor that decides the scope of his activities.

He does not view quilting as “primarily a women's art medium.” He believes that every individual has “natural aptitudes” or “natural predispositions” for particular activities. Adam considers the influence of society and the “encouragement via your parents or via a peer group” as important factors that help further develop your interests. He would

encourage any individual interested, male or female, to participate in quilting. Adam realizes that some individuals may not be able to escape either societal or self-imposed barriers preventing them from pursuing their interests.

I can see somebody with possibly low self-esteem or a low sense of self [experiencing barriers]. As with anything, people that don't have the best self-confidence wouldn't have the ability to stand up and go against what the popular culture is telling them to do. Looking ahead to the future, Adam has determined that he would encourage his children to pursue any activity of interest — regardless of their gender.

If quilting becomes a larger part of my life and if I have children (male or female), if they've seen something that I've done and they like it — I'll encourage them to try it. I wouldn't take stock of whether they're male or female in my consideration of that. So the gender issue would not come into it. I wouldn't force anyone into something they didn't want to do.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Adam professes concerns over the resources of the present education system. He hopes that Home Economics “would encompass introductions to an expanded index of mediums” including quilting. Without question, Adam believes that the activity of quilting “could be valuable.” Adam maintains that both boys and girls need to receive instruction equally on all subjects. He believes that separating the genders when teaching quilting would encourage previous stereotypes.

Although Adam believes that information about quilting could be introduced through social studies or art classes he argues that the most suitable subject for teaching quilting would be Home Economics. Only through Home Economics would students learn the techniques of quilting. He acknowledges that “girls may be more responsive than boys because our society says it's more of a feminine thing.” As a result “a lot of people out

there will encourage girls to do it over boys.” He believes that quilting should be an activity available to all students. Adam perceives quilting as both an historical and current art form. When introduced to quilting, students need to understand the historical background of quilting. But when experiencing hands-on exploration of the medium students need to appreciate quilting “as a current art form.”

Adam suggests several benefits that students would receive from the medium of quilting. These include “a sense of accomplishment that you get when you finish a project, the ability to focus on a task, co-operation and team management and group dynamics. I think they learn all those things as with countless other things that I can imagine.” Adam considers “any activity requiring hands-on as having those benefits.”

Case Study #10

Jack is in his mid seventies, and is the youngest of four children. He is married, has two sons, two daughters, five grandsons and one granddaughter. He is a retired police employee and reached grade eight in public education. He resides in a suburb of a large urban centre. He considers himself a beginner quilter. He received his first formal instruction in quilting from night school courses. He believes that each time he gives a quilt away he gives a part of himself away also.

Jack provided the only representative of a quilting guild member in this study. Jack belongs to both a major guild and a smaller local guild within the Lower Mainland. He has held executive positions in the past and appreciates the support the larger guild provides in financing guest quilting instructors as well as organizing collective quilt shows.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

Jack defines quilting as simply “a composition of three different layers of fabric which are all joined together to form a pattern or a piece.” His knowledge of quilting through the perception of a guild member identifies the labelling of quilting as an art or craft as “highly

debatable among quilters” and prompting countless discussions. Jack does not perceive quilting as a craft. In fact he believes that any reference to quilting as a craft implies a inferior status in comparison to other activities.

Instead Jack appreciates quilting as an art form. An art form that enables the illustration of “people’s ideas” in the surface of fabric. Jack believes that the artistic impressions possible through quilting are “not adaptable to painting or enamelling or any of those other types of crafts ... So that makes it more of an art form.”

Jack is the first to admit that he is still developing as a quilter and that his abilities are continuing to progress.

Well, I’ve only been quilting for 10 years but I think every time I attempt something I sort of grow from it. And when I look back at the first quilts ... that I made, and the work that I do now I sort of feel ashamed of the work that I produced in the first year. I made my son a quilt when he was in university. As a going away quilt. This past summer I got him to bring it back to me because I would like to redo it again. And my son says ‘please don’t take anything out of that. I want it the way you made it nine years ago.’ But it’s going to happen. And I went to the library and got books before I joined any guild or took any classes or anything like that.

Motivation for Quilting

Jack explains that quilting is “very relaxing” and that “it gives me such satisfaction.” He also admits that quilting plays an integral part in his life. “If I didn’t have quilting — didn’t do quilting every day I [would] really feel lost. I’m very, very happy working with it all the time.” Jack explains that quilting maintains his cheerful disposition.

It keeps me very happy. And it doesn’t interfere with anything else in our home life ... I think quilting is one of the greatest things I’ve ever done. I feel more gratified spending an hour quilting than I do reading a book.

He appreciates that the completed quilt “will be admired and perhaps remain for years and years with the person you give it to.” Jack perceives the permanence of the quilt as a tangible personal memory that can be given away. “If we have a lot of visitors from overseas I always make them something small to take away with them. And that to me is really something. They’re taking a part of me with it.” In addition Jack never doubts anyone’s appreciation for his quilting. In fact he indicates that they are “just overjoyed when they get them.”

Political current events do not affect Jack’s quilting. The new innovations of quilting provide a more significant impact on his experiences. Through his guild he has explored many new fads or patterns.

Three or four years ago everything was watercolour quilts ... They’re all made out of little two inch squares. And it’d have perhaps a couple of thousand. And you’ve got to collect these and you put them up on the wall and you keep changing them every day.

And then you finally get the picture of what you want. Now just this summer they introduced what they call ‘I spy’ quilts which are made up of thousands and thousands of pieces of fabric with pictures of animals, bees, children, flowers for children.

Actually they do them for the young cancer patients — eight and nine [years old]. And when they’re in bed, caregivers say ‘I spy a green caterpillar’ and the kid looks all around the quilt. Now that’s something that’s got everybody in the guild — they’re all collecting pieces now ... Eventually next year someone will come out with something else they’ve seen or learnt and they run a class on it and everybody gets ‘gung ho’ and wants to make one of these quilts.

Jack sets aside a regular time for quilting “generally in the evening.” Jack works upon either cutting or sewing or sorting out fabric or something like that during the morning hours. Although he works on two or three projects at once to eliminate boredom, he

provides valuable advice for beginners.

I say well you've got to make time ... Even an hour a day. Because I know what peace of mind it bring me. Most people that I know that start they're searching. And they want to learn so many things at once ... Now I say I've got three or four projects going on at a time. Because when I cut out a piece of fabric and I've got a piece a foot long — two inches wide, well I work that into another project straight away. That just goes into a little box and if I've only got 15 minutes spare I can work on this smaller project. And just put it aside ... But once you've set a quilt on a quilt frame or anything ... you want to spend a couple of hours at least on it to make any progress on it.

Context/Behaviours/Habits

Jack acknowledges that his previous experience with handicrafts have positively influenced his quilting. "Many, many years ago I used to knit. And I used to do embroidery. That was long before I was married. I think with the handwork yes, it was helpful. 'Cause I'd learned how to thread a needle."

Jack admits that quilting can occupy 6 or 8 hours every day.

Sometimes I get up in the morning very early and I might work downstairs for a couple of hours. That quilt stays out all the week unless I have any visitors. I just leave it sit there. That's why I say my wife's very supportive of me. Otherwise most people would say, 'oh, you have to clean up in here' and all that sort of thing. But when I'm working and she then says, 'Oh, well let's go to bed now.' And I just leave it where it is. And I take it up again the next day.

Jack does not need to subscribe to quilting publications because of the extensive library of the quilting guild. "We have 2000 quilting books — 2500 or 3000 magazines." Jack has discovered that magazines often repeat information over a short period of time. The costs involved in magazine subscriptions are also expensive, while "for \$60.00 you can

buy yourself a very good quilting book.” He recognizes that an individual can easily become overwhelmed by the amount of information available about quilting.

I know a lot of people (quilters) who buy every book that’s more or less printed. Some people are fanatical on buying books or taking courses. So when I buy a book or magazine now I try and make at least one thing. Well, if I buy I book I try to make something out of that book so that it’s not just a book on that shelf. And every magazine that I bring home I go through them and try to make something or else photostat a particular pattern. And I have a book of photographs downstairs of things I feel as though I would like to do or I feel as though I could accomplish. The last book I bought was some 4 years ago and it was just on sale for such a stupid price I thought I can’t even let that pass, you see. And if I really didn’t make anything out of that book or didn’t want it, I can give it to the guild to put it in their library.

Jack indicates that the books he uses most are “Australian patchwork books that include a lot of history about the early days of quilting.” These books specialize in Australian wildlife, flora and typical domestic scenes.

Just recently Jack discovered that his niece in Australia also quilts. Jack and his wife were staying with his niece and found a quilt in one of the bedrooms. Jack identified the pattern of the quilt as a ‘Lover’s Knot.’ His niece didn’t know that he also quilted. Jack was then told how his niece became interested in quilting.

Her husband was a principal of a school — an Aboriginal school — 500 miles away from Sydney. There were only 80 people in the town. About 20 people were white. And one lady there was a quilter. It was boredom that brought her to quilting. But she only ever made the one. That’s the only one I know of.

Although health problems and an abundance of visitors have restricted Jack’s recent attendance of local quilting shows and exhibitions, he used to attend all he could. He

admits that his wife shows her support by attending quilting shows with him. "But she doesn't really enjoy it. She goes to a quilt show. She walks in. She walks around — finished in ten minutes and she sits down at the door and she knits." She was ready to take messages without complaint when he held executive positions in the guild. "And she still does ... It's something that we've enjoyed together. I would say that. I think maybe she'd sooner have me do that instead of anything else." He also enjoys sharing the companionship of his wife when quilting and admits that his wife risks "becoming a quilt widow" if he doesn't try to continue his interests within her presence.

Gender and Quilting

Jack has never considered a relationship to exist between quilting and gender. He simply perceives himself as a quilter. Within the atmosphere of his guild he represents just another member. Jack remembers how the presence of men was not always a novelty in circumstances concerning quilting.

There are male teachers as well. And when you go into some fabric stores quite often you find a man there ready to serve you. Not so much now — just recently. But years ago there was always men in Surrey here in fabric stores. 'Cause years ago in the old department stores there was always a man to unroll the bolt and measure out and all that sort of thing.

Jack does admit that the general public has perceived quilting as a woman's art medium.

I would say most people consider it primarily a women's thing that a lady does ... I think it's related to history. Because very few men were taught to quilt. Lots of ladies ... learned to thread needles as a little girl and all that. But not often do you hear or see anything relative to a young boy.

Jack doesn't consider the public perception of quilting as a barrier inhibiting individuals

from quilting. Instead he believes that many of the barriers constructed are self-imposed.

He relates the example of another man that came to the quilting guild:

He wanted rules changed for him. And he wanted this. But he only lasted the year ...

He still had a lot to learn. But he did make this piece and he wanted it put in the show.

And finally after a special meeting to save the guild any embarrassment, they changed their constitution and everything allowing him to enter his work. Then he faded out.

Jack's Australian upbringing gives him a different perspective of possible gender stereotypes in quilting as compared to the other male quilters in this study.

In Australia where I come from they hold in Sydney a men's knitting competition. And all these men, they're all shearers, they're miners — they live way out back. You take a fellow who lives on a cattle station where they're got thousands of acres. And he's there and might only see his boss once a month. He lives all by himself. What's he going to do? He's got to do something. So I think men learn to knit and all that sort of thing. Some are even quilters.

Jack believes that lingering stereotypes concerning quilting will disappear once enough men become interested in quilting.

Jack would teach anyone how to quilt regardless of their age or gender.

Anybody. If the man next door to me came in and says I'd like to learn how to quilt I'd just rub my hands in anticipation and teach him everything I know. The same as it was taught to me. I feel as though if I can introduce somebody to quilting it'd make me happier.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Jack does not mind including quilting in schools as a class activity but feels uncomfortable with passing or failing grades being attached to the completed projects.

If it's a group project that'd be fine. But not if the boy had to do it all by himself. But

if he's participating in making a group quilt and then years to come you say 'I had a part in that. Here's my block up there.' And he'd always be able to point out to his friends, 'Yeah that's my block. I made that.'

He believes that quilting should be presented as an elective activity enabling students themselves the choice of participation or not. Only if the individual, male or female, is interested should they be encouraged to quilt.

Jack does not consider quilting to be gender restricted but acknowledges that social pressures might encourage more interest in the medium from girls than boys, especially at school age.

