

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF A GIRLS' CLUB  
QUILTING PROJECT

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, FAMILY STUDIES, AND  
COUNSELING  
COLLEGE OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

BY

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DENTON, TEXAS

AUGUST 2021

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family for their unwavering support. First, to my husband, Brian: Thank you for your patience and understanding throughout these last six years as I have pursued my dream of earning a Ph.D. Your faith and support have meant so much to me. I love you so much.

To my four children, Jacob, Matthew, Jesse, and Lily: My hope has always been that you would be inspired to pursue your dreams in your lives, whatever that may be. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me. I love you all and am so glad that I have you. To my daughters-in-law, Gaby and Jessica: I am so glad that you both are a part of our family and I am thankful for your love and support. I love you both.

To my grandson, James Warren Cottle: You are a delight to me and I love you more than you will ever know. I pray that you will grow to accomplish many wonderful things in your life.

To my mother, Ruby Pierce: You know how much it has meant to me to pursue this accomplishment--since I was in high school! You were the one who would talk me through my fears of failure, and it has been your calm presence that has assured me that I could accomplish the tasks set before me. I love you and am grateful for you.

To my father, David Pierce: Daddy, I miss you and I wish you were here. When I struggled with my coursework and with writing, I remembered your voice encouraging me and I kept going.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank Dr. Catherine Dutton for your guidance, support, and encouragement. You have been a consistent source of enthusiasm and wisdom throughout this process. Taking on a middle-aged mentee was an exercise in faith, I am sure. Thanks for taking a chance on me and for your patience--especially this last year.

I would also like to thank Dr. Rhonda Buckley and Dr. Nerissa Gillum for serving on my committee. Your feedback and encouragement have been invaluable to me.

Thanks and appreciation to Dr. Joyce Armstrong for being a source of delight and inspiration to me throughout my journey towards the Ph.D. You were the first person to welcome me to TWU and I am grateful to you. I want to also thank Dr. Linda Ladd for your encouragement and for always showing interest in my work. Your life and work have inspired me.

To Ms. Rita Bacque: Thank you for your continued support. You always had my back, and I appreciate it.

To Mrs. Amber George and Mrs. Jasmin Moore, I cannot thank you enough for being my co-sponsors. Your friendship and support have been priceless. To Ms. De'Ana Hogan, thank you for being a true friend and encourager.

I am grateful to the administration and staff where the club was founded and based for your support of the SMART Girls program. I am especially grateful to the women who offered their time to the club and who provided inspiration to the girls.

Thank you to all of the girls and parents who participated in the SMART Girls Club, especially during the 2019-2020 school year. We had a lot of fun. I continue to be inspired by you and hope that you will accomplish great things. Always remember that SMART is beautiful.

## ABSTRACT

JENNIFER PIERCE COTTLE

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF A GIRLS' CLUB

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AUGUST 2021

The phenomena of connection, competence, and self-efficacy have not been explored in the context of an after-school girls club. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of nine girls engaged in a quilting project in an after-school program for expressions of connection, competence, and self-efficacy using a feminist quilting metaphor to stitch together a feminist relational framework, psychosocial framework, and social cognitive framework. Secondary data was collected from the de-identified transcripts of an after-school program evaluation, which used semi-structured interviews with the participants. Transcripts were analyzed using a three-stage coding process. Themes were organized into a novel strategy called Code Group Quilt Blocks and found poetry. Findings indicated that the participants expressed connection, industry, specific self-efficacy, and boredom regarding the quilting project. The quilting project provided an opportunity for the girls to develop connection and friendships with one another as well as an opportunity to develop and learn new skills. This study has implications for improving the experience of children in after-school programs and for the use of a new strategy for qualitative analysis.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the Study: A History of the SMART Girls Club**

In this section, I recount the founding of the Science, Math, Achievement, Research, & Technology (SMART) Girls Club and my reasons for evaluating the program. I discuss the steps taken to begin the after-school club and the evolution of the program thus far.

#### **Founding the Club**

In the spring of 2015, I was teaching Kindergarten at a public elementary school that was part of a large school district in North Texas. My youngest child, Lily, was almost 9 and I had become concerned about the messages she and her young friends were receiving in print and visual media. I noticed a worrying trend amongst the television shows they were watching, one in which girls were encouraged to disparage their parents and grandparents and to be engaged in romantic relationships with boys.

A few months before, I had stumbled across a documentary film called *Miss Representation* (Siebel Newsom, 2011) that was streaming on Netflix. The film put a fine point on the concerns I had for my daughter and her friends as it demonstrated that a great deal of entertainment and news media were spinning a narrative of objectification of women and girls. The film also made a strong case for changing the media landscape. As I began to engage with the film's producer/director on social media, it occurred to me that my unique position as an elementary teacher afforded me an opportunity to educate

girls about this media narrative. I hoped to subvert the messages girls were seeing in TV, movies, and video games, and that they were hearing in popular music.

I conceived of an after-school club for girls. I decided to call it Science, Math, Achievement, Research, & Technology (SMART) Girls Club. I approached the principal with my idea: We would offer the club to third through fifth-grade girls after school once a week to counter media messages and to encourage girls to pursue careers in one of the SMART fields. The principal liked the idea very much and said that she felt it would also help with a discipline problem that was happening in the upper grades. She related that there were a lot of “mean girls” issues that were disruptive to instruction. She had grown weary of dealing with the girls in the third through fifth grades who were deliberately trying to undermine one another and to create drama. She approved of my idea and I was tasked with finding a curriculum (if one existed) and to determine the details of the club—where it would meet, when, who would help me with the club, et cetera.

I decided to start the club in the fall of 2015. I enlisted the help of two of my colleagues, one on the Kindergarten team, Mrs. Amber George, and the other on the first grade team. We would conduct meetings in my classroom once a week after school on Tuesdays. My idea was unorthodox because we worked with the youngest grade on campus. We had to assure the teachers in the upper grades that we were not attempting to undermine the important work that they were doing as the girls’ primary teachers. I spoke to the faculty and staff about the purpose and mission of the club at our monthly faculty meetings and soon had their support. As a matter of fact, several of the teachers in the

upper grades referred students to our club in hopes that it would help with some of the discipline issues that they were dealing with.

We learned a lot in that first year. I had received a grant to purchase a curriculum from the *Representation Project*, the corporation that arose from the documentary film. Unfortunately, it was not suitable for the age groups we were working with. It became necessary for me to write our weekly lesson plans and develop activities that would engage and stimulate the girls. I found websites that were useful for teaching about journalism and marketing through [www.poynter.org](http://www.poynter.org) and [www.pbs.org](http://www.pbs.org). By the following spring, I was able to invite female professionals in SMART fields to come to our club to be interviewed by the girls. The girls interviewed a local chiropractor, one of their fifth-grade teachers, a chemist, a geologist, a researcher in an infectious diseases laboratory, a pastor, and a landscape architect. They received a lesson in photography from a local photographer. The girls created their own school newspaper that year as well.

In the years that followed, we decided to improve on the format by limiting the number of girls that could enroll in the club. The first year, we had almost 40 girls and this was far too overwhelming for a small classroom. We limited the group to 20 and opened a waiting list. We liked that the girls created a media project the previous year. We decided that the girls should do some type of media project each year. Fortunately, Mrs. Jasmin Moore, a special education teacher on campus, joined our team. Mrs. Moore was keenly interested in the work we were doing and was also training to become a school counselor. As it happened, she was also a professional photographer. In year two, the girls created a gallery of famous historical women. The girls recreated portraits

of the women, using period costumes, hairstyles, and make-up. The portraits hung prominently in one of the hallways for Open House, when parents and family members of the children of our school were invited to come and view the work done by all of the schoolchildren.

In Years 3 and 4, the girls created documentary films that were entered into the school district film festival. The first film featured issues of sexism that the girls encountered on campus. This film won first prize in the documentary category. The girls acted out a talk show featuring famous women in history in the Year 4 film. This film won honorable mention in the documentary category. For Year 5, I wanted to try something new and different. Over the years, the girls were asking to learn to sew. I had only been able to conduct two lessons on hand sewing up until that point, and I sought to rectify this.

### **Quilting and the SMART Girls**

I had the opportunity to work on a quilting research study in the spring of 2019. My role was to read interviews done with professional quilters and to look for specific themes determined by the principal investigator. I was moved by the narratives of the quilters; specifically, the connections that they felt to one another and to the stories that their quilts told. I was also intrigued by the knowledge of women's history related by some of the quilters. The quilts represented their personal stories and they often represented a labor of love. I decided that for the following school year, the SMART Girls would create a quilt of their own as their media project.

By the fall of 2019, we were down to just two sponsors: Mrs. George and myself. I was no longer teaching at the elementary school, but the principal was happy to allow our work with the girls' club to continue. For the first time, we included a supply list with our club application. The girls would have their own sewing kits with quilting supplies and fabrics. They were going to learn to quilt by hand. Before we could begin, however, I needed to lay the groundwork for the club. Each year, we began with a set of rules and expectations for club members and their parents. We also discussed how we would conduct our meetings and the girls and their parents were informed as to when they should bring their assembled sewing kits to the club meetings.

We conducted a goal-setting meeting with the members so that we could learn what the girls hoped to accomplish in the coming school year. We wanted to facilitate their personal goals by giving them the tools to accomplish them. As a group, the girls set goals of learning to sew, learning to cook/bake, and learning to take care of pets. The girls also created individual personal goals, for example, one girl wanted to become a better dancer and another wanted to make all As in her classes. We also agreed as a club that we would do some type of school project, but that we would decide what that would be in the spring.

Before we began our sewing project, I taught a lesson on the history of quilting and how women gathered together in quilting bees to socialize with one another as they sewed. We discussed the concept of friendship quilts and I explained to the girls that we would be making a friendship quilt of our own. When it came time to begin our sewing project, all of the girls brought their sewing kits and Mrs. George and I taught them how

to thread their needles (I supplied each of them with a needle threader), knot their threads, and how to sew a few simple stitches. Their first project was to sew a needle keeper using felt. Our quilt was going to be created using 1.5-inch hexagons out of three types of fabric (see Figure 1). The girls were instructed to bring fabric that would represent their interests/likes. For example, two girls brought fabrics with a space theme and one girl brought Girl Scouts fabric.

**Figure 1**

*A Fourth-Grade SMART Girls Club Member Sewing Her Quilt Block on December 2, 2019*



Our after-school club meetings began to look very much like a quilting guild meeting where formal and informal learning were taking place (Dickie, 2003). According to Dickie (2003), different types of learning take place within adult quilt-making settings: learning to make a particular type of quilt; learning to use quilting/sewing tools; learning about different types of quilts and the history behind them; and learning to challenge



oneself. Without realizing it, the girls were learning all of these things with determination and enthusiasm. Before long, the girls were relating to each other as competent quilters. For the first time, I had girls thanking me for conducting SMART Girls Club. My co-sponsor, Mrs. George, often remarked on how well the girls were getting along with one another. While sewing their blocks together at one of our club meetings in February, the girls told me, “Look, Mrs. Cottle! We are sewing just like a quilting bee!”

There were significant challenges, however. For one, two of the girls had significant special needs that we were not aware of when we began the school year. These girls were new to campus and had learning disabilities and fine motor skills delays that affected their ability to concentrate on the tasks we put before them. They had significant difficulties with threading needles and tying knots, so they required assistance with their work from Mrs. George and me or one of the older girls. The other challenge was much greater: The COVID-19 pandemic required that the school district shut down in-person learning in late March of 2020. At that point, most of the girls had completed their quilt blocks and were joining them together with hand stitching. Prior to the pandemic, we had planned to finish the quilt in April. Due to the health emergency, we were unable to meet in person. Due to the nature of sewing the blocks together in close proximity, we were unable to work together in person at all, even off-campus.

Despite all of this, I continued to have club meetings. I purchased a Zoom video conferencing account so that I could meet with the girls each week online. We played games and I taught lessons on yoga, relaxation techniques, self-esteem, and digital photography manipulation. One week, I taught the girls how to make sugar cookies in our

online meeting, which fulfilled one of the goals that they had set at the beginning of our club meetings. Though we did not have the full complement of our club members in attendance every week, we did have 13 out of 16 in attendance for club meetings by the end of the school year, when we had our annual end-of-year party.

At the end of each school year, we celebrated with the girls the accomplishments of the previous school year with crafts, games, food, and fun. Because this school year had changed the dynamics of the club, I planned a slightly different end-of-year celebration. I told the girls that we would have a surprise at our party and coordinated with their parents to fulfill the surprise. I created a party package complete with a Bingo game card, two packets of fruit candy for Bingo markers, a fancy paper straw, a piece of string, and a strip of craft paper. I made arrangements so that the girls could get their party package and talked with parents about what to purchase for snacks. For our last online club meeting, the girls made a wind spinner with me, played Bingo, and we all sipped ice cream floats using our fancy straws and the ice cream and soda that parents purchased. It was a wonderful time.

### **Club Evaluation**

Typically, I would debrief with club members, the co-leaders, and some of the parents at the end of the school year. I would ask them what they had learned from the media project, what they had enjoyed about it, and what they would change about it. I would also ask the girls what they would like to do in the club in the coming year if they were returning. With the co-leaders, our conversations were lengthier and focused on the successes and challenges we had faced throughout the school year in the club. We would

discuss improvements to club management and we would make plans for the upcoming year. With parents, I would ask their opinions of the club lessons and seek their input about the ways that we could improve the club. In this way, I was able to determine how our media projects had gone, what the girls had learned as a result of them, and any ideas for the upcoming school year. We were always trying to improve. Because we were meeting in person consistently in years past, feedback regarding the functioning of the club was easy to obtain. I was able to chat with the girls and their parents each May, often sitting with them during our end-of-year party. At the end of each media project, we would record the girls' responses to the project and what they had learned. When we completed the history talk show film, I included a portion of the girls' responses at the end of the film to demonstrate how impactful the project had been for them. With the pandemic, I was not able to meet with the girls in person to talk about our club year and the quilting project, but I continued to meet with them through video conferencing. However, there had been challenges with the online platform. The girls were used to playing games with me, but they could sometimes be boisterous and difficult to hear all at once. I decided to meet with the girls in small groups according to grade to talk with them about how they felt our club had functioned. I wanted to know what we had done well and what needed to be improved.

Because I had learned so much from some of the parents about their daughters' club experience the year before, I decided to include parents in the evaluation process. I included parents in two of our online club meetings, which was something we had never been able to do before when we were meeting on the school campus. I asked parents to

meet with me by phone or video conference for the purpose of evaluating the club. Since Mrs. George had been vital to the program and was a witness to the ongoing successes and struggles of the year, I interviewed her for her perspective (as was typical in years past). Mrs. Moore had established a second SMART Girls chapter on another campus 2 years before. She had taken a new role at this school and she decided to try our program there, but she had run up against many challenges. She had been consulting with me throughout the year as she was attempting to recreate the photo gallery of historical women that we had done a few years previously. I invited her to meet with Mrs. George and me to discuss both programs.

One perspective that I sought to include in the club evaluation was that of the principal. Her support and encouragement had been invaluable to us as we attempted to do something unprecedented in our district. Any concerns or insecurities that I had had initially about starting a club for girls had been sufficiently overcome by the principal. Since I was no longer teaching on campus, I had not had the opportunity to speak with her regularly during the school year. I asked to interview her as part of the evaluation process, and she happily agreed.

I learned a great deal about the SMART Girls Club through the evaluation, and I was happy to share what I learned with the girls, their parents, and Mrs. George and Mrs. Moore. The girls seemed pleased that I was asking them for their opinions. When we moved the club to an online format, I worried that the girls would not enjoy it. Through the interviews, I learned that the girls had enjoyed continuing to meet together, even if it was by video conference. To my surprise, they wanted to continue to meet in the

summer! I was also pleasantly surprised to find that the girls wanted to have club meetings last longer. Several of the girls remarked that they felt that they would like to have more time together. We talked about the topics we had discussed in our club meetings, the quilting project, our online meetings together, and what they would like to do next year in SMART Girls Club. I learned that the girls wanted to do more skill-based learning activities. They liked the sewing project but did not want to do something that took so long. They wanted shorter projects that allowed them to talk and work together and to learn new skills.

The parents reported that they were pleased with what the girls were learning in SMART Girls Club, specifically that the girls were learning about women's history and leadership. They were candid about the successes and challenges of the quilting project as well as the challenges posed by the pandemic. Overall, the parents were pleased with the work that we had done during the school year and appreciated that the girls were able to continue to meet in the video conference format. They appreciated the women's history and empowerment lessons that we taught both in-person and online. They also gave ideas and suggestions for the upcoming school year.

While the principal was not involved with the quilting project, her feedback was enlightening. Before the pandemic, we led the girls in a Black History Month lesson and had created an accompanying display in the school hallway before Open House. The principal discussed how the media projects that we displayed on campus had enhanced the environment at school and had often been a topic of discussion amongst parents when they visited campus. She was very pleased with the work that we were doing with

SMART Girls. One thing that was very encouraging to learn was that since the inception of the SMART Girls Club, there had been a significant decline in the number of disciplinary issues amongst girls on campus. She noted that the mean girls' problem that she had dealt with in years past was almost nonexistent now. This was very gratifying to hear.

Despite all of the challenges of the school year, the evaluation of the club affirmed that the work we were doing was important and valued by both the girls and their families. The evaluation served to bolster the confidence of myself and the other sponsors. The information that we gained will guide us as we seek to improve the program. It will also help us to develop a written curriculum for the coming year.

After the evaluation, I was intrigued by what the girls had shared with me about their desire to learn more skills. This was a consistent desire of the girls; they wanted to learn how to do more things and wanted to have more time to complete projects in groups. Going back to their goals at the beginning of the school year, many of the girls had expressed a desire to learn a skill or to improve a skill of some sort. Before the pandemic shutdown, I planned to invite one of the members of the high school girls' soccer team to come to conduct a soccer clinic for the girls since they had expressed a desire to both learn to play soccer and to learn soccer skills. They also wanted to learn to cook. I had coordinated with the principal to do a cooking lesson with the girls in the school motor lab that contained a kitchen. Instead, I conducted an online cooking class and almost all of the girls and their parents had mentioned that this was their favorite thing that we had done in SMART Girls Club.

