Sense of Self and Relational Connections Through the Use of Textile Arts

Lisa Thompson-Gibson

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Sense of Self and Relational Connections
Through the Use of Textile Arts

by Lisa Thompson-Gibson, Master of Arts

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in the field of Art Therapy Counseling

Advisory Committee:
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ABSTRACT

SENSE OF SELF AND RELATIONAL CONNECTIONS
THROUGH THE USE OF TEXTILE ARTS

by

LISA THOMPSON-GBISON

Chairperson: Assistant Professor Megan Robb

This thesis explores the use of textile arts to inform sense of self and authenticity in developing growth fostering relationships. Through narrative inquiry, 11 textile artists were interviewed to explore the question of how relational cultural theory (RCT) and textile arts can inform a sense of self and authenticity for use in art therapy settings. Themes in the research findings included an understanding of how participants originally became involved in textiles, their approach in the creative process, their development of relational connections with others, and how they repair relational disconnections through textile work. Relational cultural theory provided the theoretical framework to examine these findings and to consider how the use of textile arts can be applied in art therapy settings.

Keywords: relational cultural theory, art therapy, textile arts, self-in-relation, authenticity
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

When I was a child my grandmother crocheted crisp, white doilies. Coming from a large family of Irish and German decent, I remember many of my aunts clamoring for one of my grandma’s coveted doilies to embellish their otherwise modest dwellings. Similar appreciation for textile expressions from the women in my family sprinkle my childhood and adolescent memories: a bright pink crocheted robe from my aunt, a quilt from my great-grandmother, a stitched dress from another aunt, a batik wall hanging made by my mother, a crocheted afghan from my step-mother, and sewn pillows from my step-sister. I became enthralled with these expressions of love and connection within my family and tried my hand at macramé, sewing, crochet, and needlework. My relatives were generous with their expertise in attempts to teach me. I became impatient with the learning process, as is often the case in adolescence, and moved on to other art materials. However, textile expressions have held a special place in my memories and their power to bring women together in good and bad times. The pieces offer visual testament to a specific time and place and create evidence of moments that might otherwise be lost. As an adult I have engaged again in textile work with a deeper understanding of the personal connections that textile expressions afford and an interest in its use in the art therapy environment.

Aptheker wrote about the “dailiness” of women’s lives, emphasizing routine aspects of women’s lives and work that ultimately create connections and a sense of meaning through the generations (1989, p. 39). “Women have traditionally built a sense of self-
worth on activities that they can manage to define as taking care of and giving to others” (Miller, 1976, p. 54). Despite the shift away from functional need in contemporary society, the presence of textile arts are richly intertwined in the collective days of many women’s lives. Johnson & Wilson (2005) found that “contemporary women have many leisure-time options from which to choose and their choice of textile handcrafts reflects personal enjoyment, rather than a sense of obligation” (p. 121).

Art making, in general, has a long history of aiding in identity finding. Textile arts also provides a forum for the development of a positive sense of self and authenticity. According to Fine (2003), “The desire for authenticity now occupies a central position in contemporary culture. Whether in our search for selfhood, leisure experience, or in our material purchases, we search for the real, the genuine” (p. 153). Growth fostering relationships can be developed through engagement with textile arts. An illustration of this is seen in the resurgence of knitting and crocheting popularity in American culture over the past 15 years, in particular with the “Stitch ‘n Bitch” trend and the interest in creating upcycled pieces (Ulaby, 2002; 2004).

**Problem Statement**

This thesis explores the following question through narrative inquiry. How can relational cultural theory (RCT) and textile arts inform a sense of self and authenticity for use in art therapy settings? Over the past 35 years scholars have developed feminist theory in psychology and refined it into RCT (Miller, 1976; Miller, 1984; Jordan, 1997b; Miller & Stiver, 1997; Jordan, Walker, & Hartling, 2004). This resulted in an expansion of conventional views of self as not an individualistic identity, rather one that is created fluidly in relationship with others. Exploring how nurturing “growth-fostering
relationships” contributes to the self is central to RCT. Surrey wrote “...the self-in-relation involves the recognition that, for women, the primary experience of self is relational; that is, the self is organized and developed in the context of important relationships” (1985, p. 2). Another central component of one’s sense of self is authenticity (Miller, 1976). Since there is a correlation between art making and sense of self (Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Titus & Sinacore, 2013), my research strives to understand if involvement with textile arts gleans similar outcomes.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about sense of identity as formulated within a group of textile artists. From this, I drew upon how the art has been used to develop identity to inform art therapy practices. Desired outcomes of the study included developing an understanding of the benefits gleaned by participant involvement with textiles to inform the development of recommendations on application within an art therapy setting.

Hypotheses that were examined in this narrative inquiry research study included:

1. Engagement with textile arts contributes to a positive sense of self and understanding of authenticity.
2. Growth fostering relationships can be pursued through involvement in textile arts.
3. RCT is an effective theoretical framework to utilize in an art therapy setting with textile arts.

Possible extraneous variables I considered include the subjects’ and the researcher’s artist status, age, socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, and individual competency levels with textile materials.
Definition of Terms

Operational definitions create a shared understanding of the questions explored in this research study. Several terms are defined for this purpose as follows:

Textile arts

Textile arts include quilting, weaving, knitting, needlework, embroidery, crocheting, and sewing (Moon, 2010). According to Collier (2011), “textiles encompass a variety of fiber-related materials that are made from plants, animals, or synthetics” and “fibers are felted or spun into yarn, dyed, knit, crocheted, or woven” (p. 104). For the purpose of this research the term textile arts is used to refer to both textile arts and fiber arts.

Art therapy

Art therapy is the therapeutic use of art making, within a professional relationship, by people who experience illness, trauma, or challenges in living, and by people who seek personal development. Through creating art and reflecting on the art products and processes, people can increase awareness of self and others; cope with psychological symptoms, stress, and traumatic experiences; enhance cognitive abilities; and enjoy the life-affirming pleasures of making art (American Art Therapy Association, 2012).

Authenticity

“Authenticity is not a static state that is achieved at a discrete moment in time; it is a person’s ongoing ability to represent her-/himself in a relationship with increasing truth and fullness” (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 54). “Mutual authenticity is the ongoing challenge to feel emotionally real, connected, vital, clear, and purposeful in relationship” (Mencher, 1997, p. 323). Miller (1976) wrote that “…relationships can lead to more, rather than less, authenticity” (p. 98) and that “to move toward authenticity, then also
involves creation, in an immediate and pressing personal way. The whole fabric of one’s life begins to change, and one sees it in a new light” (p. 114). I define authenticity synergistically in this paper, acknowledging the individual role in the experience but with reliance on relationship and cooperation with others. It is counter-intuitive to seek authenticity without considering relationships with others (Brown, 2012; Miller, 1976), as this research explores.