I don't think a boy would like to say to his buddies 'Well, I can't come and shoot baskets with you tomorrow, I've got to go to a quilting lesson.' I think in high school it would be a social thing. Peer pressure.

Jack implies that Home Economics would be the most appropriate subject for introducing quilting to students.

Jack considers quilting to be an historic art form.

In Australia when they speak about the history of quilting in any book you read or anything like that or any museum you go into, it goes back to the days of when the first fleet went to Australia with all the convicts on. The Elizabeth Fry society would give every female passenger a bag of scraps and needles and thread. Because the journey used to take some six or eight months to do. And that was to keep them busy. While the men used to do the work on the ship and gamble and all that sort of stuff. When you go into a lot of museums in country towns and that in Australia — you'll see a quilt up on the wall. And it tells the history more or less of the town, the pioneers and all that. And young people learn that well this is not just something that's being produced today. It goes back a long, long way. Well most quilting blocks they get a name from

somewhere. And there is a meaning to that name. And a reason why.

Jack indicates several benefits that students would experience from learning about quilting.

The satisfaction of the knowing their ability to make something useful. Something that would be of benefit to other people to either look at or to receive or to help keep them warm. It helps them to realize the value of the fabric and that that you're using. And how you can utilize every little square inch of it. They must know themselves once they make something they must realize that there's a certain amount of esteem in producing something that other people would enjoy looking at or using.

Chapter VI

Comparisons from Findings: Amateur and Professional Quilters

Introduction

Michael James discovered that the topic of quilting had a “widespread identification” within society (James, 1981, p. vii). When the topic of quilting was mentioned individuals would profess to knowing a quilter within their family. Many of these individuals would also affirm that the quilts produced by family members had become treasured heirlooms. Similarly, my interest in quilting and its participants has met with much support and interest by others. Through my own information sources and the knowledge of other individuals I easily located the ten quilters who participated in my study and was welcomed into their homes. I enjoyed discovering the thoughts, perceptions and beliefs of each individual.

The data findings from this study do not accurately represent the perspectives of contemporary male and female quilters for the number of participants did not provide a large enough sampling. In addition, the sample was deliberately rather than randomly selected and contains a high per cent of beginning quilters and individuals who do not quilt on a regular basis in comparison to the quilters who participated in the Maine study (Langellier, 1990), the Minnesota study (Cerny, Eisher, DeLong, 1993) and the Canadian study (Woods, 1995). Therefore, I am unable to provide generally applicable conclusions of how gender actually affects the conceptualization of the quilting process or indicate the benefits of quilting for both genders. However, I believe that this study did serve an important purpose since the information gathered contributes to the body of knowledge already existing in contemporary quilting literature. The more information gathered about the thoughts, perspectives and beliefs of quilters, the better our understanding of contemporary quilting experiences.

Before the transcribing of the case studies had been completed, I realized that an

abundance of information that extended far beyond the scope of this thesis had been received. Within this chapter I will draw a connection between some of the perspectives and beliefs originating from the case studies and those expressed in contemporary quilting literature by quilters representing the amateur, hobbyist, professional and artist classifications. I have continued to organize this chapter under the five research headings of medium, motivation, context/behaviour/habits, gender and school curricula.

Understanding of Quilt Medium

The individuality of each quilter, both male and female, was represented by the responses given to this first section of questions from the interviews. The word quilting was understood to have not just one meaning but several, referring to both tangible and intangible qualities. The meaning offered by each quilter, male and female, reflected the different experiences that they brought to their quilting. Quilting was defined as:

(Table 1. Definitions of Quilting from Case Studies)

-
1. an appearance
 - a three-layered unit
 - decorative finishing stitches
 - a puckering effect on the fabric surface
 2. an experience
 - the process of putting pieces together
 - a hobby that creates something beautiful
 3. a form of symbolism
 - more than material and stitches
 4. a single gender activity
 - something that the wife does

These four definitions are represented in greater detail by contemporary quilt literature. Many contemporary quilters begin with the understanding of a quilt as being a traditional bed covering of “three layers joined together by stitches” (Hunt, 1996, p. 196) before exploring the medium and “replacing the idea of what a quilt should be to what a quilt could be.” (James, 1997, p. 16) The ten participants in my study recognized that quilting represented more than material but devoted less time and energy towards quilting than other contemporary quilters. Although reliable conclusions can not be made based upon the responses of the ten participants from my study I would suggest that the majority of quilters, as represented by other research, have the opportunity more often to immerse themselves into quilting or to reflect upon the thought processes involved or incidental to quilting.

Many contemporary quilters whether describing themselves as amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist, admit to requiring several years of contemplation before being able to form an adequate vocabulary to describe their perceptions of the quilting medium (Carter, 1996, p. 83; James, 1997, p. 7). They have discovered that the medium of quilting requires a detailed exploration of the different layers both visible and invisible during the quilting process. For example after several years of experience as a quilter, Wendy Lewington Coulter indicates that quilts possess meanings on different levels by determining that “the medium is the message.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 18) I discovered other definitions for quilting that are equally thought-provoking:

(Table 2. Definitions of Quilting from Contemporary Literature)

1. an appearance

illustrations using fibre and thread (Becker, 1996, p. 61)

2. an experience

representative of a building process (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 61)

an experimenting and learning process (Becker, 1996, p. 107)

3. a form of symbolism

capable of significant meaning (Hunt, 1996, p. 3)

metaphor for creative resourcefulness (Hunt, 1996, p. 3)

provides connections across generations/cultures (Becker, 1996, p. 3)

establishes connection with the past (Becker, 1996, p. 69)

multi-leveled and appeals to different people on different level

(Becker, 1996, p. 123)

4. a single gender activity

something that women do (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69)

representative of a women's hobby (Hunt, 1996, p. 196)

5. a social commentary

reflection of good thinking and one's contribution to the world

(Hunt, 1996, 18)

large part of the women's movement (Hunt, 1996, p. 94)

instrument of political analysis, social awareness and capable of influencing

relevant issues (Becker, 1996, p. 41)

personal language for discussing the human condition (Carter, 1996, p. 83)

6. a form of release (physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, or artistic)

one's philosophy (Hunt, 1996, p. 97)

expressive of the beauty of women's work and metaphor for feelings or

ideas (Fallert, 1996, p. 12)

outlet for an artist's expression or voice (Carter, 1996, p. 12)

extension or expression of an individual (Becker, 1996, p. 103)

7. an art media

unlike any other art form (Becker, 1996, p. 37)

alternative to the mainstream media (James, 1997, p. 11)

The participants in my study discussed whether quilting represents an art form or a craft form. Seven out of the ten quilters participating in my study (three males/four females) considered quilting to represent both a craft and a form of art. Each insisted that the technical skills required to complete a quilt could be considered as craft. All seven quilters insisted that mental processes involved in the planning and organizing of a quilt that occurred before the actual quilting was started suggested that quilting was an art form. The opportunity for original pattern designs, alterations of established patterns or individuals' choices of materials and colours enabled quilters to reflect their own artistic nuances upon the fabric surface of the quilt.

Quilt artist Michael James believes that "quilting requires craft." (James, 1998, p. 26) He indicates that knowledge of the skills or craftsmanship involved in the process of quilting is necessary but that mastering these skills do not qualify a quilt as a work of art. A quilt only becomes art when determined by the intentions of the creator for "the medium is irrelevant — art lies in what you do with it." (James, 1998, p. 25)

Two quilters from my study (one male/one female) categorized quilting exclusively as an art form. Each indicated that the medium of quilting was comparable to other art mediums such as painting and deserved equal respect and attention from society. The surface of the quilt portrays the emotions and the experiences of the quilter as does the painted surface of the canvas in painting. Yet quilting has one advantage over painting. The painting remains on the wall for observation from a distance. The quilt invites an

individual to touch its surface as though through touch one can feel the soul of the quilter who has produced the work.

One quilter (male) who participated in my study considers the terms of art and craft as interchangeable — not as two separate contexts. In comparison, quilt artist Michael James describes the differences between art and craft as well as underlining the importance that design plays in quilting experiences.

Art is a state, a situation that a work enters when its expressive, symbolic, metaphorical, and/or decorative value assumes a communicative power that transcends its materiality. To me, craft is the process, the construction, the technical aspect of producing some object. To a degree, design is technical also, but whereas craft is focused on the construction end of the object, design is focused on the composition — essentially, on the interweaving of the surface elements — line, colour, form, shape, etc. (James, 1998, p. 121)

One quilter (male) determined that the quilts he produced are strictly a craft form. He admitted that other quilters produce quilts that have artistic qualities. But he stressed the functionality of his work as a reason for categorizing his quilts as craft. Seven out of ten quilters (two males/five females) do not consider quilting as an inferior activity when labelled craft.

Two quilters (two males) considered the label of craft in reference to quilting as indicating negative connotations. They considered the word “craft” to lower the status of the work involved in creating a quilt. According to quilting literature I discovered that negative connotations are not linked so much to the labelling of quilting as a craft but rather to the association “of fabric with women’s work.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 53)

Many of the sources I consulted did not encourage the categorizing of quilting as strictly a craft form. Quilt artist Michael James suggests that in some instances the word craft still

retains a secondary status and that individuals doubt whether “the work of the mind and the spirit” are sufficiently exercised during the creative process.

Two male quilters indicated that the perception of society of quilting as a medium does not correspond with the perception of quilters. They believe that only quilters are qualified to identify quilting as an art or craft — not society. Quilting literature reveals that this controversy causes heated debate amongst quilters regardless of their classification as an amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist.

Many quilters look beyond the labelling process of quilting to the fabric itself and how “it is associated with every event of our lives.” (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 53; Shaw, 1997, p. 16) Contemporary literature indicates that the symbolic meaning of the quilt has become a focus of attention for many prominent contemporary quilters.

I doubt that the controversy of quilting considered as an art or craft will ever be resolved. Yet the controversy itself enables quilters to define their understanding of quilting and the distinction is only important if “made by the quilters themselves.” (Langellier, 1990, p. 34) The opportunity for quilters to seriously consider their medium of choice encourages a continuous exploration of the unlimited opportunities of quilting.

From the data collected I would say that the medium of quilting encourages different interpretations. When given the same material two quilters can produce highly different quilts. The quilter is provided with many choices when planning the layout of a quilt. Quilters are not limited to one pattern but a multitude of patterns and variations. Quilters can go beyond traditional patterns and create their own original designs. Each quilt serves as a visual record of an individual’s experiences. The opportunity to work with the fabric and to tear or cut it to fit an individual’s ideas can evoke strong emotions. The undeniable connection to past history also allows each quilter a relationship with those individuals who created quilts in years gone by.