What the girls expressed seemed consistent with what I already understood from psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), that school-age children enjoy learning and making things and developing new skills. Psychosocial theory posits that children at this stage of development are experiencing the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority (Erikson, 1963). It made sense that the girls would want to work on skill-based projects to improve their abilities. There was something else, though. The girls were not seeking recognition from one another or Mrs. George and me as they developed their sewing skills, a key position in Erikson's theory (1963). The girls were expressing their desire to talk to one another and to learn; they liked doing the projects together because they could talk to one another at the same time. They wanted more opportunities to work together; they just did not want to do projects that took too long, a criticism of the quilting project. They wanted things that they could finish. There seemed to be another goal—a desire to spend time together. As the co-sponsors and I talked about the results of the program evaluation, it became clear that the girls were telling us that what they wanted was to develop friendships and that our club was a vehicle for doing that.

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) posits that children learn a great deal about themselves in school through the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Through social comparison and classroom practices, children learn about how they measure up to their peers (Bandura, 1997). By structuring our quilting project in a cooperative manner, rather than a competitive one, the younger girls in the group should have benefited from being assisted by the older, more experienced girls, according to the

theory (Bandura, 1997). Furthermore, the older girls with better sewing skills should rate themselves well on their performance (Bandura, 1997). Since we had the advantage of conducting the club in a non-competitive, cooperative way, I wondered if the girls would appraise themselves highly in their ability to sew, or their sewing self-efficacy.

According to Gilligan (1993), the process of developing identity in Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) theory involves the child's constant progress towards becoming an individual separate from his parents. Self-esteem is developed through learning and the mastery of skills, so that the child may become acceptable to the adults around him (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan's criticism centers on the way that Erikson characterized the development of identity in men and women: For men, when human development is progressing as it should, identity comes before intimacy. But for women, they come to know themselves through their relationships with others (Gilligan, 1993). Despite these differences, Erikson's stages of development are not altered and optimal human development is characterized by separation in Stages 2 through 5 (Gilligan, 1993). Any attachments past the first psychosocial crisis are considered to be hindrances to development and women are typically assessed according to this view (Gilligan, 1993). In short, for development to be considered optimal according to psychosocial theory, it must involve separation; thus, it must be male (Gilligan, 1993).

Gilligan (1993) offered another view. She argued that women show a sense of regard for the feelings of others and that they often demonstrate leadership in caretaking. The intuitive, expressive nature of women is devalued in Western culture and the autonomous, instrumental nature of men is valued and celebrated (Gilligan, 1993). These



social and cultural values were also esteemed by the men conducting the research on human development and moral reasoning—research that was often conducted with male children (Gilligan, 1993). It follows that women, socialized to be caregivers, would value connection and relationships. As girls are growing up, they learn to identify femininity with caregiving (Gilligan, 1993). For boys, the process of becoming a man involves separating from the mother—a process that is not necessary for girls (Gilligan, 1993). Girls are free to be connected to others, while boys must learn to be autonomous (Gilligan, 1993).

If autonomy is the prerequisite for success in business, personal growth, and the development of identity, then women will be considered weaker and less developed in traditional, male-centered developmental theories (Gilligan, 1993). Through her early research with women and girls, however, Gilligan found that women were consistently concerned with their relationships with others (Brown and Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993, 1996). Their identity and ethical and moral decision-making were concerned with the well-being of those around them. Their voices were not less developed or less moral, they were simply different due to their desire to consider others and to stay connected to the people around them (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan (1993) recentered the notion of psychological crisis for women around the desire to maintain connection, rather than the traditional way of speaking about women as having difficulty in achieving separation. Gilligan (1996) stated that the crux of human development is “...that psychological growth takes place in relationship” (p. 258).

As I considered the quilting project that we had directed with the girls in our club, I now had questions about what the project had accomplished for them from a developmental standpoint. Did this project engage the girls' desire for learning and skill development, as posited by Erikson (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997)? Was this project a way for them to resolve the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), or had it provided a way for the girls to maintain connection and care for one another, as posited by Gilligan (1993)? Since we had conducted the project outside of the traditional classroom setting with expectations about grades and achievement, would we find that the girls' rated their abilities and skills in a positive way, one that is consistent with social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997)?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Prior qualitative research studies have demonstrated that quilting is an effective way for adults in midlife to resolve the generativity versus stagnation crisis (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017) proposed by Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Despite the rising popularity of quilting (Quilting in America™ Survey, 2017) in the United States and the growing body of research dedicated to the topic (Amelon, 2009; Bavor, 2012; Cheek & Piercy, 2004; Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Dickie, 2003; Howell & Pierce, 2000; Kiracofe, 1993; Sohan, 2015; Stalp, 2006; Stalp, 2015; Stalp & Conti, 201; Trifonoff, 1999; Wickstrom, 2014), there has been no research up to this point on the use of quilting as a resolution of the psychosocial crisis of industry versus inferiority in children (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997).

Both psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson, 1964; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997) are widely taught frameworks for understanding child and human development and for explaining how children learn. Batra (2013) proposed that psychosocial theory is an excellent framework for education and society, as this paradigm explains how both systems can offer ways for their members to resolve intra- and interpersonal crises of development. However, Erikson's theory contains within it a masculine bias, which limits understanding of how girls and women develop and relate to one another (Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan's critique centers on her contention that Erikson fails to address the distinct nature of feminine development. Other feminist critiques have focused on Erikson's theory of the development of identity (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001) and the development of identity and intimacy (Horst, 1995). As of yet, there are no feminist studies that focus specifically on Erikson's concept of industry, nor are there any feminist critiques of Erikson's concept of the crisis of industry or the development of the ego strength of *competence*, the result of positive resolution of the industry crisis (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997).

In addition, Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) construct of industry has not been well operationalized (Kowaz & Marcia, 1991). Kowaz and Marcia (1991) attempted to create a measure of the construct of industry and found that a broad measure of industry was possible, but that further research in this area was warranted. Practically speaking, this presents a problem when trying to conduct quantitative research on the concept of industry: There is no valid quantitative test for children. This lack of an

appropriate and effective quantitative measure points to a need for qualitative research into this psychosocial crisis.

Bandura's (1977, 1997) self-efficacy construct is very closely related to Erikson's construct of competence, at least in definition. According to Bandura, self-efficacy relates to the individual's perception that they are able to do well on many things or to perform a specific task well (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2006; Green, 2003). Self-efficacy is a person's confidence to say, "I can," or "I am capable (Bandura, 2006)." Again, this is very much like Erikson's idea of competence (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), which is the child's recognition that they can work and learn alongside others. Unlike Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) industry construct, the validity of the construct of self-efficacy has been well established and Bandura has created a handbook for creating quantitative scales for measuring specific self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006). However, this concept has not been used in qualitative research focused on the specific self-efficacy skill of quilting or sewing in young girls.

Flannery (2001) has proposed a quilting metaphor for use in scientific research. This metaphor has been used in qualitative research to explore a variety of topics (Koelsch, 2012; Ray & McFadden, 2001; Saukko, 2000). While these studies have demonstrated the usefulness of this type of framework for scientific investigation, no studies have used this metaphor to "stitch together" three different theoretical paradigms as of yet. Furthermore, no research studies have used this approach to investigate a quilting project for young girls.

## **Statement of the Purpose**

The intent of this study was to explore the phenomena of connection (Gilligan, 1993), competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) as expressed by young girls involved in a quilting project. This phenomenological inquiry was framed using feminist theory (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Osmond and Thorne, 1993), psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997). All three theories were joined together using the feminist quilting metaphor for scientific inquiry proposed by Flannery (2001). Existing data in the form of interview transcripts were analyzed and coded using in vivo and process coding (Saldaña, 2016). Because there is no research on the role of quilting in the development of connection (Gilligan, 1993), industry/competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) in young girls, this study attempts to fill the void in child development, education, family studies, and feminist research.

Interview transcript data were gleaned from an evaluation of an after-school media program for third through fifth-grade girls conducted in the late spring of 2020. Interviews were conducted with the girls, their parents, the co-sponsors of the club, and the principal of the campus where the club was held for the purpose of debriefing after the club year, improving the functioning of the club, and planning for the upcoming school year. For the purpose of this study, I only used the transcripts of the interviews conducted with the girls.

## **Research Questions**

The following questions guided my approach to this study and also guided my methodology:

1. How did the SMART Girls Club members express connectedness when describing the quilting experience?
2. How did the girls express competence when discussing the quilting experience?
3. How did the girls express self-efficacy when discussing the quilting experience?

## **Definition of Terms**

In this section, research terms are defined for clarity and understanding.

### **Connection**

For the purpose of this study, connection is defined according to the conceptualization of Gilligan (1993): Responsiveness and empathy to the thoughts and feelings of others and the determination and intention to be in relationship with other people through careful attention to others' lives. It is the opposite of separation, a state of being in which an individual intends to conduct themselves independently of others. Gilligan's definition supposes that the central crisis of women's development is maintaining connection with others in relationships (Gilligan, 1993).

### **Industry**

According to Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) work, industry is the central developmental concern of school-age children leading to the development of the ego strength of competence. Industry is the child's determination (within the cultural and societal context) to learn and to master the use of tools and technology as well as

skills that will be useful to them as they enter adulthood. Industry represents the child's love of learning new skills that develops at this age.

### **Competence**

Competence, the ego strength that develops as a result of the resolution of the developmental crisis of this age group, is defined according to the conceptual framework of Erikson (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) as the child's recognition that they are able to work and learn alongside others.

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy is the individual's perception that they are able to do well on many things or to perform a specific task well (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Green, 2003). According to Bandura (2006), self-efficacy is a person's confidence to say, "I can," or "I am capable."

### **Quilting**

Quilting is a handicraft that can be worked on by one or more individuals using a needle, thread, and fabric (Kiracofe, 1993). Quilting involves piecing together the quilt top, a meticulous process that involves sewing together cut pieces of fabric into a design that is usually predetermined, and sewing the top to a fabric backing with a layer of soft batting sandwiched in between the two (Kiracofe, 1993). In this study, quilting referred both to the process of creating an actual quilt and the feminist metaphor proposed by Flannery (2001) to join together both the unique perspectives of the participants and the three different paradigms used to frame the study.

## **Research Design**

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological, and relational approach to better understand how young girls expressed feelings of connectedness (Gilligan, 1993), competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) regarding a quilting project conducted in an after-school program. Because I wanted to better understand the girls' experiences with the quilting project in the context of the after-school program, I used a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2014, 2016). This approach valued the perspective of the participants (Seidman, 2013) and aligned with my value of the dignity of the individual. My goal was to arrive at the essence of the experience (Creswell, 2016) to better understand the phenomena I explored.

## **Assumptions**

For the purpose of this study, it was assumed that the participants were honest and open in the discussion of their feelings about the quilting project. Because this was a phenomenological study, it was assumed that the interviews reflect the lived experiences of the participants involved in the phenomenon of inquiry, the quilting project (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative nature of this study meant that the research process was inductive and that the research design would emerge through the process of analysis (Creswell, 2014). The perspectives of the girls were afforded meaning and value, an important assumption of all qualitative research (Creswell, 2014).

The assumptions of the theoretical frameworks for this study were that girls prioritize maintaining connection to others in their development (Gilligan, 1993); that all children experience a developmental crisis during their elementary school years that is



described as a conflict between the drive to be industrious and the feeling of inferiority (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997); and that participation in activities and skills by children will create within them a feeling of self-efficacy in those skills (Bandura, 1997, 2006; Green, 2003). It was also assumed that the feminist research framework of Flannery (2001) would be useful in quilting together the perspectives of the multiple participants and the three theoretical paradigms.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

Participant interviews are delimited to those members of the SMART Girls Club who participated in the club evaluation of May 2020. The members involved in the club evaluation had just completed third through fifth grades at the time of the program evaluation. Since I was doing a club evaluation, I did not seek to interview girls at the school not involved in the club and teachers at the school who were not involved in the club for their perspective. The girls and their parents who did not respond to interview requests or who did not keep interview appointments were not forced to participate, so some perspectives are missing from the interviews. The experience of learning to sew and quilt is different for boys and older and younger children than the participants, but this study did not include those perspectives. Most of the girls in the after-school program had very little to no experience with sewing and needed extensive instruction in all aspects of sewing and quilting. This study did not include the perspectives of girls with more advanced sewing and quilting skills. The findings of this study are specific to the participants involved and are not transferable to the larger population.

## **Role of the Researcher**

I founded and served as one of the co-leaders of the SMART Girls Club. Formerly, I was a full-time Kindergarten teacher for the elementary school where the club was located. I am married and a mother of four children and a grandmother of one. My research interests include family and media, and I am especially interested in the ways that media is consumed and used by family members. My work with the SMART Girls Club was informed by the idea that children should be taught about media and its ability to inform and persuade and that schools can use media projects to teach children about history.

I have worked with the SMART Girls Club for 5 years. In that time, I developed mentor relationships with the girls in the club, friendships with the co-sponsors, and have become friendly with the parents of the girls. Because I lived in the same neighborhood as many of the girls, I saw them occasionally in my day-to-day activities, such as walking in the neighborhood, or at special events. Over the 5 years of my involvement with the girls' club, I developed an interest in the success of the girls and sought to make the club both enjoyable and educational. My co-sponsors and I worked to make sure that the girls felt safe within the club, as well. I am aware that this predisposes me to see the girls in a positive light and to see the club as having been beneficial to the girls, their families, and the campus community. My work with the club has also sensitized me towards the challenges that girls face and has informed my concern for young girls' cognitive, social, and emotional development.

## **Summary**

In this chapter, I have explained the genesis of the SMART Girls Club and how we decided to do the quilting project with the girls. I have also given the rationale for the club evaluation and how portions of the existing interviews are used for analysis in this study. In my discussion, I have explained the gap in child development, education, family studies, feminist, and quilting literature concerning the study of school-age children using quilting as a way to resolve developmental crises and in the development of skills. The research questions, research approach, and definitions were also given.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I explain the theoretical framework for the study and demonstrate how a quilting metaphor was used as a way to synthesize three theoretical paradigms and the various perspectives of the participants in the girls' club. I present research on key aspects of the topic. Gaps in the literature pertaining to the study of girls and quilting are discussed, as well.

#### **Theoretical Frameworks**

For this study, I examined the quilting project of the SMART Girls after school club using a feminist framework (Gilligan, 1993; Osmond & Thorne, 1993), a psychosocial theory framework (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and a social cognitive theory framework (Bandura, 1977, 1997). Feminist theories examine women's experiences and how women relate to one another (Osmond & Thorne, 1993). By examining the quilting project through this lens, I hoped to elucidate how the girls experienced this project and how this project affected their relationships with themselves, their fellow club members, and their parents.

Specifically, I used the relational feminist framework outlined by Carol Gilligan in her important work, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (1993), as well as subsequent work that she has published. In Gilligan's early work (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993, 1996), she posited that women and girls follow a developmental course that is different from men and boys due to cultural

and societal factors. The developmental path of women follows a trajectory of connection; it honors the salience of relationship and the desire to maintain, nurture and preserve it. Gilligan posited that the narrative of humanity is filled with connection; our lives are connected in a variety of ways as we work, play, love, and interact. Gilligan's attentiveness to voice and listening informed my attentiveness to the girls' voices (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). In her later work (Chu & Gilligan, 2019; Gilligan, 2018), Gilligan revealed that the different voice that desires connection rather than separation is present at birth in all people. Studies with boys have shown that they have the same capacity for empathy and connection that girls have, but that the cultural prohibitions of patriarchal society force boys to dissociate from their desires for connection in early childhood (Chu & Gilligan, 2019; Gilligan, 2018). In short, patriarchy prescribes that boys separate from women in order to be part of the world of boys and men (Chu, 2014; Chu & Gilligan, 2019). Gilligan (1996; 2018) proposed that this same dissociation and crisis in connection seen in boys during early childhood is present in girls at the onset of adolescence. It is at this time that girls begin to express themselves in second person, as though their feelings are not their own. Gilligan (1996; Brown & Gilligan, 1992) proposed that the reason that girls do this is that by softening their feelings, they will avoid risking rejection by their friends.

Since the primary area of interest of this study is the young girls' reactions to a quilting project that we participated in, I also used a quilting metaphor for the qualitative approach to the study. The quilting metaphor was introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), proposed by Flannery (2001) as an approach to scientific investigation, and was

utilized by Saukko (2000) and Koelsch (2012) in their qualitative research. Ray and McFadden (2001) also used the metaphor of the quilt as a way to explain women's spirituality. By using a feminist paradigm that draws from the quilting metaphor, I recognized the diverse perspectives and voices of the participants and the contexts in which each participant spoke and I attempted to fit these pieces together to create a unified whole (Flannery, 2001). This approach seemed fitting because we were teaching the girls to sew quilt blocks and to piece together their uniquely created blocks. Flannery (2001) noted the quiet, meditative aspects of both quilting and scientific work. The bulk of both types of work is menial, routine, and is best performed by an interested, vested practitioner (Flannery, 2001). Likewise, as one who both taught the girls to sew and observed them throughout the process, I am also uniquely committed to learning from what they had to say about the project.

Saukko (2000) employed a patchwork quilting metaphor to analyze interviews that she conducted with anorexic women. She was interested in unifying the disparate voices of the women in the context of academic and societal discourses about anorexic women. By using the quilting paradigm, she was able to create a cohesive picture of five women who were themselves attempting to make sense of their disordered eating. As with a quilted piece, the perspectives of each woman were both apparent and integrated. According to Saukko, approaching the work in this way also permitted her to reflect on her feelings and perspective as they related to her personal experience as an anorexic and researcher on the topic.

Koelsch (2012) constructed a prototype of a virtual quilt that was composed of web pages that were representative of quilt blocks or patches. Each web page was a compilation of the interviews of the participants in her study, five women who had experienced rape or sexual assault but who had not internalized the experience as such. The virtual quilt blocks reflected the viewpoint of each woman, the social discourse surrounding her experience, themes found in her interview, and lists of legal resources for women experiencing or who had experienced sexual assault (Koelsch, 2012). While the virtual quilt was not accessible on the internet for confidentiality reasons, the construction of the prototype was guided very closely by the construction of physical quilts: The top layer, which was visible to the viewer, was the aesthetic aspect of the website that told the participants' story. Each quilt block was accessible and interactive and joined together by hyperlinks, analogous to fabric and batting in a physical quilt. HTML was the language that held the virtual quilt together, much like threads that hold the physical quilt in place (Koelsch, 2012).