*Self and self-in-relation*

Traditional understanding defines “self as a bounded, separate, and self-sustaining entity organized around self-development. This paradigm emphasizes its abstract, de-contextualized, and molecular nature” (Jordan, 1997a, p. 29). Developing a sense of empathy is central to women’s relational experiences and, in turn, self-in-relation. Surrey (1985) suggested that the origin of learning empathy in the mother-daughter relationship lays important groundwork for future connections and relatedness. The author identified connections between self-in-relation, empathy, and self-esteem. The reciprocal relationship between mother and daughter becomes “a source of mutual self-esteem” which is “related to the degree of emotional sharing, openness and a shared sense of understanding and regard” (Surrey, 1985, p. 4). The origins of these relational patterns, whether between mother and daughter or between significant caregiver and child, result in an imprint that influences the individual throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1982; Malchiodi, 2012). For the purposes of this research the terms self and self-in-relation are considered synonymous. Concepts of empathy and self-esteem are considered inherent to the definition of self-in-relation.

Erikson explained that “the term ‘identity’ points to an individual’s link with the
unique values, fostered by a unique history, of his [or her] people [and that] ‘identity’ expresses such a mutual relation in that it connotes both a persistent sameness within oneself and a persistent sharing of some kind of essential character with others” (1980, p. 109). For the purposes of this research, and in keeping with RCT, the terms self and self-in-relation are preferred over the term identity due to the relational focus. Self and self-in-relation are considered synonymous in this research, with a preference toward the term self-in-relation.

Relationship, connection, and disconnection

Surrey (1985) defined relationship as “an experience of emotional and cognitive intersubjectivity: the ongoing intrinsic inner awareness and responsiveness to the continuous existence of the other or others, and the expectation of mutuality in this regard” (p. 6). This definition “implies a sense of knowing oneself and others through a process of mutual relational interaction and continuity of ‘emotional-cognitive dialogue’ over time and space…where the ‘whole’ is experienced as greater than the sum of the parts” (Surrey, 1985, p. 7). Connection is defined as “an interaction between two or more people that is mutually empathic and mutually empowering” and disconnection as “an encounter that works against mutual empathy and mutual empowerment.” Hence, relationship is comprised of a series of connections and disconnections over time (Miller & Stiver 1997, p. 26).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the primary search terms that guided my research, as illustrated in the following Venn diagram. The literature review explores significant concepts represented by each “bubble” in the Venn diagram, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Research Venn diagram.

Alternate search terms supported further development of the main concepts, as described below in Table 1.
Table 1

Alternate Search Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Art Therapy</th>
<th>Relational-Cultural Theory</th>
<th>Self-in-Relation</th>
<th>Textile Arts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Expressive Arts Therapy</td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Basketry</td>
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<td>Creative Arts Therapy</td>
<td>Disconnection</td>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Beadwork</td>
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<td>Crafter Groups</td>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Braiding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artist Groups</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Cloth and</td>
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<td>Guilds</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Feminism</td>
<td>Fabric</td>
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<td>Arts and Crafts</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Identity</td>
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<td>Knowing</td>
<td>Fiber Arts</td>
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<td>Self</td>
<td>Knotting</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>Kumihimo</td>
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<td>Shame</td>
<td>Lacework</td>
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<td>Womanhood</td>
<td>Mixed Media</td>
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<td>Weaving</td>
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Note. The alternate search terms are organized as secondary terms to the main concepts identified in the above Venn diagram, along with alternate search terms for textile arts.

Self-in-Relation and Relational Cultural Theory

Miller (1988) described the process of psychological growth as being guided by mutual empathy in five ways: “a sense of increased ‘zest’ or energy; empowerment to act beyond the relationship; more knowledge of self and other; a greater sense of worth; and desire for more connection” (p. 3). ‘Zest’ is “the feeling that comes when we feel a real sense of connection, of being together with and joined by another person. It feels like an increase—as opposed to a decrease—in vitality, aliveness, energy” (Miller &
Stiver, 1997, p. 30). Sense of worth is essentially validated by being in relationship with another (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 32). When validated, sense of worth informs one’s positive sense of self. A positive relational interchange is mutual and facilitates the desire for more connection within another person, regardless if the feelings are positive or negative (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 34-35).

Authenticity is a key component to positive relational interchanges. Brown (2010) identified authenticity as central to “whole-hearted living” and that “authenticity is the daily practice of letting go of who we think we’re supposed to be and embracing who we are” (p. 50). The foundational element of psychosocial growth is based on relationships. RCT provides the framework for understanding relational competence and how relational connection promotes authenticity and self-in-relation. Jordan (2004) described relational competence as a way of engaging in growth fostering relationships that facilitates emotional, cognitive, and behavioral movement (p. 15).

RCT’s view of self-in-relation is that “the deepest sense of one’s being is continuously formed in connection with others and is inextricably tied to relational movement” (Jordan, 1997, p. 15). Authenticity is positively impacted through growth fostering relationships, as is self-in-relation. The “bidirectional” and “mutual” nature of relational connection, as described by Walker (2004a), “provides safety from contempt and humiliation; however, it does not promise comfort” (p.9). To be in connection does not guarantee absence of conflict but it can serve relationships and foster growth if it is positively embraced and claimed. When disconnections occur, particularly severe episodes over time, it is difficult to maintain connection that facilitates mutual growth.
Miller and Stiver (1997) identified disconnection as the source of psychological problems (p. 65-83). They also submit that:

In the end, finding one’s own path to connection leads to finding a sense of larger community. As we come to know the truth of our own very particular experiences of disconnection, we can come to know how we all suffer from the forces of disconnection. This sense of a shared experience leads many people to want to work to change the conditions that create damaging disconnections in the world. And, in doing so, people can have the pleasure of seeing their impact on others and on the larger social or political scene—no longer powerless or victims, but participants in the world (Miller & Stiver, 1997, p. 188).

Disconnections, then, can be a means of informing one’s self-in-relation and can foster an understanding of how to develop and nurture relational connections.