Motivation for Quilting

At the beginning of each case study I provided a brief inclusion of a personal history of each quilter. When asked to describe their quilting experiences the ten quilters illustrate their diversity by providing several different responses. Table 3 proposes a taxonomy of these responses:

(Table 3. Description of Quilting Experiences from Case Studies)

1. an emotional activity

enjoyable

exciting

frustrating

2. a physical activity

relaxing

physically demanding

an opportunity for doing something with one's hands

3. a creative activity

chance to explore a love for colour and fabric

an opportunity for creating something

4. an intellectual activity

rewarding

providing an accomplishment

an opportunity to escape the demands of one's life

5. a symbolic activity

represents simpler times

According to Yvonne Porcella, traditional quilters and quilt artists have come “to quilt making for basically the same reasons.” (McMorris & Kyle, 1996, p. 59) Some of these reasons are expressed by Joyce Becker to explain the responses of individual quilters she interviewed: “justification, intuition, impulse, capture a moment, follow your heart, optimism, tactile, calming, self-expression, validation, escape, respite, satisfying, spontaneous, joy, whimsical, creative and fun.” (Becker, 1996, p. 125)

Many of these responses were echoed by other individuals as indicated by the following descriptions of individual quilting experiences from other sources of contemporary literature:

(Table 4. Description of Quilting Experiences from Contemporary Literature)

1. an emotional activity

enjoyable (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 63)

pleasurable (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 66)

exciting (Becker, 1996, p. 11)

igniting enthusiasm (James, 1997, p. 6)

frustrating (Becker, 1996, p. 27)

2. a physical activity

enjoyment of working with one’s hands (Carter, 1996, p. 10)

3. a creative activity

provides the opportunity for exploring and experimenting with new colours,

techniques, designs ideas and choices (Wolfrom, 1995, p. 6)

provides the opportunity for creative freedom (Becker, 1996, p. 91)

releases artistic ability (Becker, 1996, p. 99)

4. an intellectual activity

- rewarding (Carter, 1996, p. 16)
- a meditative process (James, 1997, p. 5)
- satisfying (Becker, 1997, p. 7)
- encouraging appreciation (Becker, 1996, p. 7)
- suspends time as one is absorbed in the moment (Becker, 1996, p. 11)

Many of these descriptions of quilting experiences closely resemble the responses given by the ten quilters involved in my study. These ten individuals are not often given the opportunity to properly evaluate their motivations for quilting. In contrast, many prominent contemporary quilters are often asked to share personal information through different publications and artist statements thus encouraging an exploration of self-identity and creative origins. According to contemporary quilting literature these are other important motivations identified for participating in quilting experiences:

(Table 5. Further Descriptions of Quilting Experiences from Contemporary Literature)

1. a social activity

- instigates deep personal friendships with other women
(Becker, 1996, p. 119)
- potential for connections to human life (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 66)
- sharing of ideas or teaching of techniques (Becker, 1996, p. 19)
- interaction and inspiration (Fail, 1996, p. 17)

2. a form of metaphor

- representation of intangibles (Fallert, 1996, p. 12)

3. an environmentally-friendly activity

- use of non toxic materials (James, 1997, p. 5)

4. a form of communication

to engage the emotions and the spirit of viewers (Fallert, 1996, p. 12)

means of expression (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59)

5. a form of self-discovery

answering a call to the medium (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69)

developing natural abilities and skills (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69)

opportunity for variation (Fail, 1996, p. 33)

striving for originality (Becker, 1996, p. 33)

curiosity (Becker, 1996, p. 27)

6. a formal experience

the doing, the process, the creation of art (Becker, 1996, p. 3)

exploring tangible properties of fabric (Fallert, 1996, p. 12)

7. a form of accomplishment

fulfilling a challenge (Fail, 1996, p. 17)

needing to create (Becker, 1996, p. 27)

8. other

to dispel the myths of quilt making (Hunt, 1996, p. 196)

Nine quilters out of ten (four male/five females) indicated that complex thought processes were involved in quilting. This perception is reflected by quilting literature alluding to the complexity of thought necessary for creativity (Becker, 1996, p. 3; Fallert, 1996, p. 12; Hunt, 1996, p. 119; James, 1998, p. 7). For example, Janet Pope describes the design process as "a meditative train of thought." (Hunt, 1996, p. 154) She refers to the source for her ideas as a lowering of "a bucket into a deep well, deeper and deeper over the course of two or three days, and finally there's a splash. When I bring the bucket up, it

starts to come out on the paper.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 154) The majority of contemporary quilters regardless of their identification as an amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist, consider the planning or organizing of a quilt as a demanding procedure and not one to be taken lightly if an individual is motivated to produce an original quilt design.

Political activism was not a significant factor in this study. None of the quilters regarded current events as an influencing factor in their quilting experiences and mainly produced quilts for their own family and friends. Some quilters even went as far to say that they turned to quilting to avoid the presence of current events. I do not suggest that these ten individuals provide an accurate representation of the majority of contemporary quilters but realize that their responses contribute to the body of knowledge already existing in contemporary literature. Through research and the interview process I have discovered that each quilter brings an individual perspective to their quilting experiences and perceives the potential of the medium differently.

It is difficult to determine how much world events motivate individual quilters. An important social or political event will cause different reactions in each individual causing some to perceive quilting as a means of escaping the world, while others may feel compelled to produce quilts as commentary on a particular event. As an example, the 1991 Gulf War caused many individuals to produce quilts as a defense against the war images transmitted through the news media (Armstrong, 1993). These individuals determined that the medium of the quilt represented political activism through a wide variety of quilting styles and techniques.

Many contemporary quilt artists are attracted to the quilt medium because of its' potential to represent “political analysis” and “social awareness.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 97; Shaw, 1997, p. 209) Quilt literature indicates that during the 1960s many contemporary artists such as Miriam Schapiro and Sondra Freckelton turned to quilt making as a means of supporting

the women's movement and began incorporating quilt imagery into their art work. During the 1996 Visions: QuiltArt exhibition in San Diego, several quilts that illustrated political or social awareness were included. Topics such as the influence of the news media (22), violence against women (82), the exploitation of the female form (41), cultural differences (44), remembering women's suffrage (50), and remembering the explosion of the atom bomb (65) were represented by individual quilters' works (Rogers, 1996). Each quilter provided a statement explaining the reasons for illustrating these relevant issues.

Two quilters out of ten (one male/one female) responded that innovations in quilting influence their efforts and perceptions. These innovations could include improved fabrics, new quilting techniques, revision of quilting tools, new patterns or pattern variations. Quilting literature supports the influence that explorations of innovative materials have as possible motivations for quilting (Fallert, 1996, p. 12; Hunt, 1996, p. 36; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 66; Shaw, 1997, p. 83). Techniques such as hand dyeing, painting, embellishment or incorporating unusual objects in the quilt surface encourage a journey of "self-expression and self-discovery." (Carter, 1996, p. 10)

Seven out of ten quilters (four males/three females) indicated that quilting played an important role in their lives. The remaining three quilters (one male/two females) determined that quilting is not a priority in their lives at present. The demands of their lives, both personal and professional, restrict the duration of time they can spend quilting. These three quilters acknowledge that there are many quilts that they would like to create but wonder if the opportunity will ever be available for their completion.

Many individuals consider quilting as being important (Becker, 1996, p. 61; Carter, 1996, p. 10; Hunt, 1996, p. 3; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59). As they pursue their interest in quilting all other responsibilities are given a lower priority level. Quilter Karen Schoepflin Hagen's confession that "quilting is the most important thing" in her life

illustrates the need many have for experiencing the creative process (Becker, 1996, p. 103). Prominent quilters recognized as professionals or artists deliberately structure their lives around their quilting experiences (James, 1998, p. 6), while many amateur or hobbyist quilters face the reality of attempting to accommodate quilting in their daily routines.

All ten quilters in my study professed that their families appreciate their quilting. While three quilters (one male/two female) receive verbal evidence and encouragement, the remaining seven quilters (four males/three females) are asked to produce quilts for their relations on a regular basis. These seven quilters stated that the delighted expressions on the faces of the individuals who receive their quilts are motivation enough to continue quilting. Although many contemporary quilters produce quilts for their own artistic development and do not worry about receiving "the attention or the recognition that their work deserves" from critics or the greater population (James, 1998, p. 131), they do hope for recognition from their families (Fail, 1996, p. 23; Hunt, 1996, p. 96; James, 1998, p. 5) thus reflecting the data findings from my study. It seems as though every contemporary quilter hopes to experience validation for their efforts on some level and encouragement to continue pursuing their interest for quilting.

Two interesting points arose from this section of questions. One quilter (female) indicated that one's economic position could be a possible motivation for participating in quilting experiences. She firmly believed that an individual who possessed adequate wealth could pursue interests such as quilting as a leisure activity — an activity simply to eliminate boredom. She had observed many such individuals who had an abundance of free time attending quilting classes. She believed that such individuals do not really appreciate quilting as a form of artistic expression and encourage the impression of quilting as appropriate for leisure activity only. I could only find the inclusion of this perspective in

two sources of contemporary literature — the American quilting survey conducted in Maine (Langellier, 1990, p. 42) and the Canadian study conducted in Ontario (Woods, 1995, p. 44) The American survey from Maine survey indicates that an individual’s financial position once decided who participated in quilting for leisure and for practical reasons, but the affordability and greater accessibility to quilting supplies now enables many to experience the medium regardless of their social position. However, mention was made concerning the cost of newer fabric and how an interest in quilting can often lead “to issues of the control of money within the family, particularly after the practical and decorative need for quilts is exhausted.” (Langellier, 1990, p. 42) The National Canadian study indicated that some individuals may keep “two different sets of figures” recording their expenses while others “never dared to think about it.” (Woods, 1995, p. 44) The following data was also collected:

(Table 6. Expenses Attributed to Quilting Experiences from Contemporary Literature)

Amount of money spent on quilting:

quilting magazines	amount not provided
fabric	over \$400.00 per year
quilting books	over \$200.00 per year
other supplies	over \$300.00 per year
class fees	\$150.00 per year

Many of the contemporary quilters recognized that artists, in comparison, did not perceive finances as an important factor in pursuing their interest in quilting (Carter, 1996, p. 12; James, 1998, p. 6; Rogers, 1996, p. 4).

Another quilter (female) mentioned that her motivation to quilt could be connected to

reincarnation. She believed that in a former life she must have been an experienced quilter. This would explain her relentless need to learn how to quilt when growing up. She believes that when one is truly talented in a specific artistic realm, the need arises in future lives to pursue that interest. The factor of spirituality and its connection to quilting is also raised by contemporary literature. (Becker, 1996, p. 45; Fail, 1996, p. 89; Hunter, 1996, p. 103; Shaw, 1997, p. 240) Some contemporary quilters explore their philosophy and faith through the quilt medium. Quilter Win Burry insists that inspiration is both an individual and communal process.

Our inspiration comes to us as individuals from a realm which is universal, from one 'source.' If people separated by continents and time have a similar vision, that is not surprising ... The inspiration is as endless as the universe and as complete as the divine energy that is within it. (Hunt, 1996, p. 105)

Other quilters profess "a calling" or a working "of the mind and the spirit, work that shadowed the humble work of hands." (James, 1998, p. 5) Although no acknowledgment was made of reincarnation, I wonder if many contemporary quilters have experienced similar motivation in their decision to pursue quilting as a lifetime interest?

After studying quilting literature and the additional information from my study, I would say that although different motivations may be identified for encouraging individuals to participate in quilting experiences, all quilters share an overwhelming interest in the medium. Quilting may meet needs such as working with ones hands or achieving recognition from oneself and others. Often through quilting experiences quilters are able to realize levels of self-exploration and self-discovery that might have been previously unattainable. In addition, the medium of quilting has the potential to establish connections as well as promote communication. Every individual, male or female, ultimately decides whether the medium serves political or personal usage and is never restricted to just a single

layer of meaning through the surface of the quilt.

Male and female quilters identify many similar motivations for quilting regardless of their classification as an amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist. The motivations for quilting are intrinsically connected to the individual quilter's understanding of the quilt medium. Quilting literature indicates that appreciating the functional quality of the quilt or identifying the intrinsic qualities unique to the quilt medium are equally valid motivations for participating in quilting experiences.

Context/Behaviour/Habits

Five out of ten quilters (two males/three females) identified the time they had participated in quilting experiences. All seemed almost apologetic when they noted the brevity of their quilting experiences. These five quilters seemed to believe that their perceptions were not as valid as those individuals who pursue quilting on a more frequent basis. I have recorded their perceptions because each response serves an important purpose by increasing our knowledge of contemporary quilters. All ten quilters participating in the study explained that often other tasks delay or postpone their involvement in quilting. Contemporary literature indicates that quilters are often asked to identify the length of time they have been quilting (Cerny, Eicher & DeLong, 1993, p. 19; Hunt, 1996, p. 229; Langellier, 1990, p. 32; Woods, 1995, p. 42). For example from Gail Hunt's informal survey "of 213 quilt makers from many parts of Canada" the following data was collected:

(Table 7. Extent of Quilting Experiences from Contemporary Literature — Example 1)

Time spent quilting:

less than a year	2%
1 - 2 years	9%

3 - 6 years	26%
7 - 10 years	18%
over 10 years	45%

(the average length of time in this last group was 19.4 years, with the most experienced quilter responding that she has been quilting 72 years!) (Hunt, 1996, p. 229)

The study conducted by Mary Lou Woods during the 1990 Canadian Quilters' Association/Association canadienne de la courtepointe annual conference provides another example of individuals identifying the extent of their quilting experience (Woods, 1995, p. 42). Based upon "a response rate of 56%" from the questionnaires distributed the following data was collected:

(Table 8. Extent of Quilting Experiences from Contemporary Literature — Example 2)

Time spent quilting:

3 years or less	12%
3-10 years	39%
10-15 years	28%
15-20 years	9%
over 50 years	1%

Often the request to indicate the quilter's experience with quilting identifies those individuals who discovered quilting as a worthwhile activity following the resurgence of interest in the medium during the early 1970s (Langellier, 1990, p. 32). But the category of novice or experienced does not designate the skill level of the individual or their ability to express themselves through the quilting medium.