In another sense, the metaphor of the quilt is extended further, as the stories told by the participants represent the patches or blocks in the quilt (Koelsch, 2012). Each narrative is joined by the social discourse and themes surrounding the content. While each participant's experience was unique, the research and theory that frame the sexual experiences of young women provided connections between them; for the researcher, these were the threads that bound the quilt (Koelsch, 2012). Going further still, Koelsch viewed the research questions as the backing or the stability to the research quilt that she was working on. In a physical quilt, the viewer does not see the backing, but the quilter

knows that it is there. Likewise, the researcher was constantly aware of the questions she was trying to answer (Koelsch, 2012).

Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) psychosocial theory posits that human development proceeds through eight stages, each characterized by a unique psychosocial crisis that must be resolved in order to proceed to the next stage of development. While these stages build upon one another, Erikson also theorized that people may return to previous stages and may work through crises differently throughout their lifespan. Each crisis represents a kind of tension within the person as they reconcile their abilities at the beginning of the stage with society's expectations at the conclusion of the stage (Newman & Newman, 2016). The positive resolution of each crisis leads to an ego strength; failure to resolve the crisis in a satisfactory way results in a core pathology (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997; Newman & Newman, 2016). For example, the first stage of human development and the crisis represented at this stage is referred to as "Basic Trust versus Basic Mistrust" (Erikson & Erikson, 1997, p. 32). The positive resolution of this stage leads to the ego strength of hope, defined by Erikson as "expectant desire" (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997, p. 59) or a sense of positive anticipation about the near future that comes as a result of the infant's having consistently been heard, attended to, comforted, nourished, and soothed. A failure of resolution at this stage would result in the core pathology of withdrawal, in which the infant sees the world around her as fearful and dangerous; thus, she withdraws.

The developmental stage and psychosocial crisis of school-age children is referred to by Erikson (1963) as industry versus inferiority. It is at this stage that children learn to



make or produce things in order to gain acceptance. Children at this stage receive some type of standardized education in their culture and become immersed in the use of gadgets and tools (Erikson, 1963). They are learning the basics of the use of technology and how to complete a project (Erikson, 1963). They are also learning to cooperate with others in order to complete projects (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). It is at this stage that children are developing a love of learning and now view adults in their lives as instructors and mentors within the context of a society of production and skill development (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997).

While children are gaining knowledge, skills, and talents and are learning how to get along with others at this remarkable stage, they are also challenged by the fear that they might not measure up somehow. It is this concern about their ability to gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and talents that Erikson (1963) referred to as inferiority, the opposing drive to the child's desire to be industrious. The strength that develops as a result of the resolution of the psychosocial crisis at this stage is competence, defined by Erikson and Erikson (1982/1997) as "...a sense that in the growing human being must gradually integrate all the maturing methods of verifying and mastering *factuality* and of sharing the *actuality* of those who cooperate in the same productive situation" (pp. 75-76).

Erikson and Erikson (1982/1997) wrote that within all of the ego strengths there is an element of the future—a sense that the individual is looking expectantly at the challenges ahead. In addition, the ego strengths of hope, will, and purpose are necessary in order to develop competence (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). These two claims help

to further explain the meaning of competence. The child who has developed a sense of competence will recognize his ability to learn and to work alongside others who are also learning and working.

The failure to resolve this psychosocial crisis results in the core pathology of inertia, a feeling of powerlessness to act or think that prevents the child from producing or working (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997; Newman & Newman, 2016). Lack of positive resolution at this stage can also lead to regression to the earlier infantile stage (Erikson, 1963). Even more concerning, inertia can lead to the inhibition of play, according to Erikson (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997).

Batra (2013) posited that Erikson's psychosocial framework has useful implications for education and society as a whole. In Erikson's paradigm, there is hope for the successful development of the individual when society affords its members opportunities to resolve the crises that are common to all people at each stage (Batra, 2013). According to Batra, schools could help resolve the crisis of middle childhood by allowing students to create and produce meaningful work that would enable them to gain a sense of competence and purpose. With academic and governmental emphasis being placed on competitiveness and test scores, opportunities to gain ego strengths are missed (Batra, 2013). In addition, as our society has become more reliant on digital technology and online social networking, children at this stage are at risk of developing the core pathology of inertia (Batra, 2013). In contrast, agrarian and indigenous cultures give children the opportunity to participate in food gathering and production, as well as the affairs of the community (Batra, 2013). This would then give children in these

communities more opportunities for crisis resolution and the development of ego strengths, according to the framework (Batra, 2013).

Several studies have explored the topic of crisis resolution in midlife (Adams-Price et al., 2018; Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017). A database search revealed that there are lots of studies on generativity as it relates to creative arts and participation in creative activity in midlife. However, there is no research on the role of creative arts activities in resolving the industry crisis in school-age children, despite the obvious support for this in Erikson's theory (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997).

Bandura's (1977, 1997) concept of self-efficacy closely relates to Erikson's concept of competence (Kowaz and Marcia, 1991). Perceived self-efficacy is a person's belief in their ability to do what is necessary in order to act to achieve one's goals (Bandura, 1997). There are two types of self-efficacy: generalized self-efficacy, which pertains to an individual's belief in their ability to do many things; and specific self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform well in a particular domain (Bandura, 2006; Green, 2003). These beliefs are attained through performance on tasks, what is learned from the experiences of others, the encouragement that is received from others, and how a person feels (Bandura, 1977).

From a developmental perspective, being able to judge one's capabilities is useful, because this awareness keeps us safe (Bandura, 1997). Young children, unaware of their own abilities and the dangers inherent in the environment may put themselves in perilous situations without realizing it (Bandura, 1997). As cognitive self-awareness grows, the perception of one's self-efficacy takes the place of adult supervision and

guidance increasingly over time (Bandura, 1997). This perception also prevents the emotional discomfort that comes from acting without regard for social consequences.

The development of a sense of self-efficacy proceeds from the infant's recognition that actions have subsequent consequences and that her actions produce reactions and responses from others (Bandura, 1997). Her experiences begin within the context of the familial environment, branching out into the world of new relationships outside of the family. As the child grows, the relationships she develops with her peers become more important as she is developing a sense of who she is and what she is capable of (Bandura, 1997).

Schlegel et al. (2019) investigated the effect of participation in a maker program on the specific self-efficacy scores of a group of third through fifth-grade students. The researchers found that students who participated in the maker program during the school year saw increases in two of their specific self-efficacy scores: making self-efficacy and science self-efficacy. The making program that the children participated in was based in public schools and was aligned with the state-mandated science curriculum. In this particular making program, students were given the materials to create their own science tools and instruments as opposed to hands-on science activities in which students are given the materials and resources to perform an experiment (Schlegel et al., 2019). The researchers' findings support the position of self-efficacy theory, that as children engage in activities that allow them to be successful in science, their belief in their ability to be successful in science should also increase (Schlegel et al., 2019).

Personal self-efficacy beliefs affect how people function in various situations; it affects the choices they make to pursue a course of action or not, how much effort they will give to a task, and how long that they will persevere in achieving the task, among other things (Bandura, 1997). Bandura (2006) noted that when self-efficacy is expressed, it is concerned with what one can do, rather than what one will do. This important distinction signifies that the individual feels capable, or competent, to act. For this study, I examined the girls' discussions of the quilting project for expressions of capability and competence in their ability to sew, signifiers of their feelings of perceived self-efficacy in the task of sewing.

Despite the disparate elements of the three paradigms, I tried to quilt the three frameworks together using Flannery's (2001) metaphor. By doing this, I attempted to mitigate the shortcomings of Erikson's theory, which draws heavily from Freud's psychoanalytic theory and has a strong patriarchal emphasis (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997; Gilligan, 1993). Gilligan's (1993) feminist paradigm does not nullify Erikson's; however, it does provide an important extension that serves to repair—patches together—the pieces of his theory that exclude the feminine perspective. By stitching together the two perspectives, the desire of girls to be emotionally and socially connected with the desire of middle childhood to be engaged in a useful occupation, I constructed a perspective that includes both important needs of the girls in the club. Furthermore, because Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) construct of industry has not been well operationalized (Kowaz & Marcia, 1991), it was helpful to include Bandura's

(1997, 2006) construct of self-efficacy, as it has been well-elucidated and aligns very closely with Erikson's concept of industry (Kowaz & Marcia, 1991).

### **After-School Programs**

After-school programs (ASPs) began in the United States in the late 19th century as children were required to go to school and were no longer needed in the industrialized labor force (Durlak et al., 2010). These programs evolved and were viewed as beneficial for children and as a way to keep them engaged during their increased leisure time (Durlak et al., 2010). By the 20th century, however, ASPs rose in number to accommodate the many children of working mothers and fathers. Women's entrance into the labor force increased the need for these types of programs (Durlak et al., 2010). As research in child development grew, studies showed that children who were unsupervised during the after-school hours were at risk for poor developmental outcomes, which increased the urgency for safe ASPs (Durlak et al., 2010).

Presently, there are 10.2 million children enrolled in ASPs and 19.4 million more children on waiting lists to enroll. There is a demonstrated need for more ASPs (Afterschool Alliance, 2019). The vast majority of ASP enrollments are located in public school districts in the US (Afterschool Alliance, 2019). Research has demonstrated that ASPs facilitate student success by providing supervision and learning activities to children after school, while parents are still at work. (Afterschool Alliance, 2019; Durlak et al., 2010). These programs also enable parents to work without worry about their children's safety (Afterschool Alliance, 2019; Durlak et al., 2010).

Federal support for ASPs came in the form of the 1990 Child Care Development Fund (formerly the Child Care Development and Block Grant) and the 1994 21st Century Community Learning Centers fund (Durlak et al., 2010). Many ASPs in struggling schools across the United States continue to receive federal funding and guidance for their operations (Paluta et al., 2015; Texas Education Agency, 2021).

In a survey conducted by Afterschool Alliance, 89% of adults agree that ASPs are “important to their community” (Afterschool Alliance, 2020, p. 4). Program quality is important to community members, also. Eighty-eight percent of adults surveyed reported that they feel that students in ASPs should have opportunities to try new things and to learn about things that interest them (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). In addition, they also reported that students should have the opportunity to learn communication and teamwork skills (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). The majority of children enrolled in STEM after-school programs expressed increased interest in and awareness of careers in science (Afterschool Alliance, 2019).

Previous research studies found that pedagogical approaches in ASPs were driven by the characteristics of the participants. In programs with high school-aged participants, more active learning opportunities were given as opposed to programs for elementary school-aged children. In the younger group, children were given fewer opportunities for choice and fewer opportunities for planning and reflection (Durlak et al., 2010). Research studies have found that adolescents in voluntary ASPs report higher engagement because they are intrinsically motivated to participate in them. For younger children in elementary school, however, many are participating in ASPs on an involuntary basis. For these

children, their engagement level depends on the program itself (Mahoney et al., 2007). The SMART Girls Club, unlike many other ASPs for elementary school-aged children, is completely voluntary. The girls are offered the opportunity to participate and there is no cost for participation.

Organization, quality, and skill-building are features of high-quality ASPs. Programs that are engaging tend to be high quality, according to research (Mahoney et al., 2007). Studies show that ASPs may increase their effectiveness by offering different types of interactive activities which support students' learning, rather than extend the school day lessons (Mahoney et al., 2007). Students tend to benefit the most academically and socially from learning activities that encourage social interaction, build on students' interests, and that draw from a variety of learning sources. These types of activities also tend to be most engaging to children (Mahoney et al., 2007). In one study, time spent on homework in an ASP was negatively associated with program engagement (Mahoney et al., 2007).

### **Girls' Friendships**

The dynamics of girls' friendships in adolescence are typically pathologized in media coverage; however, boys' friendships are viewed quite differently (Gonick, 2004). Boys engage in many of the same exclusionary behaviors as girls, but these behaviors are viewed differently in the context of athletic sports. Within this context, athletics are framed as giving boys an outlet to express negative behaviors (Gonick, 2004). Several books targeted to parents of adolescent girls characterize girls' friendships as being



problematic. Going further, various media sources use the idea of dysfunctional girls' friendships as a symbol of greater social problems (Gonick, 2004).

Valerie Hey (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of girls' friendships at two comprehensive schools in England in the mid to late 1980s. The girls she studied were between 11 and 18 years old and occupied different social classes. Hey's study utilized a feminist paradigm to analyze how girls' friendships used language, inclusivity, and exclusivity to promote pro-social behavior in a hegemonic masculine society. She found that the girls in her study sought connections between one another in a variety of ways. For most of the girls, they sought a best friend who mirrored the ideals and values that they held. Some girls sought to police the behavior of their friends by monitoring their behavior and their dress. She noted that girls' friendships were complicated and nuanced and that a great deal of their behavior was also subversive to the patriarchal system of the school.

While Hey's (1997) study is fascinating to read, it also captures the challenges of learning about how girls relate to one another. Adolescent girls are often contradictory and elusive. In Hey's (1997) study, the girls often expressed values that contradicted their actions. For example, Jude and Gina discussed their affiliation with a local gang, made up mostly of boys (Hey, 1997). In their discussion, they note that they are the favorites in a gang made up of all boys, with only four girls. Upon further questioning, Hey discerns from the girls that there are, in fact, quite a few girls in the gang, which calls into question the narrative.

Throughout her research, Hey (1997) found that girls used relationships as a way to control and manipulate. The girls often subtly warned their friends of the expectations of affiliation in their group; failure to adhere to the expectations could result in expulsion from the group (Hey, 1997). More recent research supports Hey's (1997) findings. In one study, adolescent girls who conformed more strongly to highly feminine gender identities regarded themselves as more likely to engage in relational aggression as compared to girls who conformed to more masculine or non-traditional identities (Crothers et al., 2005). The girls who conformed to non-traditional gender identities perceived themselves as being more likely to use direct, assertive conflict resolution, which would put them at risk of exclusion by their female peers (Crothers et al., 2005). Both of these studies affirm that girls seem to receive benefits and disadvantages from their friendships with girls, at least in White adolescent girls.

Apter and Josselson (1998) explored the intricacies of adolescent girls' friendships and how female friendships enable girls and women to explore identity, relationships, and love. The authors make a compelling argument for the primacy of female friendships and how these particular friendships foster social and emotional development and protect girls and women from feeling isolated. They posited that adolescent girls try out new persona with their friends, as though they are looking in a mirror. If her peers accept her in her new identities, she feels comfortable. If she feels criticism, then she will feel anxiety about the new self she is exploring. As women age and experience changes, female friendships still provide this same feedback. Faced with a threat to the stability of the relationship due to rejection, the authors found that girls

would deny aspects of themselves or their desires in order to remain in relationship with their friends. This concurs with Brown and Gilligan's (1992) observations that girls begin to dissociate from their true feelings to remain in connection with their friends.

With so much being written about adolescent girls' friendships, it is disappointing to find so little in the literature about girls' friendships in elementary school. Pratt and George (2005) examined the concerns that a group of boys and girls had about friendships as they transferred from primary to secondary schools in England. The focus of this qualitative study was on the themes of friendship within the context of transition to upper school. Both the boys and girls in the study seemed preoccupied with their fears of the transition and with the hope that they would be able to make friends in the new setting. While this study does not focus on young girls' friendships exclusively, it does point out the centrality of friendship for children as they face a difficult and fearful transition.

### **Media Program for Girls**

Conway and Viger (2014) investigated a photovoice project presented by a girls' club in Canada. The Girls Action Foundation of Canada presented the Girls' Multimedia Club, which met each week after school on Thursdays and offered multimedia learning for fifth and sixth-grade girls as a strategy for "personal growth and social change" (p. 138). The girls participated in a photovoice project that explored the theme of safety. The girls took pictures of various things around their school and outside on the school grounds that represented safety to them (Conway & Viger, 2014). The girls were given instructions on how to use the cameras and how to take pictures. They were also taught to

protect the identity of the people in their photos by obscuring or not including faces in the pictures that they were composing.

The paradigm for the project was centered on the idea of work with girls, as opposed to work that is about or for girls (Conway & Viger, 2014). In the photovoice project, the girls took pictures of places where they could spend time with their friends who are not in class with them as well as symbols that had meaning for them at home. This project was a way for the girls to give voice to their feelings about the world around them. For example, several girls took pictures of a commemorative bench on the school grounds that was dedicated to a former student who had died in a house fire. The girls were able to process their feelings about this traumatic event through discussion of the pictures they had taken (Conway & Viger, 2014).

The girls were able to attend a women's symposium at a local university where they presented their photographs and talked about them with members of the audience (Conway & Viger, 2014). The club sponsors and project facilitators learned a great deal about the girls and about what mattered to them. They learned about their hopes, fears, and the things that they loved. Through the project, they also learned about things that happened in school that minimized their feelings and perspective (Conway & Viger, 2014).

This media-focused ASP for girls seems similar in function to the SMART Girls Club. Just like the girls in Conway and Viger's (2014) study, the SMART Girls' members have done photography and multimedia projects in the past. The biggest difference between the clubs is the SMART Girls Club's recent focus on a quilting

project, as opposed to a digital media project. Unfortunately, there were no other research studies focused on girls' media club projects that I could find at this time.

### **Quilting**

The versatile nature of quilting has meant that quilting occupies a dynamic place in culture. Quilting has been handed down through generations as an occupation (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Howell & Pierce, 2000; Stalp & Conti, 2011); as cultural expression (Sohan, 2015); as a means of discourse (Sohan, 2015); as a hobby (The Quilting Company & Quilts, Inc., 2017; Stalp, 2006; Stalp, 2015); and as a way to socialize with others (Cheek & Piercy, 2004; Dickie, 2003; Howell & Pierce, 2000; Kiracofe, 1993). Quilting is recognized as an art form and celebrated for its unique place in material culture (Bavor, 2012; Kiracofe, 1993; Sohan, 2015; Trifonoff, 1999). Women have used quilting as a way to express their support for political causes and concerns, such as war and abolition (Amelon, 2009; Kiracofe, 1993). Quilting has even been used as a technique for teaching mathematics and social studies with children (Bennett, 2008; Kurz, 2013; Trifonoff, 1999; Wickstrom, 2014). According to the most recent Quilting in America Survey (The Quilting Company & Quilts, Inc., 2017), there are more than 7–10 million quilters in the United States. This engaging activity has certainly captured the imagination of millions of people, both amateur and professional quilters.