**Relational Cultural Theory and Textile Arts**

Dooley and Fedele (2004) described relational connections from an RCT perspective and include the ebb and flow of relationship connection:

Connection occurs when we experience a sense of mutual engagement, empathy, authenticity, and empowerment within the context of relationship. We have the mutual feeling of knowing and being with the other, immersed in their experience along with our own. Such connections provide a continual source of growth for the individual and the relationship. Fostering more connection results in zest, ability to act, clarity, sense of worth, and desire for more relationships [while experiencing relational disconnections result in] less energy, disempowerment, confusion, less self-worth, and turning away from relationships (Dooley & Fedele, 2004, p. 230).

Engagement in textiles arts can reflect 1) a woman’s sense of culture, 2) connection to the larger community, and 3) her sense of purpose (Huss, 2010; Nelson, LaBat, & Williams, 2005). It can also take the form of individual or dyadic expression. Although it seems that much contemporary textile arts research focuses on middle-class, middle-aged, white women due to patriarchal publishing systems, prominent illustrations exist of how diverse populations have also purposefully engaged with textiles. Culture has informed textile arts, for example, the prevalence of quilting practices during the
enslavement of African Americans; the construction of *arpilleras* by Chilean women in the 1970s as symbols of Chilean resistance; Faith Ringgold’s painted story quilts that infuse African American heritage with contemporary African American experiences; and Consuelo Jimenez Underwood’s indigenous inspired multi-media textile pieces that relate to political issues about the border between the United States and Mexico (Aptheker, 1989; Livingston & Sauvion, 2012).

Sewing within the context of slavery demonstrates connections relationally, in community and within culture. Atkins (1994) detailed how enslaved African American women would work very closely with the plantation mistress and then “add to” “their families’ meager clothing and bedding allotments with hours of sewing after their regular work was done” (p. 15). “Making quilts with scraps and fabrics gleaned from their mistresses and worn-out clothes or purchased with what few funds they might have was an important part of this after-hours stitchery, and all members of the family would be pressed into service to help” (Atkins, 1994, p. 15).

Moxley, Feen-Calligan, Washington, and Garriott (2011) highlighted the heritage of many American quilts including: adversity quilts; pioneer quilts; mourning/bereavement quilts; social action/advocacy quilts; art form quilts; signature/friendship quilts; and six-hour quilts which demonstrate the social function and connection to the larger community that quilting presents (p. 114). Atkins (1994) added family quilts; wedding quilts; presentation and commemorative quilts; and fundraising quilts.

Beyond quilting and sewing in service to the community, researchers have explored what motivates women to involve themselves in textile arts. Findings range from creative expression to managing chronic illness to managing mood and daily life stressors.
(Collier, 2011; Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Nelson, Labat, & Williams, 2005; Titus & Sinacore, 2013). Of particular interest is how engagement with textiles promote growth fostering relationships which, in turn, promote a sense of relational connections, authenticity, and sense-of self.

The reviewed research affirmed that women who engage in textiles arts articulate RCT concepts such as a strong sense of identity based on their connection in their communities of fellow artists. An overlap exists between 1) women’s sense of community while engaged in textile arts; 2) the importance of product sharing and cultural history, and 3) the artistic process that affects one’s sense of self (Collier, 2011; Huss, 2010; Nelson, LaBat, & Williams, 2005).

From a community-at-large perspective, contemporary society provides less natural forums for relational connection. For example, with positive and negative relational outcomes, social media has become a central means of communicating and relating to one another. Modern life provides a myriad of demands that can enable disconnection. In addition, communities are challenged to remain in connection rather than disconnection due to complex relational injuries rooted in power-over experiences, racism, sexism, exclusion, and marginality (Walker, 2004b). Individuals, and their communities, are faced with questions of how to sustain relational connections while repairing relational disconnections.

Perhaps another dimension to understanding the benefits in sustaining relational connections and healing relational disconnections is in neuroscience research. Exploring the healing aspects of relationships through a neuroscientific lens suggests that “the connections between the nervous system, the endocrine system and the immune system
all shed light on the intrapersonal expressions of the relational self” (Hass-Cohen, 2008, p. 21). Neuroscience also helps in understanding the impact of images on emotions, thoughts, and well-being and how to best integrate the expressive arts into treatment (Malchiodi, 2012, p. 24). The body-mind connection of art making is a consideration when exploring the use of textile arts.

Self-in-Relation and Textile Arts

“Despite the denigration of textile-making by early feminists, there has been a resurgence of interest since the early part of the twenty-first century. It has been labeled everything from the craft revolution to the new generation of do-it-yourselfers” (Collier, 2012, p. 33). Although there are a number of reasons for the resurgence, MacDonald (1988) and Myzelev (2009) agreed that “it may also be due to the need for connections; handcrafters seek a common community, a collective identity to associate with that is often missing in today’s urbanization” (Collier, 2012, p. 33).

Textile expressions provide visual testimony to social issues and social change, for example The Names Project Foundation’s work and its impact on HIV and AIDS awareness or the Leaving Homelessness Intervention Research Project and its impact on awareness of homelessness status in older women of color (Moxley, et al. 2011). Women also share that they are motivated to create textile or fiber pieces as manifestations of love for people in their lives, legacy pieces, and a means of emotional healing (Johnson & Wilson, 2005). There is reciprocity, illustrating a tangible example of a relational connection, between the women creating the textile pieces and their recipients. An example of this reciprocity can be seen in the work of The Clothesline Project, which
serves as witness for those impacted by domestic violence and sexual assault (Malchiodi, 2008).

Women may assume the role of educating their communities about their art and the cultural contributions provided. Educators of textile arts report that there exists a sense of history and a sense of responsibility in maintaining the art expression (Titus & Sinacore, 2013). Another example of self-in-relation or community mindedness, women cite the positive impact experienced on their personal and collective identities when serving as educators.

Collier (2012) described use of textiles to address psychological concerns. These concerns can be deeply rooted in the view of the self and how one navigates through life. Engaging in activities where flow is experienced has resulted in women being able to successfully manage moods, the effects of chronic illness, and aspects of the aging process (Collier, 2011; Reynolds, 2002; Reynolds, 2010). Csikszentmihaylyi defined “flow” as a state “when consciousness is harmoniously ordered and [people] want to do whatever they are doing for its own sake” (1990, p. 6). Engagement with expressive arts provides fertile ground for flow experience or, in RCT language, “zest” (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

Because of the potential for “flow” or “zest” experiences, textile work can assist in illuminating psychological concerns. For example, Saucier (2004) described issues related to women’s aging process: augmenting self-concept, facing ageism, addressing body image concerns in regard to unattainable beauty, and navigating the experience of menopause. Howell (2001) explored spirituality and women’s midlife development, finding that participants in her qualitative study turned to their communities for support.
in managing common, and normal, negative emotions like confusion, anxiety, anger, sadness, loneliness, and fear (p. 59). Collier (2012) provided the following examples of women’s life experiences: coming of age; sensuality and sexuality; motherhood; fertility issues; menopause; physical and/or sexual trauma; death and bereavement (p. 118). She also describes the relevance of using textile arts with girls and women who have been diagnosed with mental illness (Collier, 2012, p. 39-44). Collectively, from an RCT framework, these examples of women’s lifespan experiences could be interpreted as points of relational connection, disconnection, or self-in-relation experiences.