Nine quilters (four male/five female) indicated that they did not have a regular time for quilting in their daily schedules. Many reasons were given, such as the completion of other household tasks, workplace or educational concerns, seasonal interests, social commitments or family-related occasions, for not being able to establish a regular pattern for quilting experiences. The one quilter (male) who does quilt on a regular basis every day is a member of a quilting guild and works towards completing projects for different charitable purposes. This perspective reflects the characteristics of the Minnesota Quilter as described in a survey organized during the mid 1980s (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 19). Many were identified as "leisure quilters" and indicated that priorities were given "to family obligations and/or paid employment" and resulted in quilting experiences being "limited and fragmented." (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 19)

All ten quilters had definite time preferences for their participation in quilting. The time period chosen depended upon the individual and the demands experienced from other sources. Four quilters (one male/three females) favoured daylight hours for their quilting as they felt the natural light was important to their production. Three quilters (one male/two females) favoured evening hours and reserved the activity of quilting as a restful conclusion for their day. The last three quilters (all male) confessed that they could continue quilting with brief lapse periods for hours at a time. Two of these quilters indicated that they would work continuously until the project was completed. Unlike historical references, few references from contemporary quilting literature indicate the preferences of quilters regarding the time of day or the season favoured (Hunt, 1996, p. 154; Woods, 1995, p. 45). Quilter Janet Pope acknowledges that she is "most creative in the summer" and draws upon the inspiration of the changing of the seasons for her design ideas (Hunt, 1996, p. 154). The ten participants in my study perceive particular seasons as productive quilting times for practical reasons rather than for inspiration.

(Table 9. Average Time Spent Quilting from Case Studies)

Time spent quilting:

2 hours per month	(female)
6 months to produce a single quilted item	(female)
4 - 5 hours per week	(female)
5 - 6 hours per week in winter	(male)
6 - 8 hours every day	(male)
7 - 14 hours per week in winter	(female)
8 - 10 hours per week in winter over a 2 day period	(male)
10 hours in winter	(female)
12 hours per day over a 4 day period during summer	(male)
30 - 36 hours over a 1 - 2 week period	(male)

The identification of particular time periods designated for quilting are not discussed in great detail in contemporary quilting literature. The Canadian study reveals that the time spent quilting may “vary from season to season, with more time spent quilting during the winter than in the summer.” (Woods, 1995, p. 45) In addition, the Maine survey indicates that the organization of quilting guild activities accommodate the hectic schedule during different seasons of the year, quilters themselves arrange their own “quilting time and quilting space.” (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 19) The hours that any individual contributes to their quilting experiences is decided at the discretion of that individual and the factors of their environment.

The word obsession was mentioned by many of the quilters during the interviews. Whether they themselves considered quilting an example of obsessive behaviour, they

admitted that many quilters perceive quilting in such a light. Whether in regards to purchasing of fabric, collecting of quilting publications, or participating in quilting courses or workshops, all ten quilters admitted that in some circumstances their enjoyment can lead to a passion or obsession.

This obsession can be present in many forms. Although an individual may not have the opportunity to pursue quilting upon a regular daily basis, one's thoughts may dwell upon quilting frequently. One quilter (male) indicated that inspiration often occurred during the night for new quilt designs. He believed that if the designs were worth pursuing then the idea would still be remembered upon rising. Another quilter (male) claimed that he planned a project, days in advance, to the stage where he could imagine each stitch that was necessary. One quilter (female) acknowledged that her late husband used to cook meals when she was absorbed in her quilting. She appreciated his allowing her to continue without interruptions.

Obsession is portrayed quite often in contemporary quilting literature (Becker, 1996, p. 15; Carter, 1996, p. 3; Hunt, 1996, p. 143) For example quilter Iris Ethridge will begin her design process after waking up, "develop ideas during the day and carry them out at night." (Hunt, 1996, p. 143) She also admits to quilting into the middle of the night if the occasion arises for creativity. Another quilter Wendy Lewington Coulter, until recently "quilted in every available scrap of time" often staying up late as well as getting up early (Hunt, 1996, p. 18). Heather W. Tewell indicates that her quilts linger in her imagination continuously and that "solutions for a particular problem related to the quilt will pop out of nowhere" as a result of that unconscious thinking (Becker, 1996, p. 15). Whatever the classification of quilter, the medium of quilting has the potential to overwhelm other interests or responsibilities in life.

Nine out of ten quilters (four males/five females) believed that their participation in other

handiwork supported their quilting. Handicrafts such as knitting, woodcrafting, crewel embroidery, embroidery, sewing, cross stitch, painting, crochet, and making Christmas decorations were mentioned as being transferable to the techniques of quilting. One quilter (male) admitted that he had never thought about his other artistic activities as being influential in his quilting experiences. Consistent with the majority of quilters from my study, many contemporary quilters also describe their participation in other handiwork as being influential in the composition of their quilts (Carter, 1996, p. 12; Fallert, 1996, p. 12; Fassett, 1997, p. 11; James, 1998, p. 25). There is not always adequate time to devote to these other interests but a brief respite from quilting often brings a fresher perspective towards the potential that the medium has to offer.

All ten quilters did not presently subscribe to quilting publications. When I asked each quilter for an explanation several reasons were given:

(Table 10. Explanations for not Subscribing to Quilt Publications from Case Studies)

1. the cost factor

felt prices of subscriptions for materials given too expensive and not cost efficient

had access to large libraries that were inexpensive or without cost indicated that publications were presenting repetitive materials from previous issues

2. lack of space

possessed too many other quilting publications already

3. lack of time

were subscribing to enough magazines already unrelated to quilting

4. lack of interest

were not interested enough in the medium at present

found the abundance of patterns, designs and ideas overwhelming and
frustrating

5. the convenience factor

quilting books seemed dateless and were better sources for techniques
and information

This is not to say that each quilter is without published resources. Eight out of the ten quilters (four male/four female) own quilting books that include historical information, quilting techniques, patterns and templates as well as information on special ethnic quilting styles. Four of these eight quilters (two male/two female) admit to owning several volumes of quilting books and are reluctant to expand their already large libraries. The two quilters (one male/one female) who do not own any quilting books intend to purchase some soon but as yet have not had any need, for they have access to other sources for their projects and designs. Contemporary quilting literature does not discuss the types of publications that individuals prefer or the reasons for ownership. Only a few references indicate that published images of quilting techniques originating from other cultures influence the work of professional quilters (Fail, 1996, p. 11; Hunt, 1996, p. 155; James, 1998, p. 32; Shaw, 1997, p. 260). The texts indicate clearly that these individuals do not copy the designs as illustrated in publications or exhibited in shows as other quilters might, but use qualities of the design elements to transfer to their own design ideas.

As indicated earlier, only one quilter (male) currently holds membership in a quilting guild. Interestingly enough, four quilters (two male/two female) expressed an interest in belonging to a quilting guild in future if the opportunity ever arose and they received an invitation. For the remaining five quilters (two males/three females), membership was not

an important objective in their lives. Three of the quilters (all female) participated in quilting in informal group settings but considered these experiences more as a social occasion and did not qualify them as legitimate quilting groups. The small non-representative sample of my study may not provide an accurate indication of the importance of guild or group membership to most quilters. There are several indications of how many quilters in North America or world-wide hold membership in quilting guilds in quilting literature and internet sites. Using quilting guilds is a simple way to identify and locate potential participants in large surveys or studies (Cerny, Eicher & DeLong, 1993, p. 19; Hunt, 1996, p. 229; Langellier, 1990, p. 32; Woods, 1995, p. 39).

Seven of the ten quilters (three males/four females) have attended quilting shows and exhibitions. Often these shows are local country fairs offering quilts as one of the categories for submission. One quilter (female) has presented her quilts in many different local fairs and has received much recognition and many awards for her work. She feels proud when others remark upon the composition of her quilts yet acknowledges that she quilts for herself and her own enjoyment. These seven quilters enjoyed observing the quilts of other individuals for ideas and inspiration. One quilter (female) claimed that quilting shows are not always publicized to the wider population but are directed towards a more select audience. Unless an individual maintains a presence in quilting stores, knowledge of local shows can sometimes be overlooked. The remaining three quilters (two male/one female) did not make a habit of attending local shows or exhibitions for individual reasons.

The attendance of quilting exhibitions is both supported (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 21; James, 1998, p. 134) and discouraged (Rogers, 1996, p. 4) by contemporary quilt literature. Many quilters of amateur, hobbyist, professional and artist status "further their knowledge" and encounter new innovations in design concepts by attending shows.

In comparison Penny McMorris advocates the following advice for anyone wanting to develop their style as an artist:

Shut out the quilting world for awhile. The most important thing you may be able to do for your work in the next several years is ignore every quilt-related activity going on around you and concentrate solely on doing your own work and developing your own voice. (Rogers, 1996, p. 4)

Ignoring the influence of the quilting culture after learning the basic techniques encourages self-discovery. Once an individual is comfortable with a discovered voice of expression then the individual can return and be both influenced and influential through quilting experiences.

Eight out of ten quilters (five males/three females) acknowledged that other relatives in their family quilt. Their relatives usually provided words of appreciation or encouragement rather than contributed to the actual quilting process mainly because of the distances between their residences. All of the relatives of my case study participants who quilted were identified as women, reflecting the gender of the majority of quilters represented in quilting literature. The remaining two quilters (female) stated that they did not experience quilting as a family activity. They learned how to quilt long after leaving home, marrying, having children and coming to their present residence. Contemporary quilting literature indicates contrasting perspectives. As an example the survey conducted in Maine showed that 52% of the participants had never seen any female relatives quilt (Langellier, 1990, p. 33). The informal survey that Hunt organized in Canadian memberships or associations with quilting guilds recorded that only 8% had learned the skill of quilting from a family member (Hunt, 1996, p. 229). The study conducted by Woods during the 1990 Canadian Quilters' Association conference indicated that individuals "seldom learned to quilt from family members." (1995, p. 43) According to literature most quilters learn from

workshops, publications and other media sources.

Five out of ten quilters (three male/two female) indicated that their families would provide assistance if necessary. The three male quilters represented from this number quilt in partnership with their wives on an ongoing basis. For all five quilters the assistance provided by their families could include colour selection, adjusting frames, rolling quilts, assembling pieces, and providing finishing top stitches.

Five out of ten quilters (two male/three female) said that their families do not often help in their quilting endeavours. Two of the three female quilters from this grouping did say that they receive help on rare occasions but were for the most part left to their own devices. One of the male quilters prefers to work on his own without assistance from others. Yet all ten quilters could not deny the influential and supportive role that their spouses have played in their quilting experiences. When asked several different responses were given:

(Table 11. Descriptions of Spouse's Involvement in Quilting from Case Studies)

1. provides moral support

- is understanding
- never resentful about time quilting
- provides time & physical space
- believes in their abilities
- is appreciative
- shows an interest
- is proud of accomplishments
- shares a common interest

2. provides physical support

- completes household and gardening chores

- provides meals
 - provides companionship
 - provides co-operation
 - contributes financially
 - provides necessary equipment and transportation
3. provides verbal support
- expresses limited complaints about quilting
 - offers advice & constructive criticism
4. provides creative support
- provides momentum
 - provides inspiration

Many sources indicate a willingness of the family members and spouses of quilters to be supportive during the quilting process (Fail, 1996, p. 32; Hunt, 1996, p. 98; James, 1998, p. 5; Shaw, 1997, p. 13; Woods, 1995, p. 45). Quilter Sherry Bussey indicates that her husband “shares domestic tasks when he can” and “never complains about my compulsion to quilt.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 173) Quilter Adaire Schlatter acknowledges that she receives support from her husband through his creativity and being “willing to help with opinions and physical setups wherever he can.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 109) Kerrilyn Gavin comments upon quilting being part of her family’s life. She indicates that the location of her studio “right next to the family room” ensures that she is “never isolated from the family and they are always very involved” with her quilting experiences (Fail, 1996, p. 38). Quilter Win Burry feels fortunate to have a supportive husband who says, “When are you going to get doing some quilting? And my children like to see a mother who has an identity beyond them, who’s not going to be on their necks all the time.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 98) Husband

and wife artists Susan Shie and James Accord, who quilt as a team “work intuitively, allowing their inclinations and the materials at hand to guide them.” (Shaw, 1997, 132) These are just a few examples that show that quilting literature reflects the 18 responses provided by my study participants describing their spouses influential and supportive role for their quilting experiences.