There are many reasons that adults participate in quilting on a regular basis. Some women engage in quilting for the joy of it and because it fulfills their personal needs (Stalp, 2006). According to Howell and Pierce (2000), quilting is restorative to those who participate in it; it is a pleasurable and meditative activity. The sensory aspects of both

the making of the quilt and the materials of the quilt contribute to the restful and satisfying nature of quilt-making (Howell & Pierce, 2000). In light of this, it is not surprising to find that quilting has been used as a means of therapeutic intervention and occupation (Howell & Pierce, 2000; Washington et al., 2009). Furthermore, people with chronic illnesses who have engaged in quilting reported that they felt relaxed while engaging in needlework (Howell & Pierce, 2000). While there is good evidence for the restful and restorative benefits of quilting to adults, there appears to be no research on these same beneficial aspects of quilting with children.

Research studies have shown that activities that women participate in for leisure can also help them to foster identity development at different ages (Stalp, 2006). Additionally, participation in creative activities for long periods has been shown to benefit older adults by contributing to generativity and life satisfaction (Adams-Price et al., 2018). Cheek and Piercy (2004) found that three groups of traditional women expressed age identity through their engagement in quilt making. Their roles in quilting circles in their community reflected their influence and purpose and gave them opportunities for connection (Cheek & Piercy, 2004). Research has shown that quilting may be used to resolve the generative crisis of middle adulthood (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017). In their qualitative study, Cheek and Piercy (2008) used an expanded psychosocial framework to examine how women in traditional cultures used quilt making as a tool to resolve the questions that arise during the generativity versus stagnation crisis. According to the authors, they felt that they were given “the opportunity to watch generativity in action” (Cheek & Piercy, 2008, p. 23).

Creating quilts as gifts or mementos can be a powerful tool in resolving the generativity crisis (Cheek & Yaure, 2017). In one study, researchers interviewed participants who created quilts for wounded service members (Cheek & Yaure, 2017). Throughout the interviews, the participants mentioned wanting to help those who were younger, a key expression of generativity in Erikson & Erikson's (1982/1997) psychosocial theory (Cheek & Yaure, 2017). One fascinating finding of this study was that some of the participants felt that making quilts for wounded service members and their families provided a sense of healing for them personally and that making the quilts enabled them to heal from their own traumas (Cheek & Yaure, 2017). Unfortunately, the use of quilts in resolving the industry crisis of middle childhood has not been examined, even though children participate in quilting in clubs, camps, and schools all across the country.

Quilting was used as an intervention strategy in two groups of older African American women who were transitioning out of homelessness, as part of the larger Leaving Homelessness Intervention Research Project (Moxley et al., 2011). The researchers found that the quilting workshops were meaningful to the participants in many ways. Constructing the quilts together, the women in the workshops were able to talk with one another and make sense of their shared experiences.

In the first quilting workshop, each woman constructed a patch that represented her journey into and out of homelessness and her feelings about that experience (Moxley et al., 2011). When the patches were sewn together, the quilt that resulted represented the women's collective journeys out of homelessness (Moxley et al., 2011). In the second

workshop, each woman made a quilt for herself. Embedded within her quilt was a quilt block created by one of the other members as a symbol of her support (Moxley et al., 2011). Quilting, like other types of group work, helped heal the trauma endured by the women during their homelessness experiences because it provided a means for sharing information and making connections (Moxley et al., 2011). The researchers found that both of the quilting projects facilitated the development and recovery of self-efficacy in the participants and determined to continue to host quilting workshops as interventions for future participants in their program (Moxley et al., 2011). This study is evidence of the important role that connection to others plays in the development of self-efficacy in individuals. However, there is no research examining the role of quiltmaking in facilitating self-efficacy in children.

According to Dickie (2003), learning is a primary activity and way of making meaning in contemporary quilting. For adult quilters, quilting guilds provide not only social interaction around quilting but explicit instruction in quilting topics (Dickie, 2003). One frequent feature of adult quilt guild meetings is “Show and Tell” (Dickie, 2003), which is also something that the SMART Girls Club members were encouraged to do with their quilt blocks during club meetings. According to Dickie (2003), show and tell is also an instruction and learning experience for adult quilters. Moxley et al. (2011) noted that talking with others, modeling skills, informal learning, and cultural learning were all essential sources of self-efficacy for the participants in their quilting study.

Home-based crafts, which encompass many activities, including quilting, have been shown to be a source of personal pleasure that increases the self-esteem and sense of



accomplishment of the crafter (Mason, 2005). Studies conducted all over the world reflect the value, both personally and professionally, that craft-making and leisure arts give to the craft artist (Mason, 2005). According to Mason (2005), these artists resolutely declared that skills like needlework and sewing should be taught in schools. There is another, very important reason for children to learn home-based crafts: It is a non-competitive activity (Mason, 2005) that is very different from the academic world with its pressure and focus on individual achievement (Batra, 2013). Quilting, like so many other types of arts and crafts, is often done communally, which allows participants to work together in an activity that provides no fear of alienation or punishment for poor performance. It is an opportunity to complete a project that gives pleasure to the beholder and recipient of it. Since many of the girls worked on their projects with other girls and with their parents, it is interesting to examine the perspectives of the children regarding the quilt project.

### **Conclusion**

Research studies show good support for the beneficial aspects of engaging ASPs for children. There is also ample evidence in the literature for quilting as a means of psychosocial crisis resolution and as a facilitator of ego strengths in midlife and older adults (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017). In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the chosen theoretical frameworks and a quilting metaphor are appropriate for examining the experiences of the girls who participated in the quilting project of the SMART Girls Club.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This study attempted to fill the gap in research that currently exists concerning the experiences of young girls involved in a quilting project in an all-girls ASP. I sought to examine the construct of connection (Gilligan, 1993), competence/industry (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) in young girls from a qualitative approach. I analyzed the de-identified transcripts of interviews I conducted in the late spring of 2020 as part of a yearly program evaluation. The interviews were conducted on Zoom or by phone with members of the club, the parents of members of the club, the co-sponsors of the club, and with the principal of the school where the club was held. For this study, I analyzed the transcripts of interviews conducted with the members of the club and focused on what the girls expressed with regard to the quilting project that we undertook. I approached this study using a feminist, relational framework (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993; Osmond and Thorne, 1993), a psychosocial framework (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and a social cognitive theory framework (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The three frameworks were patched together, using a quilting metaphor (Flannery, 2001). Through the process, I developed a strategy for analysis using quilt blocks that I am calling Code Group Quilt Blocks.

## **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the ways that third through fifth-grade girls express connectedness (Gilligan, 1993), competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) when discussing their participation in a quilting project as part of an after-school club for girls. Because there is no research on how young girls resolve the psychosocial crisis (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) using quilting, this study attempts to fill the existing void that exists in education, child development, family studies, and quilting research currently. This study also aimed to fill the gap in feminist research by using a feminist quilting metaphor (Flannery, 2001) to stitch together three frameworks: feminist (Gilligan, 1993; Osmond and Thorne, 1993), psychosocial (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

## **Research Questions**

This research looked at how third through fifth-grade girls expressed their feelings about a quilting project conducted during an ASP. Specifically, the task of sewing/quilting was examined as a means for facilitating relationships (Gilligan, 1993), developing competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and developing specific self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997). The three research questions were:

1. How did the SMART Girls Club members express connectedness when describing the quilting experience?
2. How did the girls express competence when discussing the quilting experience?
3. How did the girls express self-efficacy when discussing the quilting experience?

## **Research Design**

Because my goal was to explore the experience of the girls in the context of the quilting project using their own words, I used a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2014, 2016). For this study, I analyzed the interview transcripts for expressions of the phenomena of connection (Gilligan, 1993), industry and competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

Phenomenology considers the context within which the phenomena occurred (Creswell, 2016). In this case, the experience of interest took place within the context of an ASP for girls. I examined the transcripts, looking at how the girls expressed the development of friendship and connection (Gilligan, 1993) between them as well as their feelings of competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

A phenomenological design also permitted me to bracket out my own experiences (Creswell, 2016; Tufford & Newman, 2010) to permit the voices of the girls and their parents to speak for themselves. This approach enabled me to reflect on my feelings, biases, and ideas, as well (Tufford & Newman, 2010). Throughout the coding process and analyses, I submitted to weekly supervision with my advisor and a group of researchers from my department. This allowed me to discuss difficult emotions and the challenges of the project, a strategy discussed by Tufford and Newman (2010). I also kept a reflective journal during data analysis where I recorded my thoughts and shared them with my advisor.

## **Program Evaluation Participants**

Because the interview data that was collected was originally used for the purpose of program evaluation, I collected a very limited amount of demographic information. Under normal circumstances, I would debrief with club members, parents, and co-sponsors in person at the conclusion of the school year. Unfortunately, this was not possible because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For this reason, most of the interviews were conducted on Zoom or by phone. The only face-to-face interview was conducted with the principal, prior to the campus closing due to the COVID-19 shutdown ordered by the governor of Texas. I had been conducting club meetings after the shutdown through the Zoom online platform, so students and parents were comfortable with meeting with me in this way. The audio of all of the interviews was recorded in Otter.ai for transcription and editing.

When we were meeting in person and on campus, we had 16 girls in attendance regularly. We began the year with 22 girls, but six of the girls dropped out of the club over the first few months due to conflicting schedules with dance classes, tutoring, and other club meetings. When we moved to the online format, 13 girls attended regularly. I contacted the parents of the girls who were not attending online meetings and the mother of two of the girls said that they did not want to attend the online meetings and the other mother never responded. For the evaluation, I was only able to interview nine of the girls. I tried several times to schedule interviews with the other seven girls, but I was unable to do so.

## **Procedures**

In this section, I describe the process of data collection, ethical considerations, protections, and how I approached data analysis. I also discuss how I approached the use of the existing data and how my unique role in collecting the data required careful consideration as I analyzed the interview transcripts. I explain the data analysis strategy that I developed through this process, a strategy that I refer to as Code Group Quilt Blocks.

### **Program Evaluation Process**

Participants were interviewed for the program evaluation using semi-structured focus group interviews and semi-structured one-on-one interviews. The principal was interviewed in person in her office on campus. One parent was interviewed by phone and the rest of the participants were interviewed using the Zoom online platform. I created a set of questions for each group of attendees having to do with the quality of the SMART Girls program and ways that we could improve and possibly expand the program (see Appendices A-D). I was also looking for ideas and feedback from the members on things that we could try in the fall. At the end of every school year, I would debrief with club members, parents, and my co-sponsors about whatever media project that we had completed the year before. Because we had never done a quilting project before, I asked students and parents a few questions about the project specifically. One concern that I had was that the project may have been too time-consuming or that it may have caused stress to the families in trying to complete each student's quilt block. It is the responses of the girls to the questions on the quilting project that I examined for expressions of

connection (Gilligan, 1993), industry and competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997).

While conducting the interviews with attendees, I recorded them using Otter.ai, a transcription software that permitted me to ask questions without needing to write down participants' responses. All of the attendees understood that the purpose of the interviews was to help with improving the program and all of those involved agreed to record.

Another reason I used Otter.ai, was that it provided me with keywords from the interviews right away. I still needed to edit the interviews for clarity, but the keywords helped me to better understand what the students had enjoyed about the program and what the parents had found most beneficial about it. Throughout the program evaluation, I was able to give parents updates about what I was learning from the girls about the program and about what they were hoping to learn in the upcoming year. After I had interviewed the girls and their parents, I met with my co-sponsors to share what I had learned and to get their perspectives on what had worked in the past year and how to tackle the challenges ahead.

### **Access**

As the founder and club co-sponsor, I have been working with girls in the SMART Girls Club for 5 years. As a former Kindergarten teacher at the school, I also taught many of the club members in their Kindergarten year. Because of this, I was able to develop a good rapport with club members and parents. The program evaluation participants, both adults and children, had worked with me for quite some time, so I had also developed a trusting relationship with them. During the evaluation, parents

frequently expressed their gratitude for the program and my efforts. The principal acknowledged that the SMART Girls program had helped to reduce disciplinary issues with girls over the last few years, one of the program goals when we initially started the club in 2015. The club has had widespread campus and community support throughout its history and was featured prominently by the publicity department on the district website in 2016. We have worked hard over time to develop trust with our campus staff and faculty as well as with the parents involved in the program. For all of these reasons, the club members and their parents were willing to participate in the club evaluation. There was no remuneration for their participation; they were simply asked for their opinions and suggestions in order to make the club more successful.

One major reason that club members and their parents were willing to participate in the evaluation was that they hoped to see improvements in the quality of the club experience. The girls were happy to give me activities and ideas that they would like to try. Many of the girls did not want the club to stop meeting for the summer and were happy to meet with me so that they could visit with me and their friends. Young girls are not often given the opportunity to share their ideas and give suggestions on the things that they would like to do, and I sensed that by giving them a voice in the program, they were pleased.

I asked the principal if I could interview her about the club in February 2020. She asked me to email her to set up a time as her schedule was busy due to the impending state testing schedule. We arranged to meet on a weekday in her office in early March. About a month before the end of the school year, I emailed all of the club members'



parents to let them know that I would be conducting my yearly program evaluation during the month of May after our last scheduled meeting and end-of-year party. I informed them that I would be interviewing the girls about how they felt that the club meetings had gone and to ask them for ideas for the next club year. I let them know that I would be interviewing the girls through the videoconference platform in groups according to grade level. I anticipated that the interviews would take 20 to 30 minutes or less in the grade-level groups. I also invited the parents to meet with me to ask their opinions about the club and our quilting project. I told them that I would also ask for ideas about how to improve the club and for ideas for the next club year. I coordinated interview times with parents for their feedback and set up the interviews with the girls at the same time as we would normally have club meetings. I had to coordinate separately with a few of the girls, as their schedules had changed. I was able to interview the parents and girls in May and June 2020. I met with my co-sponsors by videoconference in June, as well. That interview took much longer, approximately an hour and a half.

Throughout the interviews, I checked in with the participants to make sure that I understood what they were saying and asked for clarification when necessary. Another reason for recording the interviews was so that I could focus on what they were saying. I did not want to miss anything, and I wanted them to know that they had my full attention.

The program evaluation was conducted with sensitivity to the girls and their opinions. Because the girls' club was always intended for the benefit of the children and the school community, it was important that their opinions be solicited in order to improve the program and to make it more enjoyable for them. As the club sponsor and

their former teacher, I recognized that it could be intimidating to answer questions from me. For this reason, I took great care not to pressure the girls to participate or to answer questions if they did not want to. Likewise, I valued the opinions of the parents of the girls and solicited their input with great care and respect. Parent support has been invaluable to me throughout the tenure of the club, and I did not intend to undermine the trust and respect I received from them.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants of the club evaluation were under no obligation to participate. Even though the club evaluation was not a formal study, I made sure that all participants were aware that I was recording our interviews and I asked permission of both the parents and the girls before we talked. All of the questions asked pertained to participant opinions of the SMART Girls Club and were specifically asked so as not to elicit responses that would confront or embarrass them, so there was very little psychological risk to any of the participants in the club evaluation. For the girls, our interviews were very much like our online club meetings, so there was often laughter and fun. Because the evaluation was intended to improve the club and to make it more fun for the girls, I shared the results of our club evaluation with the girls, their parents, and my co-sponsors.

All of the transcribed interviews and photographs that accompany this study were de-identified and stored on a password-protected computer in my home, accessible only to me. I created pseudonyms that I used in the de-identified transcripts and kept the actual participants' names and identifying information separate from them. I was the only one who had access to the participants' names. Any paper data from this study will be

destroyed within 5 years after the conclusion of this study and the electronic data will be erased from the hard drive of my computer.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Because of the respect and value I place on the participants' opinions, I used de-identified transcripts of the interviews and treated them with the same dignity and respect. The de-identified transcripts were only shared with people who assisted me in triangulation, my advisor and two other trained researchers, all of whom were vetted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Texas Woman's University (TWU).

Part of my role has been as a learner alongside the girls, as well as their teacher. As the club sponsor and instructor, I have learned a lot from the girls. I am connected to the data uniquely, not just because I originally collected it: The girls were reflecting and responding to me as their mentor. Thus, I was an instrument in data collection during the program evaluation; I facilitated and engaged in the exchange of information with the participants involved. My role in the analysis of transcripts in this study is connected to my role as the teacher, club sponsor, and program evaluator.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

I used existing, de-identified data for this study. No identifiable data was disclosed to anyone else involved in this research study, and all of the participants' identifying information was kept separate from the de-identified transcripts. All transcripts and any identifiable data were kept confidential on a password-protected computer in my own home. Although the data was originally collected as part of a program evaluation, I obtained the approval of the IRB of TWU on November 11, 2020

to use the de-identified, interview transcript data for this research study. Furthermore, I assured the safety and confidentiality of the data by abiding by the IRB requirements to limit the access of the de-identified data to only those persons who were authorized to conduct data analysis.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

All of the transcriptions and notes collected regarding the quilting project were entered into Atlas.TI Cloud for coding purposes. I began the process by reading through the interview transcripts in their entirety. I determined which portions of the interviews pertained to research questions and coded only those portions. I performed coding for the purpose of content analysis and I also used analytic methods, such as frequency counting and graphic representations (Saldaña, 2016). I performed in vivo coding and process coding (Saldaña, 2016) in the initial and secondary analyses. I chose these methods after careful consideration of the phenomena of interest (the lived experiences of the girls during the quilting project) and because these methods are suitable for the types of research questions I used (Saldaña, 2016). Saldaña (2016) recommends using in vivo coding to capture the authentic voices of children and to center the analysis on their point of view. Process coding captures the action within the interviews (Saldaña, 2016), so using process coding enabled me to create brief narratives that expressed the essence of the girls' experience with the quilting project. In vivo coding uses the exact words of the participant to code a portion of the narrative and process coding is an analytic coding method that pulls *-ing* forms of verbs, or gerunds from the transcripts as labels (Saldaña, 2016). In vivo coding enabled me to accomplish my goal of honoring the voices of the

girls and is well suited to capturing the emotions and dynamics of the narratives (Saldaña, 2016). In addition, process coding retained the action of the narrative that a more reductive method might miss (Saldaña, 2016). After coding the transcripts and analyzing the data, I looked for patterns both within the girls' narratives and between them in order to find underlying themes within the narratives. I was attuned to the themes of connection (Gilligan, 1993), industry and competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) while conducting data analysis.