Conclusion

Fedele explained that “during the course of our lifetime, in the desire to make connections and to be emotionally accessible, we all experience harm or violation that leads to a need to develop strategies to keep large parts of ourselves out of connection” (2004, p. 196). RCT recognizes that disconnection can occur as a form of self-protection when safety is at risk or non-existent. The role of art therapy, in accessing textile arts as its material of choice, is to therapeutically assist in repairing these disconnections.

According to Moon, “The craft form of fiber arts has received a modest amount of attention in art therapy” (2010, p. 22). With this in mind, my research explores how textile arts in the context of art therapy with an RCT framework can serve as a positive means to develop growth fostering relationships, a sense of self, and understand authenticity.
CHAPTER III

METHOD

Qualitative research provided a rich format for gathering the relational and historical aspects involved in textile work. There appears to be a need for theory building to understand the experiences or phenomena that emerge through textile expressions. In order to address my research question through direct sources and their stories, narrative inquiry was my chosen methodology.

Research Design: Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry gathers firsthand accounts of participants’ life stories and experiences. It enables direct interaction with participants and their stories to tease out specific themes or concepts during an interview process (Josellson, 2006; Smith, 2007; Spector-Mersel, 2010). Conditions during the interview process were not manipulated. Rather, participants were in natural settings of their choosing. My role as the researcher was to gather narrative experiences of textile artists through specific interview questions intended to inform my understanding of the use of textile arts in art therapy. This methodology is relevant to seeking information related to RCT and art therapy because of its emphasis on the importance of relationships.

Chase delineated 5 approaches of narrative inquiry: “(a) the relationship between life stories and the quality of life experiences; (b) the relationship between stories and people’s identity or personal well-being; (c) how people narrate their stories along with their content; (d) the connection between narrative practices and narrative environments, especially what is and what is not said; and (e) the researcher’s personal stories about life
experiences as an important research source, in addition to the stories gathered from participants” (2011, p. 421-423). These approaches informed my data collection and analysis.

Areas of possible concern included “the research relationship, ethics, interpretation, and validity” (Chase, 2011, p. 423). The interview format was intentional to ensure a thorough analysis of individuals’ narratives. It was important to be mindful of appropriate roles and the way in which the data was interpreted. My role as the researcher was to serve as “a key instrument” in collecting the data since it was gathered in a qualitative, naturalistic manner (Creswell, 2013; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). In other words, I was active in the study, acknowledging that my findings are based on my interpretation of the participant’s experiences (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Issues of validity were monitored, seeking to support findings with evidence. However, because this is a graduate student thesis, inter-rater reliability methods were not utilized.

Procedures for Data Collection

With consent, interviews were audio-recorded using Quicktime software on my personal laptop computer. Written notes were taken during the interviews as a means to double check audio recordings. A Research Grant for Graduate Students (RGGS), through SIUE’s Graduate School, was utilized to subsidize transcription services so that the data could be transferred in written form to NVivo 9 qualitative software for data analysis. Chase’s approaches to narrative inquiry informed how interviews were conducted and analyzed for similarities, discrepancies, and themes as illustrated in Figure 1 and described in Chapter II (2011, p. 421-423). Anticipated themes were compared to real themes that emerged to determine if findings supported or negated my hypotheses.
Table 2 provides the questions that were asked during the interviews. Questions were devised through the literature review process and exploration of the research question.

Table 2

**Narrative Inquiry Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Demographic Information  | Q1. What is your gender?  
                          | Q2. What is your age?  
                          | Q3. What is your ethnicity?  
                          | Q4. What is your sexual orientation?  
                          | Q5. Can you describe your family/at home situation?  
                          | Q6. What is your educational background?  |
| Relational Cultural Theory | Q7. How does your work with textile arts help in developing connections with others?  
                          | Q8. How would you describe the relationships you have developed through your work?  |
| Textile Arts             | Q9. How are you engaged in textile arts?  
                          | Q10. How long have you been working with textiles?  
                          | Q11. Do you engage in your artwork independently or with a group?  
                          | Q12. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being low and 5 being high, how would you rate your competency in each medium?  |
| Authenticity             | Q13. How does your work with textiles reflect your true, authentic, being?  
                          | Q14. How has your status as a textile artist informed your identity?  |
| Self-in-Relation         | Q15. How do you relate with others based on your status as a textile artist?  
                          | Q16. How has your work with textiles helped you cope with or manage life’s stressors and challenges?  |
Through narrative interviews I sought to explore RCT themes and meaning that relate to authenticity and self-in-relation through engagement with textiles. Themes were considered using a literary and biographical perspective, as described in Chase’s 5 approaches to narrative inquiry (2011, p. 421-423). Attention was toward gathering themes relevant to using textile arts in art therapy. The manner in which participants told their story had meaning and will be discussed in the Research Findings section.

Participant Demographics/Information

In the process of gathering participants I vetted 11 female textile artists who articulated concepts of RCT in their work through their artistic subject matter and/or how they identified themselves in written documentation, such as their artist’s statement. The sample size was determined based on research concerning data saturation points, in particular a generally homogeneous sample as reaching saturation at 12 interviews (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). All of the artists approached agreed to participate in the study. The artists gleaned no monetary benefit in volunteering their time. Interviews were conducted in natural settings including artists’ homes, professional work spaces, and public spaces.

Approval through SIUE’s Institutional Review Board was secured in April, 2013 to conduct my research with human subjects. Ethical standards of practice, as outlined by the IRB, were met to ensure that participants were properly informed about my study and were exposed to the least amount of potential for harm or negative outcomes due to participation.

The minimum criteria for participant selection included: (a) identifying as female; (b) being at least 18 years old; and (c) having at least one year experience with textile arts.
Artists were interviewed on a voluntary basis using a convenience sample and the snowball technique. The convenience sample was comprised of artists that met the minimum criteria and were readily available. The snowball technique involved receiving a total of 15 referrals of artists via the interview process, four of which were received after completion of the interview timeline.