I discovered that while the gender of the quilter does not necessarily determine specific context, behaviour or habits, the individuality of the quilter is considered important. The factor of time was identified as being important in quilting experiences. Unquestionably all serious quilters must accommodate the factor of time in their experiences by designating definite time periods to participate in quilting experiences. The choice or preference for different times for quilting experiences on a daily or seasonal basis illustrates the individuality of each quilter and the unique factors that determine each quilter’s schedule or routine. But time also determines the difference between an experienced and novice quilter. All quilters agree that the time devoted to quilting may be perceived as commitment to developing their individual artistic expression.

All contemporary quilters have difficulty accommodating their enthusiasm for quilting within the scope of their responsibilities or other interests and some may have to temporarily sacrifice attention towards other interests to complete a quilt. Others may have less difficulties accommodating their quilting experiences in their schedules because of the assistance and encouragement from their friends and family. Although different sets of circumstances are experienced by each quilter, many share similar behaviours and habits and continue to perceive quilting as a valid activity.

Gender and Quilting

Six out of ten quilters (two male/four female) believed a relationship exists between gender and quilting. They believe that quilting is women-orientated and not generally

taught or passed down to men. Contemporary quilting literature discusses the relationship between women and quilting in great detail (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 16; Fail, 1996, p. 9; Hunt, 1996, p. 96; James, 1981, p. 2; Langellier, 1990, p. 29; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 69; Shaw, 1997, p. 20; Woods, 1995, p. 48). For example author and quilt artist Jean Ray Laury, describes quilting as “a connection with other women, both horizontally and vertically.” (Shaw, 1997, p. 20) This perception is shared by quilter Joyce Becker, who indicates that quilting encourages “deep, personal friendships with other women who have the same love for this art. The opportunity to vent, share, laugh and cry with others who are also driven and passionate about their art is as important as the art itself.” (Becker, 1996, p. 115) Becker acknowledges that quilting is not connected to women simply because they produce quilts but for many of the incidental experiences that accompany the activity. Many individuals continue to observe quilting “as a large part of the women’s movement” (Hunt, 1996, p. 96) enabling past generations of women to establish and express their opinions concerning relevant social issues when other forms of communication were not available. The literature indicates that growing numbers of men and women participate in quilting experiences as a means of exploring “who we are and how we relate to each other.” (Rogers, 1996, p. 4)

Three quilters (two male/one female) from my study acknowledged that although society might perpetuate a relationship between gender and quilting, they themselves did not believe in one. They indicated how males were more accepted as quilters, teachers and researchers. The final quilter (male) indicated that he had never thought of any relationship between gender and quilting due to the way his mother had introduced him to the medium as a young boy. Quilting was an activity that anyone could participate in and accomplish from any skill level. This perspective is also reflected in contemporary quilting literature for factors of gender, race, social class or education no longer determine whether or not an

individual will participate in quilting experiences (Shaw, 1997, p. 23). Gender is just a small part of what creates the "individual uniqueness" of each quilter based upon "lifetime experiences, interactions and teachings" from different "environmental influences." (Wolfrom, 1995, p. 10) More and more individuals of both genders will continue to discover quilting as they appreciate the communicative qualities the medium has for society (Shaw, 1997, p. 19).

All ten quilters agreed that history has portrayed quilting as a women's art medium. They also insisted that present society does not have to maintain that status quo. All believed that any individual, male or female, should be welcomed as a quilter as long as they showed an interest. One quilter (male) acknowledged that in some quilting groups resistant to male members still exists but that this should not deter a man from learning how to quilt. None involved in the case studies were concerned about gender stereotypes in their quilting experiences. They in turn would encourage any individual to quilt, male or female, as long as an interest in the medium was evident. Yet one quilter (female) acknowledged that she would probably encourage females more than males just because she believes that females would be more interested in the experience of quilting. Each quilter realized that not every individual is a quilter and should not be forced into the activity without expressing interest.

Contemporary quilting literature underlines important contributions that past generations of women have made to the present quilting medium (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 16; Langellier, 1990, p. 31; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59; James, 1978, p. 3) but only a few sources acknowledge that quilting is more than a women's art medium (Carter, 1996, p. 4; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 61; Shaw, 1997, p. 21). The surveys conducted previously limited their research to females because their sample originated from quilting guilds containing only (United States) or mostly female members (Canada). Using their

limited sample, they organized their findings to produce contemporary definitions of femininity (Cerny, Eisher, & DeLong, 1993, p. 16; Langellier, 1990, p. 30; Woods, 1995, p. 40) for comparison to the characteristics of the average historical quilter and investigated the medium of quilting as a feminine activity.

In comparison, Erika Carter considers quilting to represent "the continuing dialogue of what it is to be human" not necessarily male or female (Carter, 1996, p. 83). In her opinion gender is not an issue and should not affect the decision to become an artist, pursuing quilting as a valid medium and working to discover an individual creative voice.

The question of gender barriers preventing some individuals from quilting provided much discussion from the study participants. Only one quilter (female) firmly believed gender was an unimportant factor in the decision of an individual to quilt. Another quilter (male) was unsure how many individuals would be affected by possible gender barriers. He blamed the restrictions of society for creating circumstances of discrimination in the first place. The remaining eight quilters (four males/four females) stated that although possible gender barriers should be disregarded, they could not ignore their influence in determining which individuals would pursue quilting as an activity and interest. Some felt that changes in contemporary society encouraged a discontinuance of previously established gender-appropriate activities; however, they could not rid individuals of self-imposed gender barriers.

Quilt artist Michael James feels frustrated by assumptions that his "motives are open to question because of his gender." (James, 1998, p. 128) Yet he tries not to let these negative reactions affect his creativity or influence his decision to pursue quilting as his medium of choice. After researching quilts and quilt history he believed "that there was enough inherent dignity and value in the medium, in its history and its methods, to justify a dedicated and continued involvement." (James, 1998, p. 8) He encourages any individual

to quilt but acknowledges that "it's so easy to make excuses for not working, for not producing." (James, 1998, p. 7) The reasons for participating or not participating in quilting are individual and should never be determined by the expectations of society.

Many of the quilters felt that the character and personal experiences of each individual influenced their quilting more than the gender of that individual. Six out of ten quilters (four males/two females) felt that their gender was unimportant in their quilting experiences. Two quilters (both female) indicated that they had never thought about their gender being influential before and were unprepared to provide an answer for the question. The last two quilters (one male/one female) considered their gender to be of great importance in their quilting experiences. In fact, the one female quilter indicated that her gender had given her a greater opportunity to be a quilter. She did not think that as a male she would have become an accomplished quilter.

When asked whether gender discrimination exists amongst quilters, two quilters (one male/one female) professed to a lack of knowledge about a large number of quilters. For both these individuals quilting is still a relatively new experience and they did not want to assume what the perspectives of more accomplished quilters would be. Two other quilters (one male/one female) acknowledged that discrimination could be present because of the quilting industry's focus on women and the pursuit of perfection by some quilters perhaps unimportant to others. The remaining six quilters (three males/three females) don't believe that discrimination exists for they themselves have never experienced or encouraged any gender bias.

Quilt artist Michael James indicates that he has received some hostility as being "a white male 'establishment' voice in a field that is 99% female" (James, 1998, p. 126) but believes that his professional integrity towards the medium proves his commitment to traditional quilters and quilt artists alike. He admits that he feels "uncomfortable" when put in an

authoritative position (James, 1998, p. 126) because he is just one individual of a minority group who quilts. Yet he indicates that most quilters do not perceive his gender as being significant but rather appreciate “the discipline of aesthetic standards” that he follows and the “high standards of workmanship” he presents through his quilts (James, 1998, p. 26).

Many quilters acknowledge that gender is not an indication or prerequisite for having quilting abilities but should be considered as one of several factors contributing to the individuality of each quilter. The unique traits of each quilter must also include their age, culture, upbringing, political affiliation, sexual orientation, regional location, religious denomination and educational background. Gender barriers are most often self-imposed rather than encouraged by the majority of quilters and are disregarded by those individuals pursuing a serious interest in quilting.

Quilters recognized as amateur, hobbyist, professional or artist, have never disputed or ignored the association that quilting has with womens’ culture and history. In some circumstances hints of discrimination may still exist in the quilting industry because of that association but are not perpetuated by the majority of quilters themselves. Quilters appreciate the work involved in the quilting process and will encourage any individual showing an interest in the medium. With the resurgence of interest in quilting continuing, many individuals of both genders will discover the unique qualities of quilting and participate in quilting experiences.

Quilting in School Curriculum

Seven out of ten quilters (three males/four females) believe that quilting should be included in school curriculum but only under certain conditions. Quilting has to be introduced as a small individual project or large joint project. Three of the female quilters included in this group shared examples of quilts assembled by different students and other individuals that were completed successfully and well received by the participants.

Qualified individuals would have to be given the task of introducing quilting to students. These individuals need to be interested and enthusiastic about quilting. Quilting must be approached as a hands-on activity and not presented as a series of lectures. Quilting must not be an activity that offered credits as some individuals who were more talented would have an unfair advantage over others.

Three out of ten quilters (two males/one female) did not support quilting being introduced in the school system. They felt that teachers were responsible for too much curriculum already. In addition, resources should not be stretched to include quilting at a cost to other areas of education. However, if quilting were used in a lesson to enhance the learning of information and did not detract from other learning then all ten quilters agreed that quilting might have a legitimate place in the school curriculum. All felt that students should at least be made aware of quilting as a possible activity for any individual.

Although contemporary quilting literature does not discuss the possible introduction of the activity into elementary or secondary school curricula, sources indicate that quilting is taught in other settings. Many of the quilters represented in different sources provide workshops for individuals of different ages exploring their interest in quilting (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 21; Fail, 1996, p. 31; Hunt, 1996, p. vii; James, 1998, p. 6). Workshops are important for they allow participants to expand their knowledge of quilting as well as give instructors the opportunity to interact with others and experience potential influences for their future artistic creations (James, 1998, p. 7). Above all, workshops are opportunities for learning about one's self. Carol Galloway provides an interesting perspective of the workshop experience by stating that "no one should feel guilty about not finishing a project started in a workshop, because knowledge is a goal in itself." (Hunt, 1996, p. 71) Another quilter Lois Wilby-Hooper understands that "permission to experiment, try something different, and make mistakes" is necessary to create original

design ideas (Hunt, 1996, p. 127).

All ten quilters indicated that both boys and girls should be taught quilting. Any separation of gender for learning a skill such as quilting would simply reinforce previously accepted stereotypes. All ten quilters also agreed that girls would probably be more responsive to learning about quilting than boys. Reasons included:

(Table 12. Reasons for Girls' Interest in Quilting from Case Studies)

1. historical factors

the historical association of women with quilting

2. social factors

preparation of future homes or hope chests

effects of society and stereotypes

demands of peer pressure

3. business factors

industry's recognition of quilting as a feminine-dominated past time

One quilter (female) cautioned that one can not always correctly anticipate the reaction of individuals when introduced to new activities. She indicated that the response of boys to quilting may be quite positive if presented in the right light and to the right age group.

The workshop experiences discussed in contemporary literature sources do not mention restrictions according to gender (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 21; Fail, 1996, p. 31; Hunt, 1996, p. vii; James, 1998, p. 6) so I would assume that many contemporary quilters do not perceive or consider a certain gender as a prerequisite for pursuing an interest in the quilt medium. Any individual participating in a workshop would be exercising their imagination. According to quilter Adaire Schlatter that is very important for "imagination is

like an elastic band; if you put it on a shelf it rots, but use it and it stretches and stretches.” (Hunt, 1996, p. 108) Quilting could be perceived as one potential medium for exploring an individual’s artistic creativity.

The ten quilters in my study do not agree as to how quilting could be introduced into public school curriculum or which subject area was most suitable for studying quilting. Four quilters (all male) indicated that quilting should be taught as part of Home Economics. Three quilters (all female) indicated that quilting should be taught as part of History. One of these female quilters stated that quilting could be adapted to any subject if the right approach was used. The remaining three quilters (one male/two females) perceived quilting as suitable for Art, Industrial Art, Design or Arts and Crafts. Their responses show the versatility that the medium of quilting provides.