An additional analytic strategy that I used after the first and second cycles was developed by Brown and Gilligan (1992) called a "Listener's Guide". The Listener's Guide is a feminist, relational method that is used in qualitative research to center the analysis on the voice of the participant and is designed to recognize how women and girls speak in light of male power and influence (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). It is concerned with retaining the personal experience of the person speaking and preventing the researcher from objectifying the participants. This method uses the term "listening" when referring to both the act of listening to audio interviews and reading interview transcripts (Brown & Gilligan, 1992).

According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), the process of the Listening Guide involves four questions that the researcher asks: "(1) Who is speaking? (2) In what body? (3) Telling what story about relationship—from whose perspective or from what vantage point? (4) In what societal and cultural frameworks?" (p. 21). These questions attune the listener to the distinct voice of the speaker and to the story that she is telling. This method requires four listenings, or readings, as the case may be. In the first listening, the

researcher is trying to get a sense of the story that the participant is telling and is answering the questions of who, what, where, when, and why. The researcher is looking for the person at the center of the story in this initial listening/reading. The second listening/reading is when the researcher is looking for the voice of the person through the tracking of “I” statements. The researcher is attuned to the ways that the participant speaks of herself at this point and to the places in the narrative in which the speaker dissociates, or uses second-person statements. During the third and fourth listenings, the researcher gives attention to the ways that the participants talk about relationships. The researcher is also listening for ways that society (e.g., the school environment, the teachers, and the other students) and cultural values inhibit the ways that the participants express themselves. As Brown and Gilligan have explained it, the social and cultural norms and values that exist within patriarchal society inhibit honest expression because they may lead to exclusion from relationships and thus to isolation.

Following this method, I read the interview transcripts again, reacquainting myself with the narrative. In the next reading, I looked for the places in which the girls expressed themselves in the first- or second-person (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). These expressions were charted, along with the emotion conveyed by each one (see Tables 1 and 2). In the final readings, I looked at constraints placed upon their expression, such as when it seemed as though they were trying to please another person or when another family member might be present.

**Table 1***“I Statements” Table with Emotions/Feelings that Accompany the Expressions*

Girl	I Statements	Emotion/Feeling About the Project
1 (3rd grade)	I got it	Enjoyment
1 (3rd grade)	I liked it	Enjoyment
3 (4th grade)	I really like the sewing	Enjoyment
2 (4th grade)	I think it was pretty fun	Enjoyment
4 (5th grade)	I liked that	Enjoyment
4 (5th grade)	I wasn't very good at it	Disappointment
4 (5th grade)	I'm not good at sewing	Disappointment
4(5th grade)	I will get frustrated...when I tried to sew”	Frustration
4 (5th grade)	I'm not good at it	Disappointment
4 (5th grade)	I wish I was good at it	Longing
4 (5th grade)	I could sit there and ask if I needed help	Reassurance
4 (5th grade)	I could ask you what I needed help with	Reassurance
Girl	I Statements	Emotion/Feeling About the Project
4 (5th grade)	I didn't have to try to figure it out on my own	Reassurance
4 (5th grade)	When I try to do it at home	Frustration
4 (5th grade)	I want to wear it, but...	Frustration
4 (5th grade)	I have to try to figure it out on my own	Frustration
7 (4th grade)	I really did like learning how to do that	Enjoyment

8 (4th grade)	I did enjoy it	Enjoyment
8 (4th grade)	I forgot what I was going to say	Uncertainty
8 (4th grade)	I enjoyed it	Enjoyment
9 (4th grade)	I hated when we had to thread the needle!	Hate, displeasure
7 (4th grade)	I kind of felt stressed	Stress
8 (4th grade)	I thought it was fun	Enjoyment
Girl	I Statements	Emotion/Feeling About the Project
9 (4th grade)	I feel like it was only fun near the beginning	Enjoyment, then displeasure
9 (4th grade)	I didn't have very much done	Stress
9 (4th grade)	I was so scared and stressed out that I didn't have it done	Scared, stressed
5 (5th grade)	I thought it was a good thing	Enjoyment
5 (5th grade)	I think it really needs to be	Disappointment with others
6 (5th grade)	I was trying to teach	Disappointment with others
6 (5th grade)	I could do it on my own	Confident
5 (5th grade)	I know a lot of the older girls	Certainty
5 (5th grade)	I thought it was just kind of nice to sit down and talk to people	Enjoyment
5 (5th grade)	I think it would've been better	Disappointment, displeasure
5 (5th grade)	I get helping the girls and stuff	Understanding
5 (5th grade)	I think it could've been better, I mean...	Disappointment, displeasure
Girl	I Statements	Emotion/Feeling About the Project
6 (5th grade)	I liked it	Enjoyment
6 (5th grade)	I could just, like, I went over to her house	Enjoyment



6 (5th grade)	I think you should do, like, more of those	Enjoyment
5 (5th grade)	I thought the stitching thing was really fun	Enjoyment
5 (5th grade)	I just thought we did so much of it	Boredom
5 (5th grade)	I thought maybe we made, maybe not make a quilt	Boredom, displeasure

**Table 2**

*“You Statements” Table*

Girl	“You” statement	What was she responding to?
2 (4th grade)	It wasn’t that thing, like you could only focus on one thing, but if you can like sew and talk, so...	The questions: How did you feel about it? How did it make you feel while you were sewing?
4 (5th grade)	...you could just sit down and talk to your friends while also doing it. I needed to have to be like, concentrated and whatever, and you could work on it at home.	The question: How did you feel about that, what you did get to participate in?
5 (5th grade)	...you need to learn how to do it by yourself.	She was talking about how the younger girls were not doing the work/putting in the effort themselves.
5 (5th grade)	You’re just coming every time sewing more, sewing more, and sewing more.	She was talking about how the sewing project went too long and was too time-consuming.

I examined the interviews, specifically the portion of them that pertained to the quilting project that we had conducted. During the semi-structured interviews, I asked several questions about the program to gauge what the girls had enjoyed the most and the least about their experience in the ASP. The specific questions that I asked about the

quilting project were “How did you feel about the quilting project?” and “How did you feel while you were sewing?” With some of the girls, I also asked how much help that they had had with sewing their quilt blocks. I was curious about whether the sewing project had been too taxing on the younger girls and whether they had needed very much help from their parents to complete their quilt blocks. For the purpose of this study, I only analyzed the girls’ expressions that pertained to sewing and how they felt about the project.

### **Trustworthiness**

The full context of the participants’ statements was considered, so as not to strip the narrative of the richness that comes from clarity and understanding. To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the four criteria outlined by Shenton (2004) for qualitative research were considered: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Further, data analysis included other analysts to ensure that I was not projecting my own ideas or viewpoints on the data. Saldaña (2016) suggests that qualitative researchers can appraise the trustworthiness of their analysis by keeping a reflective journal with extensive notes during the analysis phase, which I did.

### **Credibility**

Phenomenological inquiry has been used previously in qualitative research with quilters and quilting (Cheek & Piercy, 2004, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017; Langellier, 1994) and in feminist research with girls and women (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993, 1996). In all of these research studies, semi-structured one-on-one and focus group interviews were used to collect data. Using established methods of inquiry is one way

that Shenton (2004) recommends that qualitative researchers can ensure the credibility of their studies.

Because of my unique role as founder, facilitator, and former Kindergarten teacher, I was privileged to have experienced the type of “long engagement” that Shenton (2004, p. 65) recommends, as well. However, I was alert to biases that these roles may play as I analyzed the data collected. I have known many of the girls for several years, so I attempted to protect the analysis from the possibility of bias through personal reflection, debriefing with my advisor, and by engaging multiple reviewers (Shenton, 2004). For personal reflection, I kept a reflective journal and took extensive notes during my analysis of the data. I met with my advisor every week to discuss the content analysis/coding that took place. I also enlisted two other qualitative researchers to check my analysis.

### **Transferability**

I have provided a significant amount of information about the genesis of the club and the context in which the quilting project and program evaluation took place. Phenomenological inquiry considers the contextual background of the study (Creswell, 2014, 2016), and transferability—the possibility that the research findings may be transferable to another setting—is possible only to the extent that those who engage with the study may see the applicability of the circumstances of this study (Shenton, 2004). To that end, I have provided enough contextual information to permit future researchers to discern if the results from this study would be transferable to other situations.

## **Dependability**

According to Shenton (2004), the qualitative researcher assures the dependability of the research project by taking steps to establish the credibility of the research study, as these two concepts overlap. To that end, I have given a thorough account of the collection of the interview data, the steps taken to analyze the data, and my reflections on the process of analyzing the data (Shenton, 2004). Although the data I collected reflects a moment in time, anyone interested in conducting this type of research in the future should be able to follow my methods.

## **Confirmability**

I have outlined in previous sections my commitment to protecting the analysis of the interview data from bias through supervision, reflection, and the oversight of additional researchers. In addition, I have aligned my analysis with three theoretical frameworks, ensuring that anyone familiar with the aforementioned paradigms would be able to confirm my results (Shenton, 2004).

## **Summary**

In this section, I have addressed the methodology by which I collected data and how I conducted data analysis. I have listed the research questions and how my data was obtained. I have also discussed the ways that I strengthened the integrity of my analysis of the data. Through the safeguards outlined, I made every effort to conduct an ethical study that honors the unique voices of the participants and contributes to the body of research on child development, education, family studies, feminist research, and quilting.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

In this section, I discuss the findings of my analysis of the interview transcripts; specifically, the portion of the transcripts in which the girls and I discussed the quilting project. This section also contains a presentation of the data that was collected, a graphical presentation of the results of the data analysis in the form of Code Group Quilt Blocks and found poetry created from process coding, and the findings of the study.

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to convey and discuss the results of my analysis of the portion of the interview transcripts that pertained to the quilting project conducted with the SMART Girls Club. Here, I give a detailed description of the process that I undertook to analyze the data and how I developed a strategy for organizing the themes discovered within the analysis that I refer to as Code Group Quilt Blocks. Also contained within this section is a detailed explanation of my use of process coding in the second cycle of analysis as well as my use of the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) in the third and final cycle of coding analysis. Finally, I share the results of my analysis.

This chapter is meant to give the reader an overview of the methods of analysis and an introduction to a visual method that contributed to both the analysis and the process of triangulation. I hope that by explaining my strategies in-depth, my methodology will contribute to future feminist, qualitative research in a variety of

disciplines. It is also my desire to further strengthen the trustworthiness of my research by explaining the process of my analysis in-depth and how it relates to the results.

Because my strategy for analysis was innovative, my results section is also novel. I describe myself as an instrument in the research and give a brief description of the participants and their protections. From there, I have organized the results section chronologically, following the timeline of the analysis. This section is taken largely from the reflective journal that I kept during the analysis phase. The reader will note the recursive process that led me to the findings I relate here. I begin with the initial cycle of coding, which is also structured according to the three research questions that I was exploring. This process is made clearer with the inclusion of pictures of the process leading to the Code Group Quilt Blocks, the found poetry created by process coding, and the charts created using the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) as a coding strategy.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

I brought to this project the multilayered experience of being a teacher, an ASP leader, a mentor, and a researcher. This study represented a shift in roles: From being the ASP leader to the researcher interested in how the members of the SMART Girls Club had experienced the quilting project. I had to change lenses, so to speak, in order to evaluate what the girls had to say about this experience. At times, this was challenging because the purpose of the interviews was to evaluate the ASP. I had not conducted a more thorough investigation of the quilting experience because it was not the focus of my interviews. This meant that when reading the interview transcripts for the purpose of

analysis, I was frustrated on the occasion that I did not ask more questions of the girls about their experiences during the quilting project. While I made a sincere effort to maintain objectivity concerning the subject matter, I did find myself becoming emotional at times during the reading of the interviews. This was because I missed the girls; the COVID-19 pandemic prevented me from fulfilling the ideas and projects we had planned for the 2020–2021 school year. Not only that, the pandemic prevented any in-person contact with them at all. We went from meeting one another regularly each week to not seeing each other at all.

Despite this, my focus on the analysis depended on my objectivity and my commitment to a reliable outcome demanded it. I engaged in reflexive work with my advisor and in a reflective journal that I kept daily throughout the analysis. I engaged with the theoretical framework and the writings of the authors of those frameworks to provide myself with a type of navigation tool, a plumb-line by which I could gauge that my analysis was in line with the frameworks themselves. I also submitted to the scrutiny of outside researchers, to whom I made available the de-identified transcripts and my coding strategies and outcomes. Finally, as detailed in the latter part of this chapter, the process of creating graphical and visual representations of the code groups themselves provided a powerful tool for refining my results. It was through the process of creating the Code Block Quilt Groups and the Process Narratives that I found errors and corrected them, more than once.

## **Description of the Participants**

My analysis focused on portions of interviews done with nine girls involved in a yearly evaluation of the SMART Girls Club and the quilting project that we did during the 2019–2020 school year. The girls interviewed had just completed third, fourth, and fifth grades in a public elementary school in North Texas. There was 1 third grader, 5 fourth graders, and 3 fifth graders.

## **Protection of Participants**

All of the interview transcripts were de-identified prior to analysis and IRB approval was based on using pre-existing, de-identified transcripts.

## **Research Methodology**

In this section, I will describe the way that the data was analyzed and the results of the analyses. Results are organized by research question and are sequenced in chronological order. By organizing the analysis and results in this way, I have attempted to show the recursive process.

### **Research Question 1: How did the SMART Girls Club members express connectedness when describing the quilting experience?**

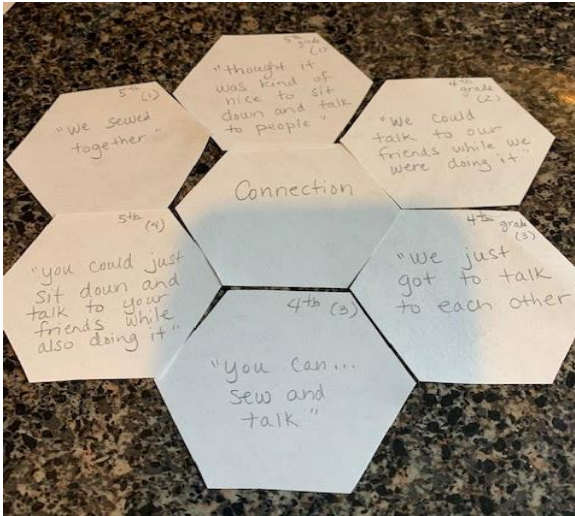
Consistent with Gilligan's (1993) theoretical framework, I found several instances in which the girls expressed how the quilting project facilitated their connection to the other girls in the club. I was looking specifically for ways that the girls expressed their desire to spend time together or expressions of relationship. After several cycles of in vivo coding and by using the quilting metaphor (which evolved into a coding strategy), I found several instances in which the girls expressed connection. I wrote these codes onto



paper hexagons that were the same patterns we had used in our quilting project to make the quilt blocks (see Figure 2).

## Figure 2

*The First Iteration of the In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for the Group “Connection”*



I initially coded this group “Together” from one of the fifth graders’ codes “we sewed together.” It seemed that sitting and talking together was a significant aspect of the project, as nearly all of the age groups mentioned this. The third-grade student did not mention this, but all of the fourth and fifth graders did. Another interesting aspect was how this project permitted what school work often does not: The opportunity to talk with one another freely. Classroom work typically involves staying on task/topic and limits the amount of talking between students. Within this group, there were six codes initially, which fit nicely into the hexagon block.

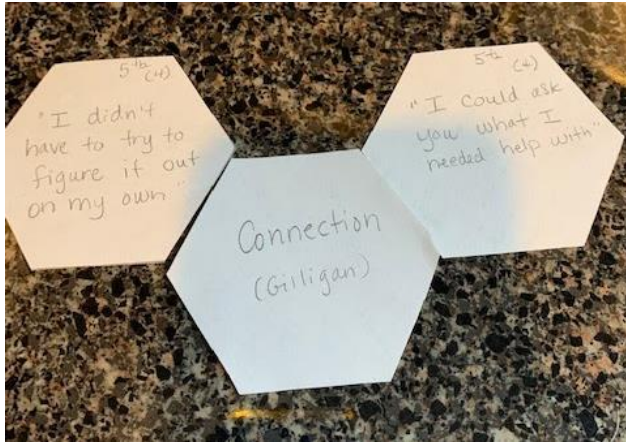
An intriguing aspect of the interviews was an exchange between one of the fifth graders, Girl 4. Following up on one of her comments about being frustrated when she tried to sew, she told me:

No, the way we did it, it didn't frustrate me because I, I could sit there and ask for help, I could ask you what I needed help with. I didn't have to try and figure it out on my own.

I coded this initially as "Availability of Teachers." Upon closer examination, what she shared fit well with Gilligan's (1993) feminist framework. Gilligan's paradigm reveals that girls do not need to separate from their mothers. Gilligan posited that Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) framework identifies separation as a key crisis in early childhood. As surrogate mothers, Girl 4 could feel confident that Mrs. George and I were readily available to help her with her quilt block. She shared this as it related to asking help from her mother, who was not always available to help with her sewing project (see Figure 3). Looking at this another way, Girl 4's statement about Mrs. George and I being available to help could also fit well with Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) paradigm in which influential adults are seen as mentors in the learning process. In this regard, there was a small amount of overlap between the frameworks and a place where the two could be stitched together, in much the same way that two different, but complementary, fabrics are stitched together in a quilt.