**Age and generational distribution**

Figure 2 illustrates the age distribution of the 11 participants that were interviewed. Ages were generally well dispersed with noted absences of participants in the 32-38 and 39-45 age brackets. It is significant to note that 54.54% of the participants were between 53 and 74 years old, placing them in the “baby-boomer” era.

Figure 2. Age breakdown of interview participants.

**Ethnic distribution**

Ethnically, 81.81% of participants identified as “White”, “Caucasian”, or “European-American”. One participant identified as “African-American” and another participant chose not to disclose her ethnicity.
Language preference and immigrant status

All participants in my study were English-speaking and had grown up in the United States. Participants were not asked their place of birth, so it is unknown if anyone was born outside of the United States and immigrated as a child.

Disability status

Participants were not asked to disclose information regarding their disability status. All participants appeared to be able-bodied individuals with no evident physical disabilities. Other disabilities are unknown.

Educational background

Figure 3 describes the educational background of the interview participants. It is notable that 10 of the 11 women interviewed had earned at least a Bachelor’s degree with the majority of participants completing a Master’s degree. One participant’s Master’s degree was in process while two participants had earned a second Master’s degree that was defined as “further education” in the data. The majority of degrees earned were in the fine arts arena. All participants identified as artists and had committed significant time and energy in learning about textile arts and refining their skills through academic coursework, workshops, and/or independent endeavors.
Figure 3. Educational background of interview participants.

![PARTICIPANT EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND](image)

Sexual orientation and at home situation

Figure 4 represents the sexual orientations of participants and their at home situations. At home situations were described as being single with or without roommates, living with a romantic partner/spouse, and/or holding parenting responsibilities. No one disclosed having caregiving responsibilities for loved ones. Overall, the majority of participants described living situations involving a romantic partner/spouse and not involving significant caretaking responsibilities.

Figure 4. Sexual orientation and at home situation of interview participants.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

In keeping with qualitative research methods, the data in my research was initially transcribed from verbal form to written form. I then coded the data into themes to inform representation of findings into figures, tables, and a discussion (Creswell, 2007).

Summary of Findings

Below is a summary of data findings obtained through interviews conducted with 11 textile artists between July and September, 2013. Findings are organized into 5 themes and 4 subthemes that were identified through data analysis of participant responses to 16 questions. Table 3 illustrates the organization of the themes and subthemes.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subtheme</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme 1. Learning textile arts techniques from family members</td>
<td>Mending familial disconnections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theme 2. Diversity in creative process</td>
<td>From novice to artist</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Independent work versus group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 3. Connections with others and authenticity</td>
<td>Connections through the virtual world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 4. Mending relational and community disconnections</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5. Textile arts as a form of art therapy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Learning textile arts techniques from family members

Among the 11 participants, childhood was a shared entry-point for engaging in textiles. All participants told meaningful stories of learning to sew, embroider, crochet, knit, or weave from women in their families; most participants were taught by either their mother or grandmother. Initial ages of engagement ranged between 4 years old to 14 years old. As one participant described, “I had grown up with a whole lot of textile arts, my mother taught me, and we made curtains and braided rugs. We did a lot of engagements in such things at home” (L. Strand, personal communication, July 25, 2013).

Many participants described meaningful connections with their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts when engaging with textiles. There was also a sense of constructing memories while contributing to the family for utilitarian purposes. As one participant said,

Well, the way I got started in textile arts is as a child because my mom made the bed quilts, and she never saw it as an art. She just saw it as a necessity in terms of, you know, keeping us warm. And she recycled our clothing into the quilts. So that’s very early where my connection with fabrics started as well as weaving old clothing into that which formed a connection in terms of memory because you could remember when you look, whenever you looked at a particular quilt where some of the items, some of the pieces of fabric came from, whether it was from an old skirt or blouse or pants or whatever. Even if it wasn’t your’s, you just remember how the quilt was constructed (E. Patterson-Petty, personal communication, July 31, 2013).

Subtheme: Mending familial disconnections

Using textiles to explore familial disconnections was a subtheme that emerged with some of the women I interviewed. Several participants shared impactful experiences in their relationships that had significant influence on self in relation and their aesthetic expressions. In some instances, large bodies of work were developed to explore concerns
raised about relationships with parents or with children. One participant framed her thesis work around exploring her relationships and upbringing with her parents (P. Vivod, personal communication, September 18, 2013). Another was inspired by the relationship with her daughter to create a large scale community project exploring attachment disorder (L. Obermeyer, personal communication, August 12, 2013). Figure 8 is an image of a collaborative piece entitled *If Only* that explores the relationship the first participant had with her mother.

Figure 5

*Figure 5: If Only. [Mixed media]. c. Vivod, 2011*

**Theme 2: Diversity in creative process**

Participants described beginning their textile experiences with sewing, quilting, embroidery, needlepoint, and weaving as young girls. Knitting, spinning, dying fibers, surface design, book binding, and papermaking were common interests that soon followed. One participant identified primarily as a sculptor that used textiles in her work. Another participant maintained strong ties to printmaking and its influences on her textile
work. Conversely, other participants identified themselves as textile artists that use alternate materials in their work. Several had significant experiences with painting and photography. Another participant recently branched off from her sewing expertise to explore millinery while two others continue to exercise their passion in developing large community installations that infuse textiles into their work.

**Subtheme: From novice to artist**

Participants had experiences with textiles progressing from a means to connecting with loved ones to a commitment in developing artistic expression on a professional level. The majority of participants endeavored to make their life’s work in textile arts, with exceptions involving first careers in art education or social services, or undergraduate majors outside of the fine arts discipline. In the cases of the former, four participants continued to create textile pieces even though they had alternative “day jobs”. The latter two participants subsequently changed their majors after enrolling in textile courses.

**Subtheme: Independent work versus group work**

Participants revealed key elements of their creative processes when being interviewed. There was a preference to independent work over group work, although all participants confirmed involvement with groups, primarily in community outreach or within a teaching capacity. The interest in teaching others was a common theme among participants, regardless of their preference to work independently or in a group setting.