Contemporary quilting literature portrays quilting as a hobby retaining a domestic quality (Cerny, Eisher & DeLong, 1993, p. 16; Fail, 1996, p. 9; Langellier, 1990, p. 29) or an art form to be taken seriously (Carter, 1996, p. 11; Hunt, 1996, p. 3; James, 1998, p. 25; McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 23; Shaw, 1997, p. 7). Considerations of other fields of study are not acknowledged in current literature although many published sources are written from a social perspective discussing the life experiences of the quilters featured (Becker, 1996, p. 3; Fail, 1996, p. 9; Hunt, 1996, p. vii; James, 1978, p. 3; James, 1998, p. 6). The medium of quilting is open to a variety of perceptions based upon the individual quilter and his or her “past and present environments.” (Wolfrom, 1995, 10)

Eight out of ten quilters (four males/four females) recognized quilting as both a historical and current art form. They felt that a teacher could not ignore the abundance of historical information provided on quilting. One quilter (male) from this group of eight believed that he would only be interested in quilting as a school subject if taught as a current art form. All eight quilters hoped that quilting was also portrayed as a medium

important to society. One quilter (female) hoped that individual preferences would be identified and addressed through the manner quilting was introduced to students. The final quilter (male) felt that quilting should be mainly recognized as a historical art form. He indicated how important quilting had been in the development of his native country. He felt other individuals should also acknowledge the history of their ancestors through media such as quilting.

Quilt artist Michael James believes that research of quilts and quilting history is necessary before teaching hands-on experience of the medium (James, 1998, p. 6). Only through such knowledge can an individual hope to discover their own creativity and potential for original design ideas. Other sources encourage an exploration of the styles and techniques utilized by other cultures (Shaw, 1997, p. 260). By using the design elements from other cultures as a foundation for one's own ideas one may perceive the connections that exist between all human culture through their similarities.

When asked to identify the benefits of quilting several responses were given:

(Table 13. Benefits of Quilting from Case Studies)

1. physical skills

- learning to use one's hands
- ability to use one's hands
- learning how to sew
- ability to make something useful
- developing one's senses

2. social skills

- co-operation
- group dynamics

team management

developing social skills

3. problem-solving skills

ability to focus on tasks

mapping out a plan

learning patience

dealing with frustration

to start something and carry it through

ability to stick with something

4. media experience

gain experience with fabric

realize the value or worth of fabric

experience of colour and pattern

understanding the origins of quilting

developing an eye for colour

knowledge of work involved

5. development of self image

sense of accomplishment

self esteem in producing final products

incentive to want to accomplish something

encouragement to carry on

6. emotional benefits

satisfaction

enjoyment

7. tangible end products

something to look at or receive
learning a viable vocation
creating something
experience
value making things
recognizing quilting as an available pastime

8. intellectual skills

appreciation
appreciation of each other
appreciation of each other's work
appreciation of beauty

A review of contemporary quilt literature reveals that many similar responses were given by prominent quilters. Here are a sampling of the other benefits of quilting experiences that were identified:

(Table 14. Benefits of Quilting from Contemporary Literature)

1. problem-solving skills

courage and confidence to make decisions (Becker, 1996, p. 3)
learning to refine or rethink ideas (Becker, 1996, p. 3)
learning to be versatile or to explore unexpected tangents
(Becker, 1996, p. 3)
learn how to take risks (Becker, 1996, p. 41)
encourages a questioning of information and instigates dialogue
(James, 1997, p. 22)

ability to concentrate (Becker, 1996, p. 11)

ability to transfer ideas from one area to another (Becker, 1996, p. 23)

ability to merge conscious and unconscious thought (Becker, 1996, p. 33)

to develop a different way of thinking (Carter, 1996, p. 10)

encourages visual problem-solving skills (Becker, 1996, p. 7)

encourages the ability to isolate parts of a whole (Becker, 1996, p. 7)

encourages concentration (Becker, 1996, p. 11)

2. self-discovery

gaining a sense of one's history (McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59)

encourage a development of self and the ability to explore self-expression

(McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 16)

confidence in one's self (Becker, 1996, p. 41)

self-knowledge (Carter, 1996, p. 83)

empowerment (Becker, 1996, p. 11)

3. tangible end product

learning to respect, admire and learn from each other's work

(McMorris & Kile, 1996, p. 59)

learning when to take control of a situation and when to let the situation

take control of you (Becker, 1996, p. 37)

good investment of mental and physical energies (James, 1997, p. 22)

to experience new and innovative ideas or techniques (Becker, 1996, p. 41)

learning the value of the process as well as the end result

(Becker, 1996, p. 3)

provides opportunities for learning optimism and positive thinking

(Becker, 1996, p. 3)

striving for a goal (Becker, 1996, p. 7)

4. social skills

learn dedication and determination (Fail, 1996, p. 17)

learn commitment (Carter, 1996, p. 10)

learn discipline (Carter, 1996, p. 11)

One quilter (male) acknowledged that many other hands-on activities would result in the same benefits. Another quilter (also male) indicated that students do not always learn the objectives of the lessons. Often incidental yet beneficial information is taught in addition to lesson objectives so one can not always guarantee what the final benefits of learning to quilt might be. In fact it might depend upon individuals and their interests.

Contemporary literature indicates that quilting has unique qualities that are incapable of reproduction in any other art medium (James, 1998, p. 119). These qualities are connected to the association that fabric has to human life and experiences (Shaw, 1997, p. 16). The fabric used to create the quilt serves many “functional and ceremonial uses in cultures around the world and throughout history.” (Shaw, 1997, p. 16)

We respond to cloth through touch, the most intimate and primal of the senses. We are wrapped in cloth at birth, covered in it in life, and shrouded in it in death. Cloth can cover, warm, comfort, disguise, or create an image. All of these simple but extraordinarily rich meanings are of the symbolic vocabulary of the quilt. (Shaw, 1997, p. 16)

Perhaps our continual contact with elements particular to the quilt medium encourages a more familiar connection than is possible with other art media.

The inclusion of quilting in school curricula was a controversial issue amongst my study participants. Although quilting was perceived as an important experience for people, many

wondered whether public education was the most appropriate agency for that instruction. However, if the medium of quilting were to be experienced by students through public education all study participants agreed that both boys and girls needed to receive equal instruction under specific conditions.

Not one, but many different subject areas were identified as being appropriate for introducing quilting, reflecting the potential the medium has to connect the different disciplines of education. The benefits of the quilt medium were quite extensive and demonstrated a wide range of possibilities thus supporting the introduction of quilting in more areas than just art education. Although quilting literature does not discuss the possible introduction of quilting in school curriculum, other aspects of education have been addressed. The benefits that quilting has to offer individuals can be experienced through educational settings and individuals are encouraged to pursue their interest in quilting whether through workshops, classes or one-on-one instruction. Many quilters perceive education as important for understanding what the medium of quilting can represent to different individuals.

Chapter VII

Implications for Art Education

Within the conclusion of this thesis I intended to provide a concise list of benefits that supported the inclusion of quilting in present art curricula. I soon discovered that the benefits of quilting as identified by a literature review and qualitative study should not be restricted to present art curricula. Quilting represents a connection between past and present generations as well as a bridge across cultures. In contemporary society both men and women are turning to quilting as a means of artistic expression and social commentary.

The disciplines of history, anthropology and womens' studies have produced most of the existing theses and dissertations on quilting. Art education provides a new direction for research about quilting experiences and quilting culture. I do not believe that the potential quilting has for visual expression and symbolism can be limited to only a few fields of study. While many of the study participants perceived quilting as art and supported students receiving limited quilting experiences, all continued to acknowledge the social importance that quilting represented to society as recorded by contemporary quilting literature. The medium of quilting has a great potential as an educational resource not only for art but for other subjects of education that study human development. I hope that all educators recognize the benefits that studying and experiencing quilting has to offer students and to understand that art education provides only one avenue for introduction.

Suggestions for Further Research

During the feminist movement of the 1970s quilting regained the popularity and interest of society. Presently more and more individuals are recognizing quilting as uncharted territory demanding closer examination. Scholars in the fields of history, anthropology, and womens' studies have already discovered the far reaching implications of quilting, while scholars in art and education are just realizing the importance of quilting for

understanding human culture.

Through my own experiences I have found that many directions may be followed upon the completion of my present focus of research. The abundance of information gathered from this study could be a basis for further research concentrating on different factors in quilting experiences. Or, I could interview the ten participants in my study after a suitable time period, compare their responses and determine reasons for possible changes in perspective. The ten participants might be encouraged to keep a daily journal recording their quilting experiences and concentrating on the thought processes involved in quilting. Interviews could follow the journal process and the data collected for further research.

These ten individuals could also be asked to document their creation of a quilt from the conception stage to the completion stage and then compare their recorded accounts to the other participants in the study. I could extend the study to include the perspectives of the spouses of each quilter and compare the possible contrasts between responses of quilters and non quilters. Perhaps other family members or close family friends would provide further insights about quilting and reflect the connections possible between individuals or generations and the medium.

The five research areas of the medium, motivation, context/behaviour/habits, gender and quilting in school curriculum could be expanded to include a comparison between members and non members of quilting guilds or organizations. Attention could be given to the areas of interest that were important to the ten participants in my study. For example, each individual identified themselves as either a novice or experienced quilter. I wondered why the identification was so important or why recognition was required to explain the possible differences in each quilter's abilities or skills. I would be curious to discover whether other quilters feel the need to identify their level of knowledge and experiences. Perhaps further questioning on the subject would reveal the reasons for this occurrence.

I would also be interested in further exploring the introduction of quilting into each participant's life experiences. I wondered whether factors such as regional location, cultural background, family upbringing, or age influenced the perspectives or beliefs of quilters. I would be interested in continuing to research possible differences between male and female quilters for a better understanding of the possible character traits of contemporary quilters.

I would conclude by stating that the perceptions of quilting experiences by both male and female quilters requires more research. Only through such research will we understand the importance of our own connections to quilting and how the medium represents human culture.

Final Reflection

I once believed that the realization of self-knowledge achieved through quilting experiences was limited to quilters. I did not appreciate how the medium of quilting as a research topic would transform my own interest in fabric arts or generate a need for hands-on experiences. As an example of preparing for future quilting experiences, I purchased both a Pfaff sewing machine and a Pfaff serger in 1997. I have completed several private sewing lessons to understand the techniques needed for operating both machines but have not had the time to start quilting.

While completing four case studies in smaller rural communities for my study, I felt the overwhelming urge to purchase a quilt. I discovered that by photographing numerous examples of quilts for this thesis I had begun to establish my own criteria for judging quilts as well as to develop my own appreciation for certain quilting styles and techniques. Quite by chance in 1998, I had the opportunity to purchase an example of a quilting technique that I was especially attracted to — an exquisitely hand-sewn appliqué bedspread that I never imagined I would have the patience or the time to complete (see Appendix D).

As my interest in quilting has continued to develop, the size of my collection of quilting publications has also grown. After considering many different publications I could not resist the temptation to purchase two oversized books depicting numerous quilting templates in 1999. While I rationalize that these templates may serve other purposes for artistic expression, I realize that I will pursue the experience of quilting in earnest as an extension of my interest in this research topic.

I am aware of the commitment of time necessary to complete a quilt that would be satisfactory to my high standards of achievement and am prepared to experience both the frustration and enjoyment that encompasses many of the quilting experiences described by the quilters involved in my study and those recorded in quilting literature. I want to establish a connection between myself and my great-grandmother through the hands-on experiences of quilting. I want to establish a connection to quilters, past and present, who pursued their own interest in the medium of quilting for very individual reasons. Finally I want to appreciate the connection that all individuals have to cloth as a constant presence in our lives from the event of our birth to our death for quilting represents both tangible and intangible qualities worth experiencing by any individuals who express a serious interest in the medium.

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Appendix A

Doris Perkin's Friendship Quilt

I received permission from Doris Perkin's family to photograph her quilt and have attempted to capture the vitality and variety of the different quilt blocks appearing on the quilt surface. When I traveled to Manitoba to photograph the friendship quilt I sent a letter to the editor of the local newspaper and included the dedication I wrote in her memory. This appeared in print, was well received by her family and other individuals and announced my research intentions to the district at large.



Also, I have included a detailed photograph of my mother's quilt block for closer observation. I wonder if others observing the quilt will appreciate the bonds of friendship as depicted by the different quilt blocks and realize that memories of loved ones remain current in the minds and hearts of those individuals who continue to survive?