### Figure 3

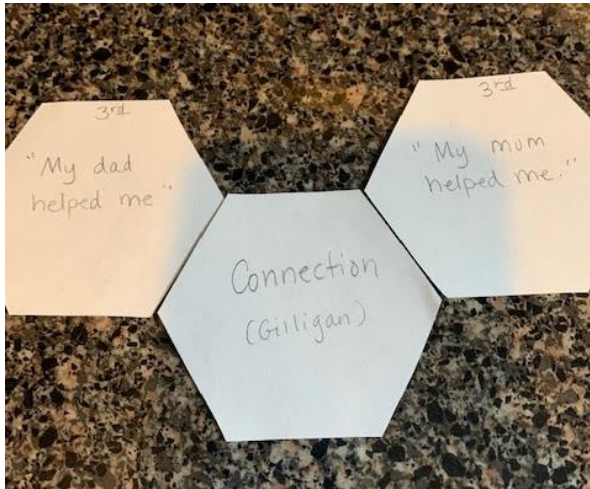
#### *Girl 4's Expressions of Connection Concerning the Availability of the Sponsors to Help Her*



Likewise, the third-grade student expressed having both her mother and father available to help her on her quilt block. Again, she did not have any concerns about completing the block, because she had the availability of her parents to help her. I coded these initially as “Availability of Parents,” and this fits well into the “Connection” code group. For this girl, autonomy (or doing the project by herself) was not a concern for her. As a matter of fact, I encouraged the girls to seek help if they needed it, from the teachers, the older girls, and from their parents (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Girl 1's Expressions of Connection Concerning Her Parents' Helping Her*



Altogether, there were 10 expressions of connection. Taking my inspiration from Flannery's (2001) feminist quilting metaphor and traditional quilt blocks, I created a Code Group Quilt Block to organize the themes, using the traditional "Evening Star" quilt block (Chany, 2021) for the design (see Figure 5). For the first Code Group Quilt Block, I organized the codes by individual voice. Each girl was given a unique color to represent her unique identity and voice:

- Girl 1—Bright Pink, Third Grade
- Girl 2—Red, Fourth Grade
- Girl 3—Brick Red, Fourth Grade
- Girl 4—Orange, Fifth Grade
- Girl 5—Goldenrod, Fifth Grade
- Girl 6—Yellow, Fifth Grade
- Girl 7—Green, Fourth Grade

- Girl 8—Blue, Fourth Grade
- Girl 9—Purple, Fourth Grade

I had a large stash of cardstock that I had used with the girls in the club, so the colors coordinated with the colors that I had on hand. I checked the in vivo codes with the documents to determine which girl had made each utterance.

**Figure 5**

*In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for “Connection,” Organized by Individual Identity and Voice*



Not only was the quilt block pleasing to look at, but it also enabled me to make additional observations by viewing the girls’ expressions in a visual way. Right away, I noticed that there were no expressions by Girls 7 and 9 that would fit within the theme of “Connection” with regard to the quilting project. Upon closer examination of the transcripts, I saw that both girls struggled with sewing. Girl 7 said that she had “fat fingers” and Girl 9 talked about being stressed out and scared about the quilt block. Both girls seemed to be daunted by the task of completing the quilt block in a limited amount of time. Girl 3 also did not express connection when speaking about the quilting project.

While Girl 3 expressed that she enjoyed the project, she had trouble elaborating upon how she felt about it. She told me that “it kept her entertained.” I might have been able to learn more if I had encouraged her to talk more about the quilting project. Looking at the transcript, it looks like I changed the subject too quickly. Girl 4 had the most to say on this topic. She was not normally the most talkative in the club or in her classes, which makes that interesting. She struggled with anxiety, something we have always known when working with her in the club. I conducted the interview with her one-on-one, which may have permitted her to speak more freely than she might have in a group setting.

I created the same Code Group Quilt Block for “Connection (Gilligan),” this time using a different strategy. I organized the code group according to grade level, assigning the color teal to third grade, the color forest green to fourth grade, and the color fuchsia to fifth grade (see Figure 6). This group has expressions by all three grade levels. It is easy to see that the fifth graders had the most to say, then the fourth graders, then the third grader.

**Figure 6**

*Code Group Quilt Block for “Connection (Gilligan),” Organized by Grade Level*



## **Research Question 2: How did the girls express competence when discussing the quilting experience?**

For this code group, I created another “Evening Star” quilt block with the inner decagon labeled according to the Code Group “Competence/Industry” and with the girls’ codes organized into a ROYGBIV (rainbow) pattern (see Figure 7). It is easy to see that Girl 4 and Girl 8 had the most expressions of competence/industry in the interviews, with two and three expressions, respectively. Though I did not intend to pair the colors with the girls in any particular way, simply in numerical order, I do think that it is nice that the two most exuberant girls, Girl 1 and Girl 7, have bright colors associated with their identities.

Despite not recording the in vivo codes on the outer triangles, it is easy to see that two girls are missing: Girl 5 and Girl 9. At first, it seemed as though neither of these girls expressed competence/industry in the interviews. Looking at Girl 9’s interview transcript, it was clear that she had not expressed competence/industry.

To investigate this further, I looked back at the transcript of the interview with Girl 5 and Girl 6. I noticed that I had missed an important aspect of Girl 5’s and Girl 6’s expressions. In their interview, Girl 6 mentioned that she “could do it on her own,” which is an expression of both autonomy and mastery (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Girl 5 mentioned that she and “a lot” of the older girls already knew how to sew. Looking at her block, this is true for her. While her stitches are not perfect, they show proficiency for her age. She agreed that she had been able to sew her block on her own, again, another expression or agreement with autonomy/mastery.

**Figure 7**

*The Initial “Competence/Industry” In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block, Organized by Individual Identity and Voice*



This revealed that I needed to add two more in vivo codes to the “Competence/Industry” code group. It also means that all of the girls except Girl 9 expressed competence/industry. While the decagon “Evening Star” is aesthetically pleasing, it does not adequately represent the expressions in this group.

While this might have seemed like a failure at this point, this demonstrates the value of the graphic, code block representation. This method of organization indicates that this way of grouping the codes is a useful tool for triangulation. When I initially coded the interview transcript for Girl 5 and Girl 6, I recorded some of the phrases that Girl 5 had used that fit in with both psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997). She was much more critical of the fourth grade girls’ lack of effort. Her appraisal of others and her judgment that their effort was lacking fits well with Bandura’s theory. While she did not

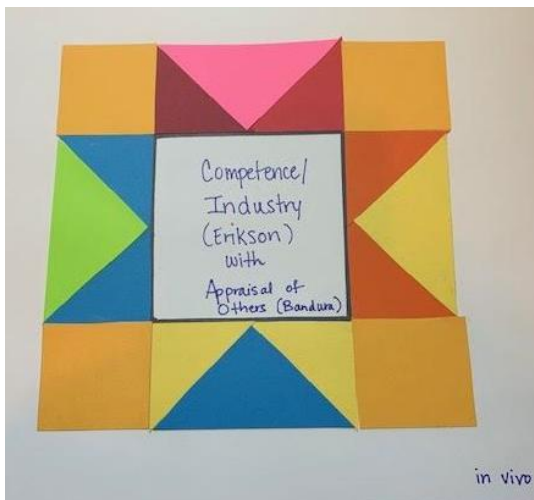


express that she felt she struggled with her abilities (something expressed by the other girls, mostly the fourth graders), she did very strongly condemn the younger girls for their lack of effort.

The block I created to encompass the expressions of competence/industry by the girls and the expressions of Girl 5 that fit with both psychosocial theory and social cognitive theory was modeled after the “Stargazer” traditional quilt block (Chany, 2021). For the first in vivo block, I began with a 3-inch square, using the Quilter’s Piece Preview I Marking and Viewing Template by Cottage Tools. From the inner square, which I labeled “Competence/Industry (Erikson) with Appraisal of Others (Bandura),” I created 2.5-inch and 3-inch triangles using cardstock paper coordinating with the identity/voice of each girl (see Figure 8).

### **Figure 8**

*In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for “Competence/Industry (Erikson) With Appraisal of Others (Bandura),” Organized by Identity/Voice*



The triangles represent the tails of the star in this block. The outer four corners were created using 1.5-inch squares in goldenrod-colored cardstock to represent the

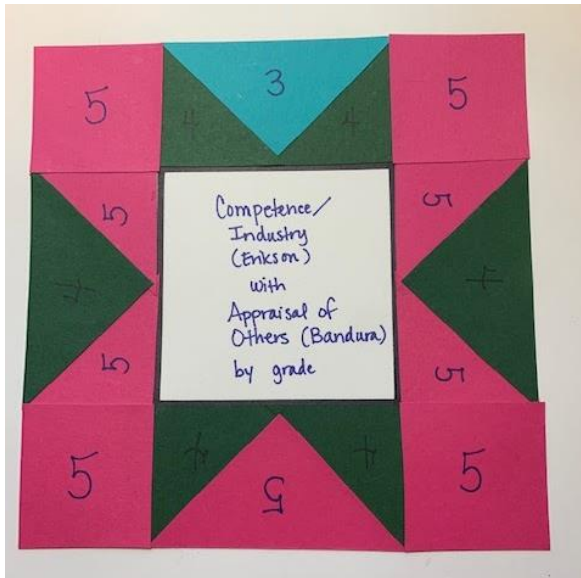
identity/voice of Girl 5. The outer corners represent that the expressions of Girl 5 fit within both social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1977, 1997) and psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) by using a different geometric shape (squares, as opposed to triangles). The result is a vibrant representation of the voices of the girls and the joining, or patching together, of the two theories. Again, it is possible to notice right away which of the girls were most expressive. Girl 9 did not express competence/industry, so she is not included in this quilt code block.

Just as I had done with the “Connection” Code Group Quilt Blocks, I did not write the in vivo codes on the pieces of the block, choosing to let the colors stand in for the girls’ voices. The in vivo codes were recorded both in Atlas.TI Cloud and in Google Docs. The Google Doc was created to share the de-identified transcripts and codes with my advisor and the other coders. With the commenting and highlighting features of Google Docs, I was able to submit comments and notes, receive suggestions, and respond to comments easily. This enabled me to have a dialogue with the other researchers during the final stages of analysis.

I created another “Stargazer” block, this time using grade level as the organizing factor (see Figure 9). It is harder to see the “Stargazer” pattern using this color scheme, but it is easy to see that the most expressions in this combined theoretical group are by fifth graders. Having both blocks is useful because it is easy to see who is speaking and which age group is speaking most often by looking at both of them.

**Figure 9**

*In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for “Competence/Industry (Erikson) With Appraisal of Others (Bandura),” Organized by Grade Level*

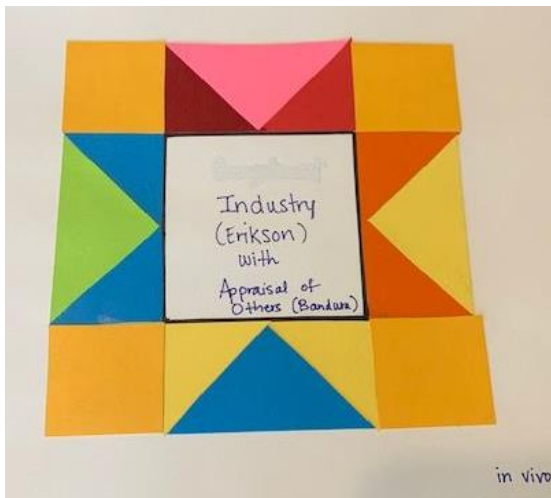


After I had created these blocks, I went back to Erikson’s (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) work to check to see if my analysis was aligned with the theoretical framework. Re-evaluating the expressions in this way revealed that the girls were not expressing competence; rather, they were expressing their love of learning to sew or their enjoyment of the activity of sewing. Instead of competence (the ego strength that is derived from the resolution of the industry versus inferiority crisis), the girls were expressing industry (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). In light of this, I changed the theme of this Code Group Quilt Block (see Figures 10 and 11) to “Industry (Erikson) with Appraisal of Others (Bandura).” One of the most exuberant girls in the fourth-grade group, Girl 7, declared “I really did like learning how to do that,” when she was asked how she felt about the quilting project. Girl 7 also acknowledged a fair amount

of stress when trying to complete her block, due to the amount of time it was taking to complete and her “fat fingers,” as she put it.

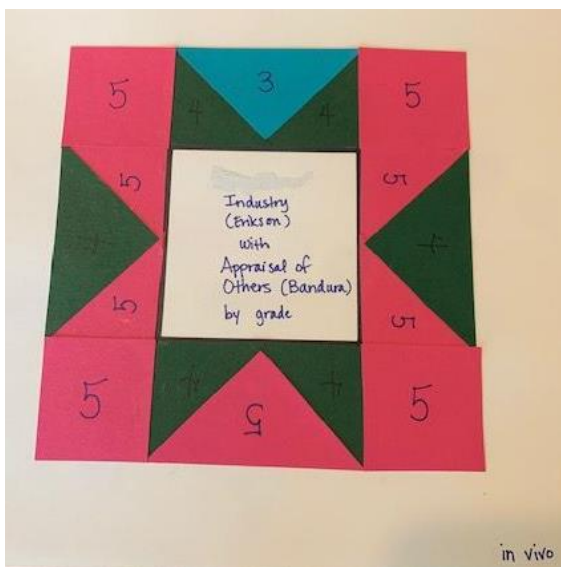
**Figure 10**

*In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for “Industry (Erikson) With Appraisal of Others (Bandura),” Organized by Identity/Voice*



**Figure 11**

*In Vivo Code Group Quilt Block for “Industry (Erikson) With Appraisal of Others (Bandura),” Organized by Grade Level*



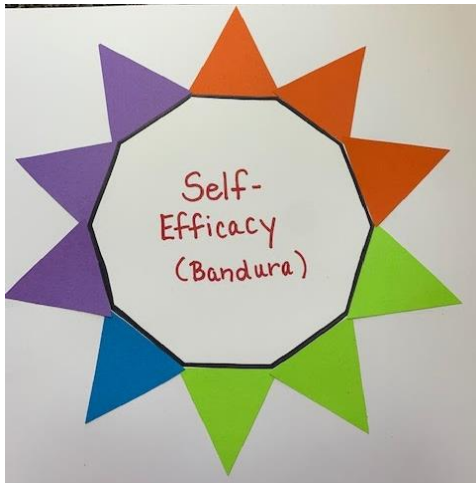
While this analysis revealed evidence of the girls' expressions of industry, it did not reveal that the quilting project had helped the girls to resolve the school-age crisis of industry versus inferiority or that it had given them a feeling of competence in their ability to sew or quilt. The fifth grade girls who expressed competence in their ability to sew, Girl 5 and Girl 6, both mentioned that they were able to sew before the project began.

**Research Question 3: How did the girls express self-efficacy when discussing the quilting experience?**

For this Code Group Quilt Block, I used the "Evening Star" pattern again, with the same decagon shape in the center (see Figure 12), which I labeled "Self-Efficacy (Bandura)." I saw right away that this group was different from the others. In her interview, Girl 4 had a lot to say about connection, and also a lot to say about self-efficacy. Interviewing her one-on-one, despite whatever distractions there were in the environment, allowed her to express herself without the other girls interrupting, which potentially could have been a problem since she is timid. Girl 4 expressed that she wanted very much to be better at sewing: "I wish I was good at it." She also said explicitly, "I'm not good at sewing."

**Figure 12**

*In Vivo Code Block Quilt Group for “Self-Efficacy (Bandura) Organized by Identity and Voice*



Girls 7, 8, and 9—all fourth graders—expressed that this project was very difficult. I expected to find expressions of specific self-efficacy in sewing by most of the girls—“I *can* sew” or “I *could* sew” (Bandura, 2006). This was the surprising part: They were very vocal in expressing that they *couldn't* sew. Girl 9 was very adamant that this project had caused her stress: “...it was very hard and time-consuming...,” “I was so scared and stressed out...,” and “I hated when we had to thread the needle...” This was also confirmed by Girl 5 very vocally in her interview. She was frustrated with the fourth graders. In her opinion, they were not trying very hard. The majority of the girls in the fourth grade group were saying, “This was hard!” and “This was stressful!”

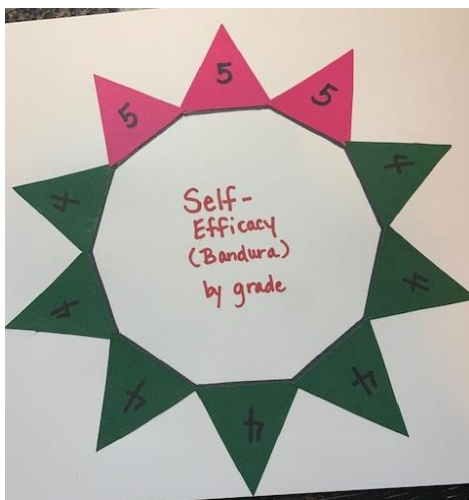
Girls 5 and 6 (fifth grade) felt confident in their abilities and did not feel stressed about sewing. In fact, Girl 6 was spending time with another girl from the club and they were sitting and sewing together at her house. The other fourth graders, Girls 2 and 3, seemed to find enjoyment in the task and did not express that it had been too difficult.

Girl 8 (blue, fourth grade) was the only girl in the fourth grade interview who said that the project was a “little difficult,” but that she mostly enjoyed it. That was because she expressed that she enjoyed sitting and talking with her friends while sewing. When looking at the Industry Code Group, Girl 8 expressed several times that she enjoyed learning the task. In this case, the joy of learning a new task overcame the challenge of the task itself.

I created another Self-Efficacy Code Group Quilt Block that I organized by grade level (see Figure 13). It is not nearly as colorful as the voice block, but it does reveal that the fourth graders had a lot to say on this subject.

### **Figure 13**

*In Vivo Code Block Quilt Group for “Self-Efficacy (Bandura)” Organized by Grade Level*



### **Project Took Too Long/Boredom**

The final in vivo code group that I created was concerned with a recurrent expression by the girls that the quilting project had taken too long to finish. Because of the pandemic, we were unable to complete the project. A few of the fourth graders were

still working on their quilt blocks when we were forced to stop. Some of the girls had been joining their quilt blocks together during club time, but the varying skill levels of the girls had contributed to the difficulty in completing the quilt promptly. In following my process with the quilt blocks, my advisor, Dr. Dutton had wondered what happened with Girl 9, as she did not show up very much in the previous codes. She does show up in the “Self-Efficacy” code group and again here in the “Project Took Too Long/Boredom” group (see Figure 14). Seeing the codes grouped like this is helpful, as I had formed the impression that Girl 9 had more expressions in this group than she did. She and Girl 5 had the most to say here. Almost half of the girls expressed that the project had taken too long, though most of them had also mentioned wanting to sew again in the future club year. Once again, creating a Code Block Quilt Group that was organized by grade level revealed that the expressions of frustration were limited to the fourth and fifth graders (see Figure 15).