Most participants described retaining the creative process for independent examination and then bringing forward developed ideas for groups to implement. However, some participants voiced an interest in connecting with others during the
creative process. One participant said, “When I weave I mostly do it on my own, but no matter what I’m doing I’m bouncing it off my mom and my mom is helping me with it, or Sarah is helping with it, or Laura is helping me with it” (M. Arnold, personal communication, September 17, 2013). Although participants did not identify as introverted or extroverted, it is likely their preferred modality influences the creative process and preference for independent or group work.

Another participant spoke about her experience of balancing independent creativity with creating with others. She said,

I became uncomfortable with that idea of removing sort of myself from whoever it was that was experiencing the work. So that is around the time when I first started involving others in my artwork or sort of in my art practice. So, for awhile I rejected me working alone in the studio altogether…so I built a back strap loom that has two sides so that you had to have two people to weave. Someone else would sit across from me and that way conversation had to become part of the work and then I actually couldn’t, like I couldn’t just sit in my studio to weave because I literally had to have another person there with me (K. Wiskirchen, personal communication, July 30, 2013).

Figure 6 is an image of the two-person backstrap loom, entitled **You and I**.

Figure 6

*Figure 6: You and I. [2-person backstrap loom]. Wiskirchen, c. 2010*
Theme 3: Connections with others and authenticity

All interview participants confirmed that their textile work facilitates relational connections with others. These connections were with other textile artists as well as non-artists. Aspects of connecting included having a sense of place in history when quilting with heirloom fabrics; telling a story through textiles that relate to a personal or social issue; and connecting with others through the “shared language” of textiles since many people have a reference point from their childhood. One participant communicated this important finding saying,

You know, usually when people are interested in what I do, I want to shift gears and ask them what they like, and it just keeps the conversation going. [It] gets people to open up about what they like to do. It often will be reminiscent, too. They’ll say oh, my grandmother or aunt used to weave, so you get talking about where that person lived, where they’re from. A lot of people end up telling you that they have known someone in their family that had a loom and they don’t know whatever happened to it and they wished they knew (J. Kettler, personal communication, September 22, 2013).

The textile arts community was repeatedly described as caring, generous, open, and supportive. “I feel very wealthy with friends and acquaintances all across the United States”, one participant said (L. Strand, personal communication, July 25, 2013). Another participant said, “I can’t specifically say it’s textile art, but I think being involved in the arts helps you connect with others because anybody who’s creative automatically has something to talk about with someone else who’s creative. And textile arts, it’s a lot of women based so I think the woman connection is very strong there. And it’s a very generous group of people. So textile artists tend to want to share. So that connection is built into being in textiles, I think, historically and contemporarily” (L. Rimel, personal communication, September 11, 2013).
Many participants were initially mystified when asked how their work with textiles reflects their true, authentic being. However, as they deconstructed the question they articulated a connection between how they saw themselves, how they saw themselves in relationship with others, and how their work was inspired by leading authentic lives. Most participants articulated being an artist as central to their identity. Since most participants were in middle to later adulthood, stories about making life changes were shared. Many participants were able to describe earlier phases in life when they were not living, or were not generating a body of work, that they viewed as reflecting their true self. It is through their life experiences and assessing life choices that these participants were led to embrace the need to create and to use textiles in their work.

**Subtheme: Connections through the virtual world**

An unexpected aspect of relational connections involved expansion into virtual, on-line environments. One participant described the impact creating a blog and a Facebook account had on her creative practices. She described her network as developing from mainly local contacts to including international contacts. In the past several years this participant has experienced a significant increase in interest concerning her work and the creative techniques she employs, much she attributes to her on-line presence. She said, “There’s a lot of connections being made, and it becomes a smaller and smaller world because you’ll meet people and they’ll have met somebody else that you know, so it just keeps…it just keeps going” (P. Vivod, personal communication, September 18, 2013).

**Theme 4: Mending relational and community disconnections**

Figure 7 is an image of one participant’s piece entitled *Mend*. In many ways textile work serves as a metaphor for repairing relational disconnections. Participants described
personal disconnections and social disconnections that inspired artistic expression. These disconnections involved poignant experiences with important loved ones to responding to community concerns about racism, classism, and sexism. Disconnections within oneself were also noted and described as points in time when some participants were challenged to live authentically and to be true to themselves. One participant described a relational disconnection and how she internalized the experience. She said,

After that, at that initial moment, I vowed to myself to just be true to who I was and what I felt because I had already in my head the direction I was going in. I had in my heart what I needed to say. And so that made me understand my opinion mattered. So it was more – it wasn’t just about the fabric. It was just about life. My decisions mattered. My feelings matter. And if someone else doesn’t quite understand it, it doesn’t mean necessarily that they are a bad person. It’s just that we’re not on the same vibes (E. Patterson-Petty, personal communication, July 31, 2013).

Figure 7

*Figure 7: Mend. [Mixed media]. c. Rimel, 2007*

From a community perspective, textiles have been used by participants primarily in their community arts efforts to repair disconnections. One participant, for example, has been involved in creating large yarn projects since 1999. Over the past six years she has
organized four large scale yarn bombings. The first was in a Chicago, Illinois neighborhood to address urban decay and issues of drug dealing, prostitution, and safety concerns. The next three were larger initiatives and involved many community members, including a women’s group of knitters that have been gathering since World War II. The latest effort, involving a yarn bombing crossing the Edens Expressway in Chicago, “galvanized the community. People came together and we were putting it up and cars would be driving by and honking and way to go, we love it” (L. Obermeyer, personal communication, August 12, 2013).

A second participant described her community work as “pop-up experiences” and recently went to a veteran’s hospital in St. Louis, Missouri to embroider with people while they awaited doctor’s appointments. She also created a manifesto as a statement of friendship and relationship to business owners north of Delmar Boulevard in St. Louis. The manifesto addresses the racial, social, and business divide between south and north St. Louis city with a hope of a development of a traveling artist studio (I. Berman, personal communication, September 7, 2013).

A third participant commits time to developing art installations for a local park near her home in East St. Louis, Illinois. Although the installations are concrete and mosaics rather than textile pieces, her work is informed by her experiences as a textile artist and involvement within her community to positively address community disconnections (E. Patterson-Petty, personal communication, July 31, 2013).

**Theme 5: Textile arts as a form of art therapy**

Participants varied in their experiences with using textile work as a form of art therapy. No one disclosed experience engaging in therapeutic services with an art
therapist. Many did not identify their work in this vein, nor did interview questions prompt individuals outside of asking if their work helped in managing life’s stressors. One of the 11 interview participants was an art therapist in addition to identifying as an artist. In this case, she shared ways that she utilizes her community arts efforts as a way to provide services within the community in a pro-bono, non-clinical manner. She did not claim to be practicing art therapy; rather, she would tap into her skill-set to develop rapport with community members and to nurture growth and development on a community level. Another participant denied using her body of work as a form of therapy, stating that she had already addressed her concerns in prior artistic work. Rather, her current work focuses on aesthetic expressions. Finally, as discussed in a prior section, some participants provided examples of how their work enables relational reparation with no clear reference to art therapy concepts.