Appendix B

Great Grandmother's Crazy Quilt

My great grandmother Margaret Fowler (née Martin), as depicted below, created the crazy quilt that my sister and I now possess. She was one of the early pioneers in the Hullet District of Manitoba and provided medical services to any individuals she could reach by horse. Our family has publications from the Hullet district that detail her life experiences in great detail and we are proud of the contributions she made.



As you can see most of the silk patches of the crazy quilt are worn away but the vibrant colours of the quilt have survived. It is interesting how the quilt has survived the death of its' creator (1923) and the death of its' original owner (1981). I wonder if the quilt will also survive the deaths of my sister and me?



Appendix C

Visual collection of Selected Quilters' Achievements

Quilt blocks of the same pattern may have several different names. The pattern names are those used by each quilter.

Case Study #1 (Rebecca)

1. Her first and only quilt (started in 1996 and still in progress) depicts “The Trip Around the World” pattern in vibrant colours instead of the typical contrast between light and dark colours. She looks forward to trying modern, abstract patterns in future and extending her quilting experiences.



Case Study #2 (Laurel)

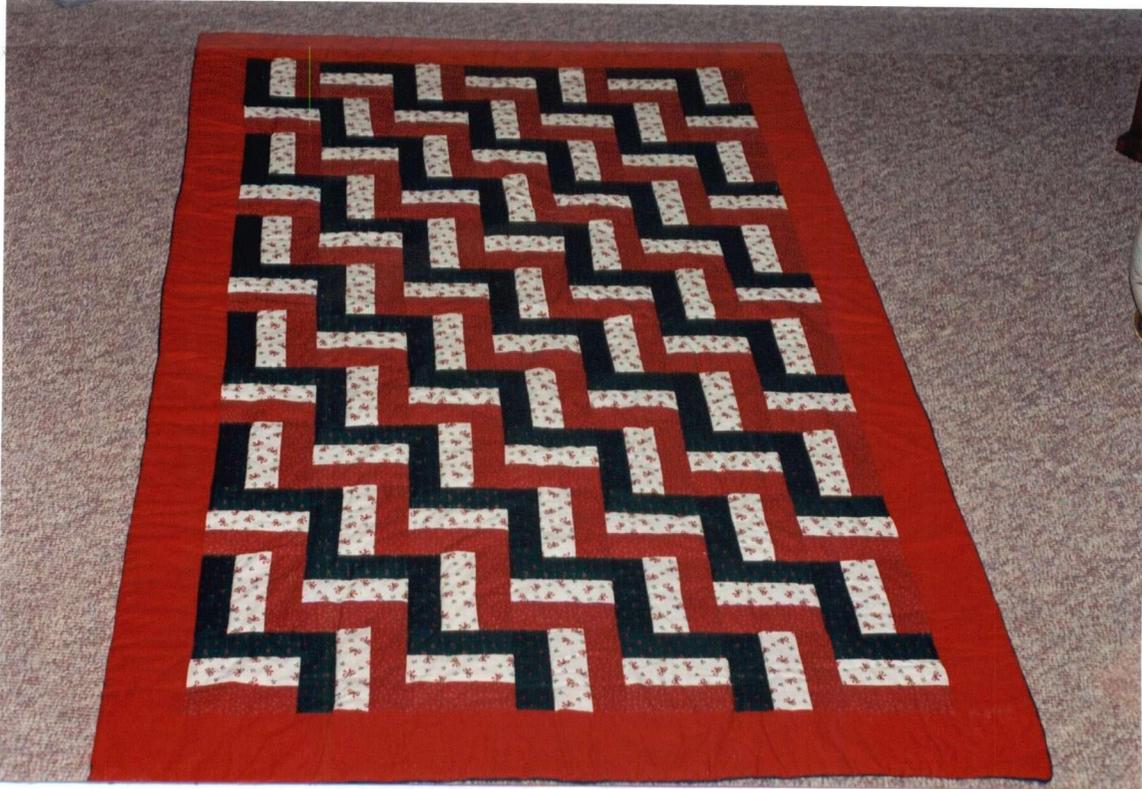
1. Her first example is four different pillows — “Grandmother’s Fan” and “Nine-patch” (Spring 1979) and the other two have appliqué patterns of a rooster (Winter 1989) and hearts (Spring 1994).



2. Her second example (Spring 1989) is the “Ohio Star” pattern as a protective yet decorative chair covering.



3. Her third example (1993), a Christmas quilt, the “Fence Rail” is in traditional seasonal colours.



4. Her fourth example (Spring 1994) is a “Sampler Quilt” of a variety of pieced and appliquéd quilt block patterns constructed in a straight set with sashing and sashing corners.



5. Her fifth example (Winter 1994) uses an enlarged version of the “Grandmother’s Flower Garden” pattern as a table decoration.



6. Her sixth example (1995) an “Ohio Star” that serves a decorative purpose for both spring and summer, is set with both sashing and sashing corners.



7. Her seventh example (Winter 1997) is a “Dresden Plate” pattern using 12 pieces to complete each plate, in a straight set with sashing and sashing corners.



8. Her eighth example (Spring 1997) shows how quilting can be used to enhance any object including terry cloth towels.



9. Her ninth (Spring 1998) and tenth examples (Summer 1998) use the “Garden Wedding” for a wall hanging and a co-ordinating pillow.



10. Her eleventh and final example (started in Winter 1998 and still in progress) expands her seasonal quilt decor and is an “Ohio Star” variation in an Autumn colour scheme set



Case Study #3 (Joanna)

1. Her first example (1990) is a “Sampler Quilt” of twenty different quilt blocks constructed in a straight set with sashing and sashing corners.



2. Her second example (1993) is a quillow (a quilt and pillow combined) featuring “Sunbonnet Sue” and “Overall Jim” with the “Log Cabin” pattern.



3. Her third and final example (1997) is a wall hanging using small squares in an impressionistic style.



3. Her third example (1983) is a duplication of a quilt her mother produced — the “Crazy Star.”



4. Her fourth example (1984) shows how random piecing of flannelette provided useful bedding.



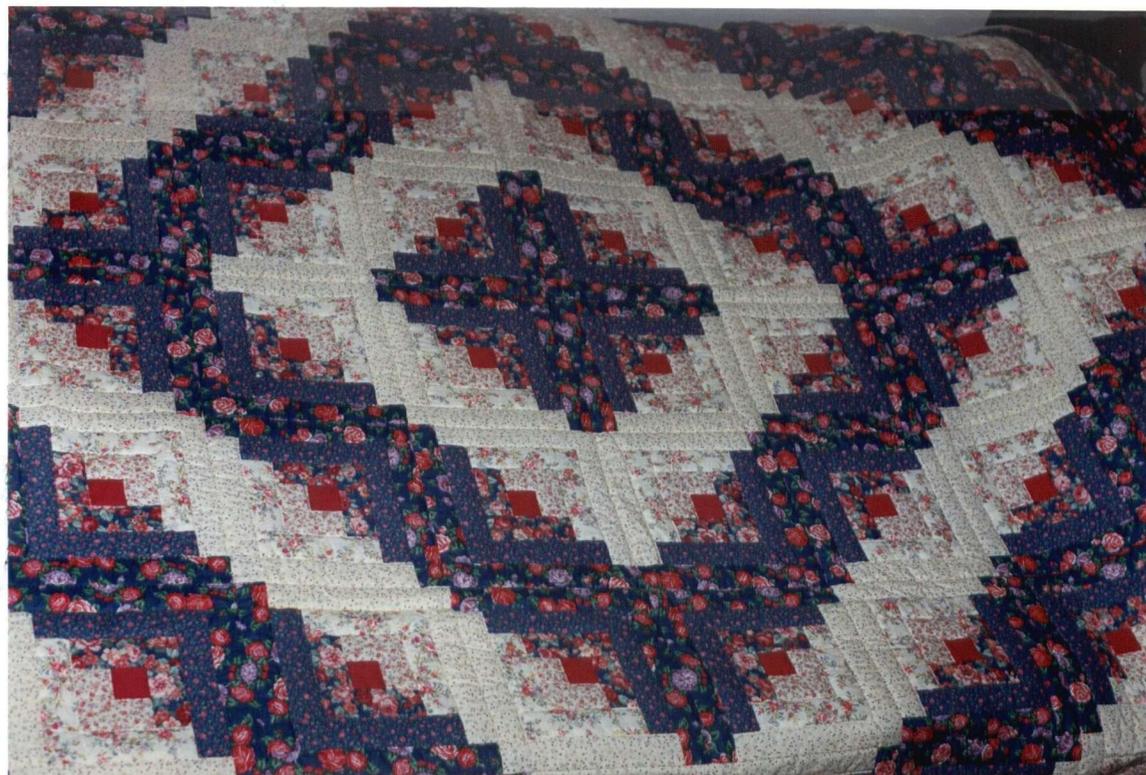
5. Her fifth example (1985) is a duplication of a quilt her mother produced — the “Dresden Plate” pattern in a straight set.



6. Her sixth example (1991), a Christmas wall hanging, is a “Feathered Star” variation.



7. Her seventh (1994), eighth (1995) and ninth examples (started in 1997 and still in progress) present the “Barn Raising” set of the “Log Cabin” pattern.





8. Her tenth and final example (started in 1998 and still in progress) depicts the pattern of the “Double Irish Chain.”



Case Study #5 (Ruth)

1. Her first example (1973) is an embroidered crib quilt that was one of her initial projects.



2. Her second example (1979) uses liquid embroidery as different design method for quilting.



3. Her third example (1983) presents the technique of cross-stitch as another embellishment for the quilt surface.



4. Her fourth example (1985) depicts the technique of candle wicking on quilt blocks.



5. Her fifth example (1995) presents a “Fan of Roses” quilted pattern on polyester satin.



6. Her sixth and final example (1996), a match box car quilt for her grandson, uses a pre-printed design for quilting.



Case Study #6 (James)

1. His first example (1983) uses the technique of appliqué to illustrate the Easter story.



2. His second example (1997) is a "Sampler Quilt" of twelve different block patterns in a straight set with sashing and a wide border.



3. His third and final quilt (1998), the “Swamp Patch” pattern, is intended as a wedding present.



Case Study #7 (Edward)

1. His first example (1989) uses the technique of cross stitch as a surface embellishment.



2. His second example (1990) uses the technique of embroidery as another example of surface embellishment.



3. His third example (1993) is the “Pigs in Blanket” pattern.



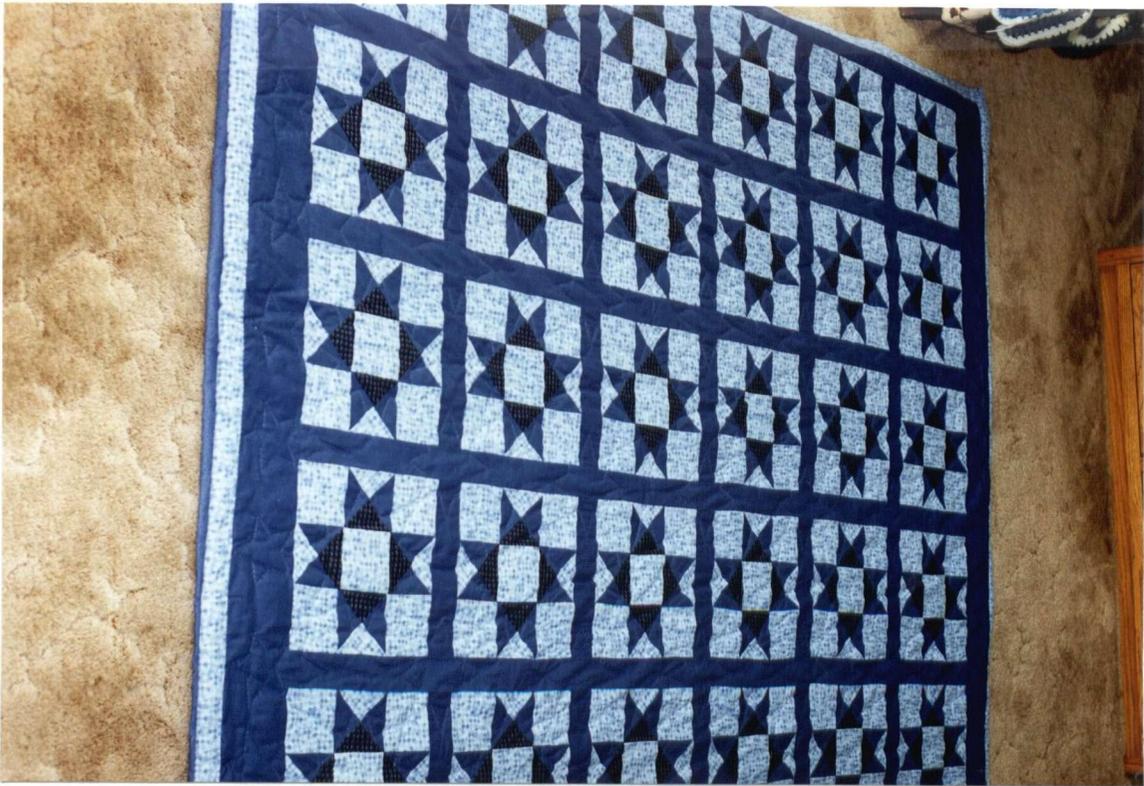
4. His fourth example (1994) presents the “Frosting on the Cake” pattern.