**Figure 14**

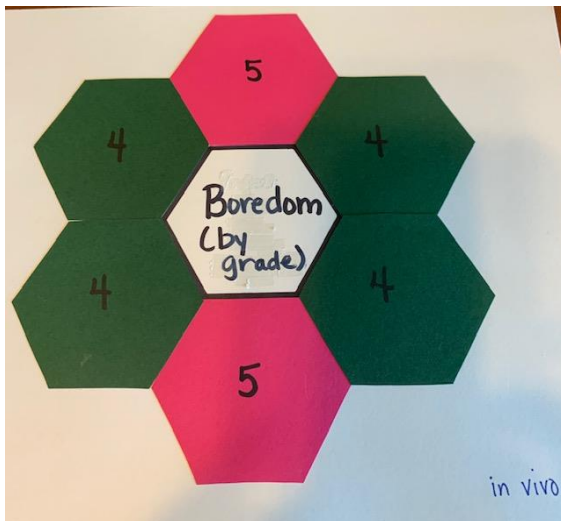
*In Vivo Code Block Quilt Group for “Boredom” Organized by Identity and Voice*





**Figure 15**

*In Vivo Code Block Quilt Group for “Boredom” Organized by Grade Level*



I renamed this Code Group “Boredom,” as I found a lovely and rather tongue-in-cheek literature article in the journal *Analysis* (O’Brien, 2014), which defined and described boredom in depth from a multidisciplinary perspective. The author defines boredom as “...a mental state...of weariness...restlessness, and...lack of interest in something to which one is subjected...” (O’Brien, 2014, p. 237).

I learned several things about the data through the first cycle of in vivo coding:

- Industry has the most expressions with 12. It is comprised of the voices of eight girls, in third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade.
- Connection has 10 expressions. It is comprised of the voices of six girls, in third grade, fourth grade, and fifth grade. Two of the expressions in this group could also fit with Erikson’s (1963, Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) psychosocial framework. These were expressions by Girl 4 about having teachers available to help her.

- Self-Efficacy has 10 expressions. It is comprised of the voices of four girls, in the fourth and fifth grades.
- Appraisal of Others (an aspect of social cognitive theory) has four expressions. It connects Industry and Self-Efficacy and is comprised of the voice of one fifth grade girl.
- Boredom has six expressions. It is comprised of the voices of four girls in the fourth and fifth grades.

Once I had completed the initial cycle of coding (which ended up being a recursive process, as the Code Group Quilt Blocks demonstrated), I turned to the second cycle. In this phase of analysis, I used process coding (Saldaña, 2016). I tried process coding in the Atlas.TI software but found that the program was wieldy and confusing. Saldaña (2016) suggests that novice researchers print out their data and code by hand; I decided to try this and found that it was much easier to code in this way. I went back through the interviews, pulling the verbs/gerunds from the narratives. With some of the girls' expressions, this was straightforward. For example, Girl 1 (third grade) said, "I liked sewing every day." The process code that I labeled this expression with was "liked sewing." For some of the expressions, I was looking at the expressions for the meaning and/or the depth of the expression. For example, I asked Girl 3 to clarify one of her statements about the quilting project. I asked her, "So we come in and do one thing, and then maybe do another thing at the same time, or do you mean like have more than just the quilting?" She responded with, "Have more than just the quilting." My process code

label for Girl 3's response was "wanting to do more," because what she expressed fit her desire to do more than just quilt in our ASP in the coming year.

From the codes, I created found poetry (Saldaña, 2016) that was representative of the essence of what each girl expressed about the quilting project:

Girl 1, Third Grade:

*I liked sewing.*

*My parents helped me.*

Girls 2 and 3, Fourth Grade:

*Sewing was entertaining*

*Because talking to each other*

*And sewing and talking*

*Was fun.*

*But we want to do more*

*We really want to do more than just sewing one thing.*

Girl 4, Fifth Grade:

*I liked sewing.*

*I like sitting and talking while sewing,*

*But sewing is difficult for me.*

*Still, I felt relaxed while I sewed.*

*Sometimes, I felt frustrated.*

*I wish I was good at sewing.*

*Sometimes I needed help*

*And you and Mrs. George were there to help me.*

Girls 7, 8, and 9, Fourth Grade:

*I liked learning how to quilt*

*And making a whole, big quilt.*

*Sewing was a little difficult*

*And it was also really fun*

*And I enjoyed it.*

*But sewing was difficult for me*

*And sewing was hard.*

*For me, it was very hard*

*And it took a long time.*

*I think we should choose goals before we do a project like this.*

*I don't want to sew like this next year—why do this again?*

*Threading the needle was hard and I didn't like it!*

*I felt stressed out while sewing.*

*I liked talking with my friends while sewing.*

*It was fun at first*

*But then I felt scared and stressed out at the end.*

Girls 5 and 6, Fifth Grade

*I thought that the quilting project was good*

*But the other girls were not focused*

*And didn't put in the effort.*

*I think you should learn how to do your own work on your own.*

*You should be able to do it by yourself.*

*I was trying to teach another girl*

*But she wanted me to do it for her.*

*The other girls were not willing to work hard,*

*But the third graders were trying hard.*

*The fourth graders were not working*

*And they didn't care.*

*I can sew by myself*

*My mom taught me how.*

*We older girls know what to do.*

*Sitting and talking was nice.*

*I understand helping the other girls*

*But they asked too much of us.*

*My friend and I sewed together at her house.*

*Next year, you should do more small sewing projects.*

*Stitching was fun*

*But then it became boring*

*We sewed way too much.*

*And then it was not fun*

*Because some girls had to work on their sewing at home.*

The themes of connection, industry, and self-efficacy are clear in the found poetry. Girl 1 expressed her enjoyment of the sewing/quilting project and that her parents had helped her to complete her block. Her expressions reveal her desire to learn (industry; Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) and her connection to her parents (connection; Gilligan, 1993). Though I did not find any expressions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997), this is consistent with the first cycle of coding.

The poetry of the interview with Girls 2 and 3 (fourth grade), revealed expressions of the enjoyment of sitting and talking and sewing (connection) and the longing to do more than just sew. Upon reading the found poetry, it was clear that these girls liked spending time together doing an activity but really wanted to do more. Again, Girl 4 (fifth grade) expressed the themes of connection (*I like sitting and talking while sewing..., you and Mrs. George were there to help me.*), industry (*I liked sewing.*), and self-efficacy (*But sewing is difficult for me and I wish I was good at sewing.*).

It is clear from the process codes of the interview with the remainder of the fourth graders that, while they enjoyed learning how to sew (industry; *I liked learning how to quilt and making a whole, big quilt.*), they were very anxious and stressed by the project as well. I had not anticipated how stressful this project could be for these young learners. The process codes retained the emotional resonance of their expressions, so it was clear from the resulting found poetry that the girls had experienced some distress during the project. They expressed that they did not feel that they had acquired the skill of sewing; therefore, they had not achieved the specific sewing self-efficacy that I had hoped. Still,

this was consistent with the “I can’t sew” theme that kept showing up in the first cycle with the fourth graders.

Girls 5 and 6 (fifth grade) had a lot to say about the project. They were confident in their ability to sew: *I can sew by myself, My mom taught me how. We older girls know what to do.* The theme of specific self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) is very apparent here. The process coding cycle confirmed the theme of connection (*Sitting and talking was nice and My friend and I sewed together at her house.*). The theme of autonomy/mastery was even clearer in this cycle (*I think you should learn how to do your own work on your own. You should be able to do it by yourself*). Again, just like in the first cycle, the fifth-grade girls were appraising the ability of the other girls, consistent with psychosocial theory and the concept of industry (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). I did not see evidence of expressions of competence, confirming what I had found in the first cycle.

The power in the found poetry seemed to be in the emotional resonance of the expressions. This type of analysis was not too reductive, and it gave me a strong sense of how the girls felt about the project. I did not do any further graphical analysis in this cycle, though I did try to create story quilt blocks (Hemmings, 2020) from the process codes. This was not effective and did not add anything further to the analysis, so I abandoned the effort.

For my final method of analysis, I used Brown and Gilligan’s (1992) Listener’s Guide. Though I was quite familiar with the interviews by this point, to maintain fidelity to the process, I re-read the portion of the narratives concerned with the quilting project

four more times (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). At each reading, I was asking the questions prescribed by the authors to get a sense of who was speaking, in what body, what she was saying about relationship, and what social and cultural frameworks were in place (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). I was concerned initially that my interviews were not going to be in-depth enough for this method as they were initially meant for program evaluation. In addition, there was only a small amount of information in the narratives that pertained to the quilting project. While the initial questions were straightforward, I was most interested in the places in the interviews in which the girls used first-person statements to express themselves and in the places in which they dissociated, or used second-person statements, in order to protect the feelings of the person or persons that they were speaking with (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). According to Brown and Gilligan (1992), girls begin to be more aware of how expressing themselves authentically may put them in jeopardy with regard to relationships at the age of 11 years. Their research has demonstrated that girls at this age start to show evidence of this awareness in their speech as they increasingly use second-person statements to express feelings that would be more pleasing to the listener than their honest, first-person expressions. I created a chart of all of the first-person expressions, or “I statements” (see Table 1). In addition, I charted the emotions/feelings expressed in each statement, each one color-coded so that I could easily identify the emotions. I used pink colors to show enjoyment or other positive emotions and blue colors to demonstrate more negative emotions, like stress. When the girls seemed to be expressing ambivalence or both positive and negative emotions, I used purple color variations. Frustration was coded with dark gray.



There are 41 “I statements” pertaining to the quilting/sewing project. Two were expressed by the third grader; 12 were expressed by the 5 fourth graders; and 27 were expressed by the 3 fifth graders. Of those statements, 18 of them were associated with the positive emotions of enjoyment ( $n = 15$ ), reassurance ( $n = 3$ ), confident ( $n = 1$ ), certainty ( $n = 1$ ), and understanding ( $n = 1$ ). Eighteen statements were associated with the negative feelings of disappointment ( $n = 7$ ), hate/displeasure ( $n = 4$ ), frustration ( $n = 4$ ), stress ( $n = 3$ ), boredom ( $n = 2$ ), longing ( $n = 1$ ), and scared ( $n = 1$ ). Some of the statements were coded twice as they contained more than one negative feeling. I coded the remaining two statements as ambivalent: uncertainty ( $n = 1$ ) and enjoyment, then displeasure ( $n = 1$ ). Charting the statements in this way revealed that the girls owned their emotions about the project. This was demonstrated by their use of “I statements” in discussing how they felt about the project. It also confirmed that, overall, the girls experienced both positive and negative feelings equally when reflecting on their experiences with the quilting project. They had enjoyed the project and felt reassurance from the sponsors. They were also disappointed in their performance, frustrated by their inability to sew well on their own, and bored by the length of time that it took to complete the project.

There are also a few times in which the speakers switch to second-person from first-person expressions when they are talking about difficulties with the projects. I charted the second-person (“You” Statements) statements next (see Table 2).

There were not nearly as many “You Statements;” only four compared to 41 “I Statements.” The first two girls, Girl 2 and Girl 4, were asked direct questions about how they felt about the project. Girl 2 initially said, “I think it was pretty fun, cause we just

got to talk to each other.” Then, she switched to second person: “It wasn’t that thing, like you could only focus on one thing, but if you can like sew and talk, so...” This suggests that there were, perhaps, feelings that Girl 2 was hiding or that she was hesitant to share what she truly felt about the project for fear of hurting my feelings.

Girl 4 also responded to the direct question about how she felt about the quilting project with the “I statement:” “I mean, I liked that you could sew something or,” then she switched: “...you could just sit down and talk to your friends while also doing it. I needed to have to be like, concentrated and whatever, and you could work on it at home.” Her mother was in the adjoining room. She was speaking to the dog in the background, which I noted in the transcript. I do not know if her mother’s presence inhibited her, but it is something to consider. She expressed herself candidly using “I statements” to identify her thoughts in the rest of the discussion about the project. It is interesting to me that she switched to second person when talking about the project at this point.

Girl 5 expressed herself very forcefully when talking about the project. The first time she switched to second person, she was sharing her general thoughts about how everyone should conduct themselves. She took the fourth graders to task for not working hard enough, and she and Girl 6 told me that the fourth graders just wanted the older girls to do the hard work for them. They did not like this. This is when Girl 5 made the pronouncement, “I think it really needs to be, you need to learn how to do it by yourself.” It is interesting to see this, because she was saying here, “This is what I think everyone should do.” She owned her opinion. The second time she switched to second person was when she was telling me that the sewing project had gone on too long. She was softening

the blow somewhat, I think. I was asking her what she thought about doing sewing projects for the next year in SMART Girls. She first said:

I thought the stitching thing was really fun, I just thought we did so much this year that a lot of people just really bored of it. You're just coming every time sewing more, sewing more, and sewing more.

First, she was telling me that she liked it, but that "people" got bored of it after a while and that "you" just had to keep coming, sewing more and more every time. She wanted me to know that she was really bored with the project, but she did not want to make it obvious that she did not enjoy it. Perhaps Girl 5 was trying to spare my feelings.

The fact that the older girls were the ones using second-person statements is consistent with Brown and Gilligan's (1992) research and framework. This portion of the analysis was chiefly concerned with the ideas of connection and maintaining relationships. The results of this analysis further reveal that there were places in the interviews when some of the older girls were careful about expressing themselves authentically and that they seemed to be attempting to protect my feelings, at least in some places. All three of the girls who demonstrated dissociation when talking with me were children that I had known for many years. Girl 5 had been in my Kindergarten class and had been in SMART Girls Club for 3 years, so she may have felt some loyalty to my feelings. She was also one of the oldest girls in the interview groups. According to the paradigm (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), she would be at the developmental stage of awareness of the danger of sharing how she really feels because perhaps her true feelings might cause separation and pain.

Using the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) was instructive as this method deepened the analysis while permitting me to remain connected to the participants by “listening” to what they had to say about the quilting project. This method confirmed that the girls were expressing connection when talking about the quilting project. My analysis revealed that at least one of the older girls was using language to remain in connection with me. Most importantly, their statements reveal that they were in connection with themselves and their feelings.

### **Summary**

In this section, I discussed in depth the strategy I used to analyze the de-identified interview transcripts that I used to examine the experiences of the girls who participated in the after-school quilting project. I explained how I derived the Code Group Quilt Blocks from in vivo coding and the found poetry that I created from the second cycle of coding using process codes. I also discussed my use of the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) in the final analysis of the interviews. I revealed the results of my analysis, which answered my research questions. I described the ways that the girls expressed connection to one another, to themselves, and me. I concluded that the girls did not express competence; rather, that they had expressed industry (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Finally, I described how the girls expressed self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) when discussing the quilting project.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

For many years, as a teacher of young children, I believed that children should be given the opportunity to learn more useful skills, like sewing. My belief was supported by Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) work and my own experiences, both as a child, as a mother, and as a teacher. I remembered the joy of discovery that came from my ability to create using needle and thread. Even now, I find the occupation of sewing to be very relaxing and, at times, meditative. My own children enjoyed sewing and my daughter's most anxious moments were defused by spending time sewing quilt blocks with me. Over the many years that I taught in preschool and public school, my students enjoyed the opportunity to do work on their own. My Kindergarten students did many activities that were self-contained and precise, and I found that the creative effort involved in those activities gave them great joy and provided them with the opportunity to sit quietly with their friends and talk. As I mentally surveyed these experiences, it occurred to me that the quilting project that we had conducted with the SMART Girls after-school club in 2020 may have had great value to the girls, apart from an opportunity to learn a new skill. For this reason, I chose to analyze the interview transcripts from our yearly club evaluation, looking very specifically at what the girls had to say about the quilting project.

Prior to beginning this study, I participated in a qualitative study using secondary data, interviews with art quilters, for my practicum at TWU and under the supervision of

my advisor, Dr. Catherine Dutton in 2018. It was during this time that I first encountered the idea of narrative within the quilted piece. The interviews with the professional quilters described their process, their craft, and their experiences leading up to the construction of their quilts. Most importantly, the quilters described how the quilts told their stories. This was the first time that I had encountered the idea of quilting as a narrative and it was fascinating to me. Many of the quilt narratives were autobiographical and told the story of the quilters and their families. Some of the quilters discussed how women's history had inspired their work. My work on coding the interview transcripts gave me practical experience with in vivo coding. It was this experience, in addition to qualitative inquiry coursework, that helped to prepare me for the work that I did on the girls' interview transcripts.

Beyond my experiences with education and sewing, I was also drawn to phenomenological qualitative inquiry. It is my fervent belief that our voices are important and powerful. Throughout my doctoral studies, I was drawn to the way that people express themselves. The more that I studied quilting and its history, I was intrigued by the stories that quilters shared about their work and through their work. Because my work with the girls in my ASP was predicated on the idea of teaching the girls about women's history, the historical underpinnings of the art form of quilting made it an ideal medium for the girls and me to study. Historically, women have used quilting as a means of expression during times of war and civil unrest (Kiracofe, 1993) and they have used it to express their creativity and to tell stories (Bavor, 2012; Hemmings, 2020; Kraemer Sohan, 2015; McCray, 2018). They have used quilts as gifts (Cheek & Yaure, 2017), as

an occupation (Cheek & Piercy, 2004; Stalp & Conti, 2011), and as therapy (Howell & Pierce, 2000; Moxley et al., 2011). Quilts uniquely combine fabric, handwork, and skill to create a narrative that tells a story (Hemmings, 2020; Kiracofe, 1993; Langellier, 1994). Phenomenology is concerned with the sharing of experiences as described by participants (Creswell, 2014); quilting is a visual representation of a story as created by participants (Kiracofe, 1993; Langellier, 1994).