In summary, the five data themes indicated a focus on the participants’ emphasis on learning about textiles from family members, having diverse creative process experiences with a variety of materials, developing meaningful and authentic relational connections, being able to repair relational disconnections via textile work, and minimal experience using textile arts as a formal art therapy outlet.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

Making fiber art is enjoyable; many think it is the bee’s knees, if you will. I can think of little more pleasurable than playing with colors that I adore, fibers that are amazing to touch (such as merino, bamboo, angora, and alpaca), yarn that is textured and chunky, and then creating these gorgeous materials into something that is unique, that I can complete, that I have to hold. It is fun, it is intellectually challenging and stimulating, it is soothing, it is exhilarating, and it is healing. It doesn’t have to be serious. The direct meaning may not be revealed until several pieces are done, or ever, but the process can be a journey to embrace (Collier, 2012, p. 97).

This chapter provides a discussion, conclusion and recommendations concerning using textile arts to inform self-in-relation with an RCT perspective. According to Johnson and Wilson,

Textile handcrafted objects are imbued with meaning through their creation and use and are symbolic of the maker and her relationships with other people. It is these meanings that motivate the contemporary textile handcrafters to continue to learn age-old skills and spend hours making special things. These objects are valued by their creators as symbols of self, who feel the object is special because it is not commercially obtained, it is made with love, and is connected to personal histories (2011, p. 126).

My research findings support this assertion and supported my hypotheses that 1) engagement with textile arts contribute to a positive sense of self and understanding of authenticity; and 2) growth fostering relationships can be pursued through involvement in textile arts. Concerning my third hypothesis, the data did not directly point to the effectiveness of using a RCT theoretical framework in an art therapy setting with textile arts. However, it did not dispute it. During the course of my research I learned that the third hypothesis was too broad to measure in the scope of this study. Hence, further exploration is needed to better understand my third hypothesis.
Interview results affirmed that engagement with textile arts contributes to a positive sense of self. Participants were less clear on articulating their sense of authenticity, which seemed imbedded in responses related to relational connections and creative process. Participants described meaningful examples of how their work with textiles positively influenced self-in-relation. There was evidence of successfully developing growth fostering relationships through their involvement in textile arts.

Discussion of Findings

The themes that emerged in the data affirm the compatibility of using textiles in art therapy settings. These findings are important because participants articulated experiences that would be appropriate content areas for art therapy including: resolving familial disconnections; developing a sense of expertise in an area of interest and its impact on sense of self, self-esteem, and confidence; developing growth fostering relationships and authenticity; and managing and mending relational and community disconnections.

Although research specific to using textiles in art therapy is limited, there are some studies that provide similar findings regarding the general reasons for, and outcomes from, engaging in textile arts (Collier, 2011; Fine, 2003; Huss, 2010; Johnson & Wilson, 2005; Moxley et al., 2011; Nelson et al., 2005; Reynolds, 2002; Reynolds, 2010; Titus & Sinacore, 2013).

The use of textiles in art therapy settings

Even though art therapy continues to grow and develop as a field, a relatively narrow view of acceptable art materials to use with clients exists (Moon, 2008). My research findings support that there are beneficial outcomes in using textile materials in specific relational circumstances. The data supported the use of textile materials to enable intrinsic understanding and/or extrinsic communication about an issue. Participants described
experiences where artwork could serve as a means for witnessing and visibility, which are two important concepts used in art therapy. ‘Witnessing’ and ‘visibility’ refer to the healing process inherent in the experience of seeing and being seen or self-seeing the self and self being seen by others” (Burt, 2012, p. 312). Although there were varying degrees of participant acknowledgement concerning witnessing and visibility, art pieces were an avenue for both to be achieved on the micro, mezzo, exo, and macro ecological levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Figure 8 provides an image of a participant’s piece entitled Touch that could suggest witnessing and visibility.

Figure 8

Figure 8: Touch. [Mixed media]. c. Rimel, 2007

Limitations

Possible limitations of my research include sample size; age of participants; limitations of ethnic and cultural diversity; participant pool collectively identifying as textile artists; transferability limitations, limitations in participant understanding of art therapy and assumptions/bias I held as the researcher. My research findings may not transfer well to other populations that engage in textile arts because the participant pool
was comprised of individuals that exhibited an advanced level of psychological insight, which may not be the case for other populations. Data was gathered in natural, nonclinical settings. Findings may have been different if interviews had been conducted in therapeutic settings with participants engaged in art therapy.

Age of participants

As mentioned in Chapter IV, it is likely that the age of the participants had bearing on the findings. Over half of the participants were between the ages of 53 and 74 years old. Their age impacted years of experience working with textiles, longevity of careers, generational and society influences and impacts, the age of children and grandchildren, status of important relationships, and locus of control over one’s time and schedule.

Ethnicity of participants

Similar to participant ages, it is likely that ethnic identity influenced my research findings for cultural and socio-economic reasons. My pool of participants was nearly homogenous in ethnicity and class status. Participants were in the working to middle class and were primarily Caucasian. For this reason, cultural reference points were fairly consistent and had an impact on how participants viewed the use of textiles. Diversity in age and ethnicity may have illuminated unique perspectives that did not emerge in my research.

Educational backgrounds of participants

For the purposes of my research I was interested in interviewing participants that identified as textile artists. I did not, however, anticipate that this decision would impact the educational backgrounds of participants. Ten out of 11 participants had at least achieved a Bachelor’s degree; most had degrees in fine arts. All participants had
exhibited an academic commitment to their artistic endeavors. For that reason, aesthetics and the creative process were central to the participants’ experiences as textile artists and informed how they answered my questions.

*Artist status of participants*

It is very likely that the participants’ artist status had an influence on my research findings. Artist status was inextricably connected to self in relation and authenticity. It was difficult for participants to separate their artist identity when responding to my questions. Their artist identity served to frame how they approached their work with textiles and how they related individually and in their community. If non-artists had participated they may have articulated other aspects of self as sources of authenticity.