5. His fifth example (1995) is the “Whirl-a-bout” pattern.



6. His sixth example (1996) is the “Ohio Star” pattern.



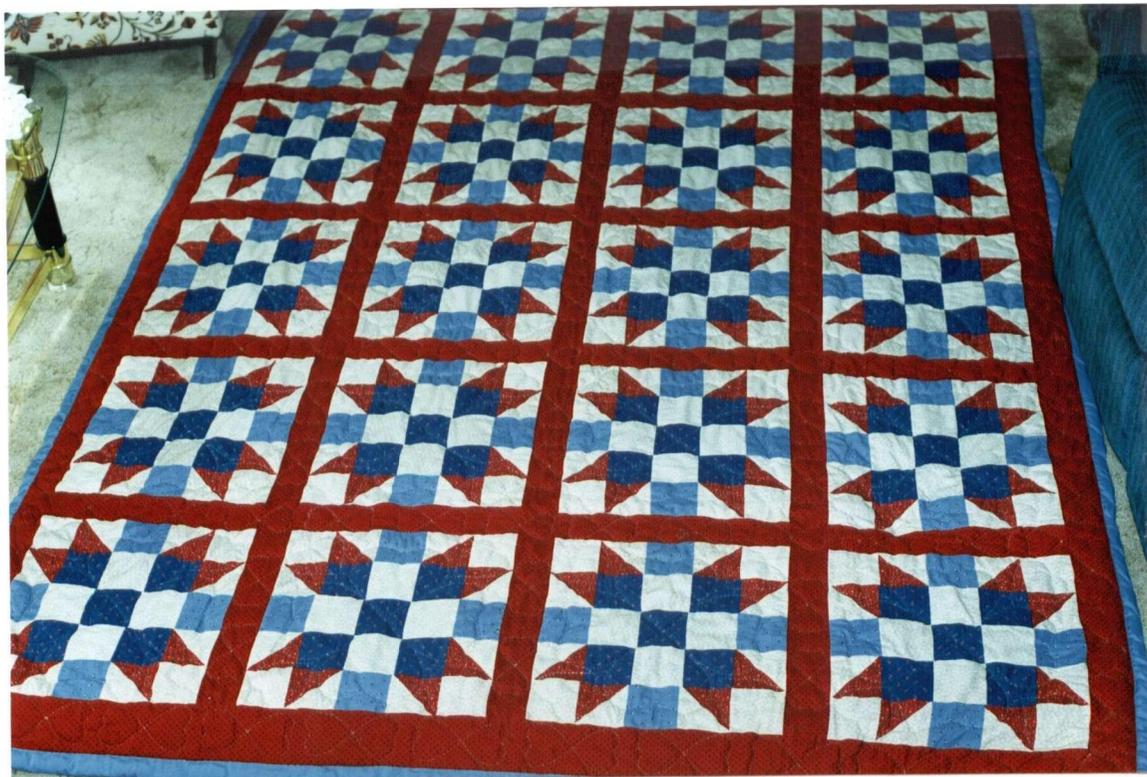
7. His seventh example (Spring 1997) is the “Whirl-a-bout” pattern.



8. His eighth example (Winter 1997) is the “Ohio Star” pattern.



9. His ninth and final example (1998) presents a pattern referred to as either “Farmer’s Daughter” or “Sister’s Choice.”



Case Study #8 (Jasper)

1. His first (1961) and second example (1963) show how the random placing of odds and ends can contribute to quilting — typical utility quilts.



2. His third example (originally completed in 1970 — bottom layer replaced in 1995) depicts the pattern “Texas Star” on an larger than life scale.



3. His fourth example (1970) is the “Grandmother’s Garden” pattern.



4. His fifth and final example (1974) presents an enlarged version of the “Grandmother’s Garden” pattern.



Case Study #9 (Adam)

1. His first example (1996) is embellishment to the front of a sweatshirt to duplicate the Canadian flag.



2. His second example (1997) is a padded flute case that uses quilting techniques for assembly.



3. His third and final example (started in 1998 and still in progress) is an abstract quilt top awaiting completion. Notice the use of curves throughout the design.



Case Study # 10 (Jack)

1. His first example (1986) is a “Sampler” quilt intended for use as a fireplace accessory.
The pattern of the two pillows (1984) by the fireplace is “Card Tricks.”



2. His second example (Winter 1989) is a “Sampler” quilt with a large central block.



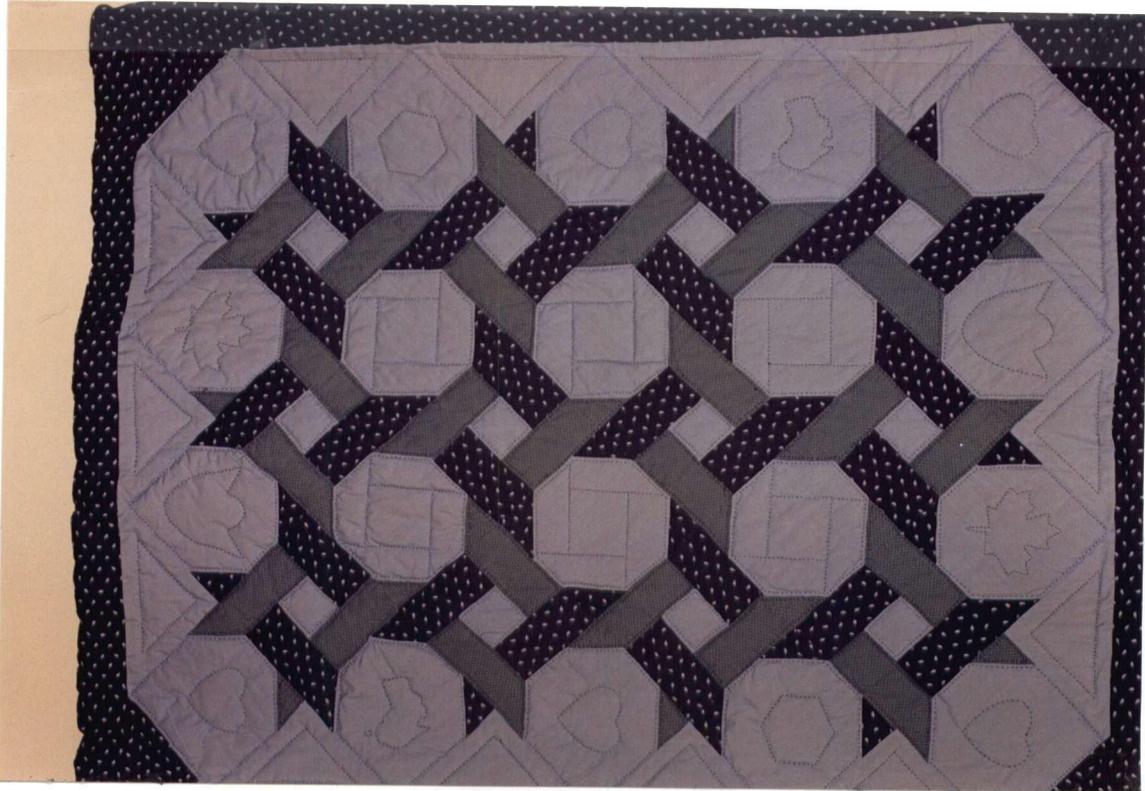
3. His third example presents two pillows — one depicts the “Dresden Plate” pattern (Spring 1989) while the other provides a simplified illustration of the Sydney Opera House (1992).



4. His fourth example (Summer 1989) is pieced and appliquéd wall hanging.



5. His fifth example (Winter 1992) uses the “Round the Twist” pattern in a wall hanging format.



6. His sixth example (Spring 1992) presents the scene of “Seascape Birds” in the “Attic Window” pattern.



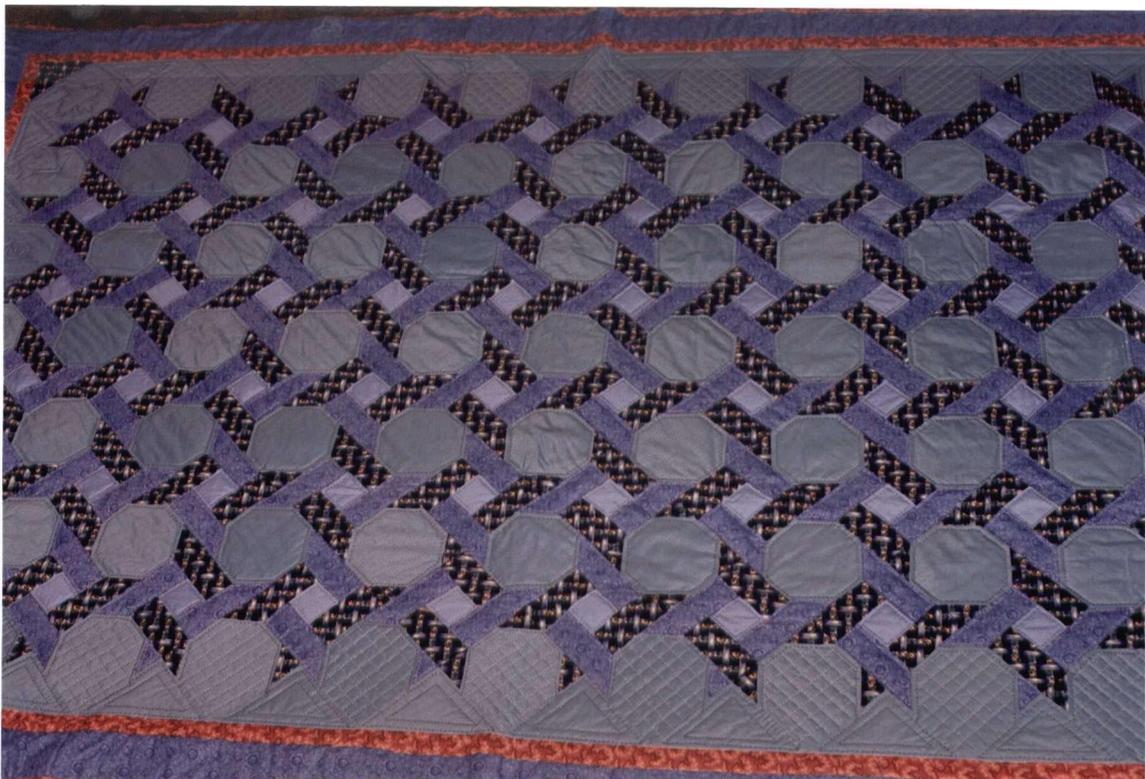
7. His seventh example (1993) uses the colourful “Grandmother’s Flower Garden” pattern to construct a double-sided quilt.



8. His eighth example (1994), a “Dresden Plate,” includes pieced sashing and sashing squares.



9. His ninth example (1995) uses the “Round the Twist” pattern with detailed quilting.



10. His eleventh example (Spring 1998) indicates how all leftover scraps of fabric can be used in the “Roman Strip” pattern.



11. His twelfth and final example (started in 1998 and still in progress) is a the complex “Triple Irish Chain” pattern.



Appendix D

My Purchased Quilt

I purchased my quilt from Elsie Friesen. The pattern is entitled “Heart of Roses” and is a duplication of ones that the Amish people produce for the tourist trade. I still find it hard to believe that I own this quilt and regard the handwork as both inspiring and incredible.