*Researcher bias and assumptions*

As the researcher, I brought personal understandings of textile work to my inquiry. Referring back to the body of questions asked of participants I find that they were framed with an assumption that relational connections can be built through textile arts. The manner in which the questions were posed may have skewed participant responses. I also had the impression that the textile community is relationally-based, which may have impacted the manner in which participants were questioned and my research findings.

*Perspectives on Participants, Data Collected, and Theories About Results*

*Strengths of interview participants*

Interview participants brought a depth of experience and perspective to my research that provided a launching point for future exploration. Individually, participants exuded a sense of generosity and caring that they described as reflections of the textile arts
community. Collectively, participants shared a common view that their work with textiles is relevant for individual and communal reasons.

There was a layperson’s understanding of how textile expressions can manage stress and act as an informal therapeutic outlet. Participants had a strong sense of personal identity and a sense of social responsibility. Although many participants appeared not to be familiar with the language of authenticity as it relates to RCT, as they spoke it became clear that collectively they saw their artistic expressions as an extension of self-in-relation. There was a commitment to sharing skills, being useful, and having a sense of belonging either informally or formally. There was an interest in connecting relationally, as described previously where one participant used her weaving experiences to facilitate spontaneous associations with family and personal history. The participants’ stories and experiences supported findings gleaned during my literature review earlier in my research process.

Recommendations for further study

Since findings support my hypotheses about developing a positive sense of self, understanding authenticity, and developing growth fostering relationships, further inquiry of the benefits to art therapy settings would be recommended. In addition, further inquiry into the effectiveness of operationalizing RCT into best practices would be recommended. Suggestions for further research include exploring the transferability of findings to non-artist populations that engage in textile work; to participant groups in the 32-38 and 39-45 age group; to participant groups who identify as persons of color; to participants who identify as consumers of mental health and/or art therapy services; to art therapists who make use of textiles in their practices; and exploring the impact of art
therapists’ competency levels with textile materials on what Moon termed “therapeutic potentials” (2008, p. 13). The practical significance of affirming the benefits of using textile arts in art therapy settings is that it supports an understanding that clients can access potentially familiar materials to advance their treatment goals in a relationally-oriented manner.

Conclusion

This research process provides valuable information to affirm what many women have known for quite some time: lives can be enriched through textile expressions. Connections and relationships are developed and self in relation and identity can be affirmed. A clearer sense of purpose, self, and authenticity can develop. Therapeutically, art expression has the ability to foster similar outcomes. Understanding the intersection between textile art work and art therapy continues to be a work in progress. Coupled with ongoing, rigorous research the history of textile arts engagement provides insight into the benefits gleaned by generations of women.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX
Narrative Inquiry Questions

Category

Demographic Information
Q1. What is your gender?
Q2. What is your age?
Q3. What is your ethnicity?
Q4. What is your sexual orientation?
Q5. Can you describe your family/at home situation?
Q6. What is your educational background?

Relational Cultural Theory
Q7. How does your work with textile arts help in developing connections with others?
Q8. How would you describe the relationships you have developed through your work?

Textile Arts
Q9. How are you engaged in textile arts?
Q10. How long have you been working with textiles?
Q11. Do you engage in your artwork independently or with a group?
Q12. On a scale of 1-5, 1 being low and 5 being high, how would you rate your competency in each medium?

Authenticity
Q13. How does your work with textiles reflect your true, authentic, being?
Q14. How has your status as a textile artist informed your identity?

Self-in-Relation
Q15. How do you relate with others based on your status as a textile artist?
Q16. How has your work with textiles helped you cope with or manage life’s stressors and challenges?
Acknowledgment of Informed Consent

Section I: Identification of Project and Responsible Investigator:

I hereby agree to participate in a research project entitled “Relational Cultural Theory, Textile Arts, Authenticity and Sense of Self” to be conducted by Lisa Thompson-Gibson as principal investigator.

Section II: Participant Rights and Information:

1. Purpose of the Project:

This research is intended to inform the researcher’s graduate thesis work in Art Therapy Counseling at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. The purpose of this research is to conduct narrative interviews with subjects to gain information about first hand experiences with textile arts and outcomes experienced through this engagement. Participation is voluntary and will involve being interviewed either individually or as a member of a group involved with textile arts by the primary researcher in a one-time session. If you choose to participate, it is expected that the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. The interview will use a pre-determined set of questions to guide the interview. There are no experimental procedures related to these interviews.

2. Description of Risks:

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts related to participation in this research outside of those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine psychological examinations or test.

3. Description of Benefits:

There are no direct benefits to the interview participants, other than sharing one’s narrative about involvement with textile arts. The researcher expects to understand more fully how textile arts can be utilized in art therapy sessions, with a fuller understanding of outcomes experienced to one’s sense of authenticity, one’s relationships, and one’s sense of self.

Disclosure of Alternative Procedures:

There are no negative consequences related to choosing not to participate in this research. No alternative procedures exist for this research except non-participation.
5. Confidentiality of Records:

The researcher will maintain records of the interview during the course of the thesis research at SIUE. The record will include age, gender, race and ethnicity. However, the record will NOT include your name, address, social security number, or any other personal information. After the researcher completes the narrative interviews the confidential records will be kept in a locked file cabinet at SIUE. They will be open only to members of the research team. Records will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis.

6. Available Assistance:

Since the research does not involve more than minimal risk, there is no need for available assistance.

7. Contact Information:

If you have any questions about this research project or about your rights and activities as a participant, then please contact the researcher’s faculty advisor, Professor Megan Robb. You can call Professor Robb at (618) 650-3198, e-mail her at mrobb@siue.edu, or write her at Campus Box 1764, SIUE, Edwardsville, IL 62026. If you are a participant and become worried about your emotional and physical responses to the project’s activities, then you are encouraged to immediately notify the researcher and Professor Robb. They will work with you to help identify the problem and solve it. If you have any questions about your rights or any other concerns, you may also contact Linda Skelton with the SIUE Institutional Review Board at (618) 650-2958 or lskelto@siue.edu.

Statement of Voluntary Participation:

If you choose to join this research project, your participation will be voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can ask to withdraw from the research project at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. At the time of withdrawal, all materials related to your interview will be shredded and excluded from the research findings.

Section III: Signatures

1. Participant: _______________________________ Date: _______________
2. Principal Investigator: _______________________________ Date: _______________
3. Principal Investigator’s address: 1004 Steven Dee Drive; O’Fallon, IL 62269
4. Principal Investigator’s phone number (c) (618) 514-2764
5. E-Mail: _lithomp@siue.edu

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