The purpose of this research study was to explore the phenomena of connection (Gilligan, 1993), competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977, 1997) as expressed by the group of young girls involved in the SMART Girls Club quilting project. I wanted to know if the quilting project that the girls had engaged in contributed to their sense of connection to one another (Gilligan, 1993); if it had helped them to gain the ego strength of competence by aiding in the resolution of the industry versus inferiority crisis experienced by school-age children (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997); and if the girls had developed a sense of specific self-efficacy as a result of learning to sew and quilt (Bandura, 1977, 1997). I aligned my research questions with the developmental frameworks of Gilligan (1993), Erikson (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and Bandura (1977, 1997) and examined the interviews I had conducted with the girls in my ASP, SMART Girls, as part of our yearly program evaluation. Four themes emerged as part of this study: connection, industry, self-efficacy, and the project took too long.

## Interpretation of the Findings

The girls discussed their feelings about the quilting project during our semi-structured individual and group interviews during our club evaluation. I was sensitive to the developmental frameworks of Gilligan (1993), Erikson (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and Bandura (1977, 1997) during the analysis phase. Three of the themes that emerged from the analysis aligned with these developmental paradigms. One additional theme did not (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Themes That Emerged During Analysis Aligned With Research Questions and Existing Literature*

Research Questions	Themes	Literature Support
How did the SMART Girls Club members express connectedness when describing the quilting experience?	Connection: Connection to others, connection to mother/father; connection to self	Apter & Josselson, 1998 Butler, 2019 Brown & Gilligan, 1992 Cheek & Piercy, 2008 Gilligan, 1993 Howell & Pierce, 2000 Mason, 2005 Piercy & Cheek, 2004 Rose & Rudolph, 2006
How did the girls express competence when discussing the quilting experience?	Industry: Love of learning; autonomy/mastery; cooperation with others	Batra, 2013 Erikson, 1963 Erikson, 1964 Erikson & Erikson, 1997
How did the girls express self-efficacy when discussing the quilting experience?	Self-efficacy: Perceived self-efficacy; appraisal of others; self-evaluative outcomes	Bandura, 1977 Bandura, 1997 Bandura, 2006



Boredom

(Possible) Erikson, 1963  
(Possible) Erikson &  
Erikson, 1997  
O'Brien, 2014

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### **Theme 1: Connection**

Research has shown that quilting has provided a way for women to have fellowship with one another and to experience closeness (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Howell & Pierce, 2000). Piercy and Cheek (2004) found that women in three traditional cultures developed close connections with women outside of their families through quilting. In their study, the authors found that some of the friendships between the quilters had lasted over 50 years (Piercy & Cheek, 2004). Butler (2019) demonstrated that quilting in the African American community has developed over time to enable women to form close bonds of sisterhood with one another in the face of adversity and oppression.

#### ***Connection to Others***

The girls in this study frequently mentioned that their favorite thing about the quilting project was that they could sit and talk to one another. They liked that they were able to work together in groups without being restricted in their ability to talk to each other. This ability to talk together and to share one's thoughts is vital to the development of connection in girls and women and to friendships (Apter & Josselson, 1998). In addition, a meta-analysis of sex differences in girls' and boys' peer relationships indicates that when comparing boys' peer interactions and girls' peer interactions, girls tend to engage in dyadic interactions for longer periods, have more social conversations, and disclose personal information about themselves more often than boys (Rose &

Rudolph, 2006). This would suggest that girls' friendships develop within the context of sustained conversations and interactions, which are often not facilitated within the context of the typical elementary school classroom.

Some of the older girls demonstrated that they were using dissociative language to remain in connection with others, as well. It was during the third cycle of analysis, using the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992), that I saw places in which the girls softened their language using second-person statements to remain in connection with others. According to Gilligan (1993), in patriarchal society, women learn to be selfless to remain in connection with others. Women learn to dissociate themselves from their feelings at approximately age 12 or 13 years, the "crossroads" identified by Brown and Gilligan (1992) as the time when girls become aware of the social order of relationships and as they begin their journey into adolescence.

### ***Connection to Mother/Father***

Sewing has traditionally been a way for women to pass on skill and heritage to their daughters (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Mason, 2005). The youngest girl in the group had the benefit of both her mother and her father helping her with her quilt block. She expressed joy in the quilting project and did not have any qualms about needing help from her parents. One of the fifth graders expressed that she liked having Mrs. George and me available to help her during the project. Mrs. George and I were there performing the role of the surrogate mother for her and the other girls in the group: teaching, supervising, helping, and talking with the girls as they sewed their quilt blocks.

### ***Connection to Self***

Through the process of analysis, I saw that the girls were connected to their feelings about the project. Overwhelmingly, they expressed themselves using first-person statements, indicating that they owned their feelings. Gilligan (1996) related that the basis of girls' psychological strength and resilience lies in their ability to speak freely about their feelings in their relationships with others.

### **Theme 2: Industry**

Consistent with Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) framework, the girls in this study expressed their love of learning and desire to be engaged in the act of learning new skills. There were no expressions consistent with the ego strength of competence, the resolution of the industry versus inferiority crisis of school-age children in Erikson's paradigm (1963, 1964; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Perhaps it was ambitious to expect a brief quilting project to resolve the school-age crisis, particularly since it was a new skill for the majority of the girls. In previous research, engagement in quilting and creative activities did help to resolve the midlife psychosocial crisis of generativity versus stagnation, but the women in these studies engaged in these creative endeavors for many years (Adams-Price et. al, 2018; Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Cheek & Yaure, 2017).

### ***Love of Learning***

Across all of the age groups, the girls expressed that they had enjoyed learning to sew/quilt. One of the fifth-grade girls had mentioned that she thought that we should do more of these types of projects in the future, indicating that she saw this project as

beneficial to the upcoming girls. Erikson (1963) posited that school-age children would set aside their desire for pretend/imaginative play during this stage and find joy and fulfillment in the pursuit of learning and producing. Consistent with this, the girls expressed joy in creating and learning. Upon reading through the entire transcripts during the analysis phase, I found that the girls were not asking to play more games but to learn more skills. Going further, their criticisms of the project involved the length of time that it took them to complete it, not that they didn't enjoy it.

### ***Autonomy/Mastery***

Two of the girls mentioned that they could sew already prior to beginning the project. These girls also mentioned that they felt that it was important for the other girls to be able to do their work on their own, without help. Erikson's (1963, 1964; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) framework posits that children at this stage in development are seeking to acquire and master new skills on their own in order to be prepared for occupation in the adult world in the future.

### ***Cooperation with Others***

Before children can be considered to have mastered a task or skill, they must be able to learn from adults and cooperate with others (Erikson, 1963, 1964; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Erikson's theory was originally based on Freud's psychosexual theory but departed from Freud's focus on the centrality of sexuality. Erikson turned his focus to the influence of society and culture on the development of the individual (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). In discussing the development of skills in preparation for the productivity of adulthood, Erikson (1963) explained that children must be able to

set aside competitiveness in order to work productively with others. This fosters self-regulation and the ability to cooperate well with others (Batra, 2013).

The found poetry created from the second cycle of coding helps to elucidate the attitude of the fifth-grade girls in the group: They saw the fourth graders' effort as lacking because they did not show effort and seemed to be rejecting the idea of cooperation. The older girls specifically complained that the younger girls just wanted them to do their work for them. This went against their belief system, as expressed by Girl 5, and as explained within Erikson's (1963) framework. As Erikson (1963) put it:

...this is socially a most decisive stage: since industry involves doing things beside and with others, a first sense of division of labor and of differential opportunity, that is, a sense of the *technological ethos* of a culture, develops at this time. (p. 260)

Girl 5 and Girl 6 saw the fourth graders as defying the implicit rule to work beside and with the other girls.

### **Theme 3: Self-efficacy**

Three of the fourth-grade girls and one of the fifth-grade girls evaluated their ability to sew negatively. When discussing how they felt about the project, they discussed their feelings as they pertained to their ability—or lack of ability—to sew. According to Bandura (1997, 2006), self-efficacy is related to the judgments that one makes about their capabilities and the outcomes of their performances. The concept of self-efficacy involves not just how a person perceives her abilities, but also what she believes will happen based on her perception of her abilities (Bandura, 1997). In addition, one of the

fifth graders appraised the sewing skills of the younger, fourth-grade girls negatively. While I had hoped to find that all of the girls had acquired sewing self-efficacy or had perceived that they were able to sew well, that did not appear to be the case with this particular group of girls. In addition, while most of the girls in this study expressed enjoyment of learning to sew and connecting with others, only one of the girls in fifth grade expressed specific sewing self-efficacy (Girl 5).

### ***Perceived Self-efficacy***

According to social cognitive theory, people make judgments about their abilities (Bandura, 1997, 2006). This is called perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Having the skills necessary to complete a task is not enough; a person needs to also believe that they are capable of completing the task in order to be successful (Bandura, 1997). Several of the fourth-grade girls mentioned that they perceived their sewing skills to be poor. Threading the needle was a difficult task for Girl 9, who spoke emphatically about the stress she felt when sewing. For the four girls who expressed difficulty with the project, three said that they experienced stress or frustration with sewing. All three of them made statements about their lack of ability or skill in sewing. One of the girls, Girl 4, expressed a longing to be more skillful in sewing (see Table 1). Judging their work objectively, the girls can sew and sew well for their age. Still, they perceived that the task was difficult and stressful, according to their statements.

### ***Appraisal of Others***

According to social cognitive theory, as children get older, they become more adept at judging their own abilities in comparison to the abilities of others (Bandura,

1997). Research into social comparison has revealed that very young children are not able to discern the differences in abilities, but by age 6 years, children are able to make useful comparisons with those whose abilities are like their own but slightly better (Bandura, 1997). It follows from the framework, then, that the older girls in this study would be most skilled in social comparison. This was borne out in the analysis, as Girl 5 and Girl 6 (both fifth graders) had the most to say about the abilities of the younger, fourth-grade members. They appraised the younger girls' lack of effort negatively and rated their own proficiency in sewing favorably.

### ***Self-evaluative Outcomes***

The results of performance are outcomes (Bandura, 1997, 2006). Self-evaluative outcomes are a function of performance and how an individual rates that performance and its outcomes, both in the present and the future (Bandura, 1997). The girls in this study rated their experience of the quilting project, but most did not rate the outcome of their work or how they felt that future projects might turn out for them. There were two specific instances in which the girls seemed to be evaluating their performance outcomes. Girl 4 said that she was not good at sewing, which expressed both her perception of her sewing skills and her judgment of her work. She went further to say that she wished she was good at sewing, another example of how she felt about the work she had completed. Girl 9 questioned whether the girls in the club should sew in the future during club time. She was specifically commenting on the suggestion by another girl that the after-school club could do more sewing projects in the coming school year. Within the context of the conversation, Girl 9 had expressed distress during the sewing project and seemed to be

judging the value of doing this kind of project in the future; she did not see the potential positive outcome of this kind of project for herself.

#### **Theme 4: Boredom**

The final theme that I discovered during the analysis was that some of the older girls felt that the project had taken too long to finish. Simply put, they had become bored with it. The girls expressed that they were tired of it; it had become repetitive and predictable (O'Brien, 2014). I evaluated this carefully in consideration of the theoretical frameworks that I was using in this study. While I did not find that this theme fits well with the paradigms I was aligned with, it is possible that one aspect of the frustration that some of the girls felt had to do with the fact that we did not complete the project. Failure to complete the project would be frustrating to the goals of the industry crisis, which is learning a skill to completion or mastery (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). Primarily, though, the girls who expressed boredom with the project had either accomplished sewing their blocks and were ready to move on, or they were struggling with it and wanted to do something else.

#### **Strengths**

This study yields new knowledge about the desire for connection that school-age girls have when participating in a learning activity in an after-school club. It also provides new information for practitioners to consider when planning lessons and programs for school-age children; specifically, that children appreciate the opportunities for choice in learning and developing and strengthening friendships. The use of Code Group Quilt Blocks in this study provides a new method for qualitative researchers to use



when organizing and theming data during the coding process. This method also provides a method of triangulation, which strengthens the trustworthiness of the data.

This study also contributes to relational feminist work on the concept of industry and self-efficacy in school-age children, an area that was lacking prior to this study. The use of the Listening Guide (Brown & Gilligan, 1992) in this study contributes to the body of research on its application with school-age girls. The phenomenological approach of this study enabled me to gain a better understanding of the benefits and challenges of the quilting project by listening to the perspectives of the girls involved in the project.

There are several strengths that add to the reliability of this study. I have known the participants for many years, both as a Kindergarten teacher and as the club sponsor. I have developed strong relationships with them over this time and have developed rapport and trust. Because of this, I was engaged with the students for a long period of time, which enhanced the trustworthiness of the study (Shenton, 2004). This also facilitated communication during the program evaluation, which led to rich data for this study. I was interested in the well-being of the participants, which meant that I took great care in protecting them and approaching the study in an unbiased manner.

I have taken great care to describe the methodology of this study to strengthen its trustworthiness and so that others may be able to engage in this type of research. I have spent a great deal of time in reflection throughout the analysis phase of the study, which is transparently revealed, as well. This also strengthened the analysis and the results, while also providing a template for future researchers.

## **Limitations**

There are several limitations to the transferability of the results. For one, the sample of participant interviews was small. Also, the elementary school site is a high socioeconomic status (SES) school and the girls and their parents are from high SES backgrounds. Despite the diversity of the club, the interviews were conducted with mostly White girls and parents due to difficulties in obtaining interviews with the participants of color. The majority of the interviews were conducted online or by phone, which influenced the flow of the conversation due to distractions in the environment and technical difficulties. There were some moments when technical glitches disrupted the thoughts of the participants. The interviews were conducted with girls who were also very engaged in the club experience, so information was not obtained from girls who were involved in the club for a time but did not continue with their involvement for various reasons. For some of the interviews, parents were present in the room or nearby, so there is the risk that the girls were not completely forthcoming about their feelings. There were no boys interviewed for the club evaluation, so this study does not compare the sewing and quilting experience with boys or with children who participated in other sewing and quilting clubs. The girls' interviews were originally used for the purpose of a program evaluation, so the narrative data are not as rich as it might have been if I had interviewed the girls at length about their sewing and quilting experiences. The findings were limited to the girls in the study and may not be transferable to other populations or girls from outside the region in which the study is located.

Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on myself, the students, and their families, there was the possibility that the participants were adversely affected by the ramifications of online schooling, online club meetings, and the missed opportunities for in-person interactions. This may have, in turn, affected the findings of the data analysis. For this reason, caution should be exercised when considering results.

I have been the girls' teacher and the club sponsor for several years. While this afforded me the privilege of gaining their trust and helped to establish my rapport with them, it may have also biased my analysis of the content of the interviews. For this reason, my work on data analysis was reviewed extensively by my advisor and two other impartial reviewers. This additional scrutiny was meant to assure that the results of the data analysis were not biased and that I did not see themes within the narrative that did not exist.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

More research needs to be done on the role that connection plays in the life of students within the context of after-school programs. According to Gilligan (2018), all people are born with the capacity and desire to communicate with others and to live in relationship with them. Her early research demonstrated that girls' development is focused on connection with others (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993, 1996, 2018). More recently, her research has been updated to reflect that the desire for connection is not limited to girls, but to boys as well (Chu, 2014; Chu & Gilligan, 2019; Gilligan, 2018). More research is needed to discover how both schools and ASPs can foster emotional and relational connections in both boys and girls.

Friendship is a natural outgrowth of connection. With prior research demonstrating the importance that girls and boys place on friendship (Apter & Josselson, 1998; Chu, 2014; Chu & Gilligan, 2019; Gilligan, 2018; Rose & Rudolph, 2006), it is important to focus child development and educational research on the development of friendship within the context of school-day and ASPs. Social-emotional learning curricula and education programs focus on the development of self-regulation skills within the context of the classroom (Niemi, 2020; Proulx & Schulten, 2019). However, research needs to be done on the development of social-emotional skills and strengthening friendships in after-school clubs and programs, particularly in the context of learning activities and projects, such as the quilting project undertaken by the SMART Girls Club.

In this study, I found that the girls enjoyed learning how to sew and wanted to learn many other skills. While I did not find that this quilting project contributed to the resolution of the industry versus inferiority crisis and the ego strength of competence (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), research is needed to determine how schools and ASPs can aid in the resolution of the industry crisis in school-age children. This is especially important when considering the implications of psychosocial theory (Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997). According to the framework (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), the identity crisis proceeds from the previous stages and is resolved either positively or negatively in order to proceed to the next stage of intimacy versus isolation. An essential component of the industry crisis for school-age children is the opportunity to learn new occupations and skills as they practice for the next stage

(Erikson, 1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), yet very little research has been focused on the industry crisis. It is as though human development research has focused very little attention on this stage, even though Erikson's theory does not seem to regard one stage as more important than another.

More research needs to be done to determine if sewing and quilting mastery could benefit children's sense of perceived self-efficacy. There is still so much to learn about the topic of self-efficacy as it relates to girls' developing sense of self and agency, particularly within the context of after-school clubs and cooperative learning projects, such as the one undertaken by the girls in this study.

Despite the popularity of quilting in the US (The Quilting Company & Quilts, Inc., 2017), there has been no qualitative research conducted with children who sew and/or quilt. Before the pandemic, children could engage in after-school quilting programs and quilting summer camps sporadically across the country. Research on the benefits of quilting and sewing for children, particularly as it relates to connection and the development of relationships is lacking.

Finally, the method for organizing and theming the data developed during the analysis phase of this study, Code Group Quilt Blocks, is worthy of further study. Both of the external reviewers mentioned the utility of this type of method for their studies. I have discussed my method with a colleague who is a sociologist and a quilter, and her response was enthusiastic. I found the strategy to be useful not just in the organization of the data, but also in triangulation as well. It would be interesting to see if qualitative

researchers in various disciplines found this to be a useful tool for them, particularly for those with experience in sewing and quilting.

## **Implications**

### **Implications for Practice**

This study revealed that the girls involved in the quilting project enjoyed the opportunity to learn a new skill while also spending time in connection with one another. Quilting research has shown that women use quilting as a means of developing connection and strengthening friendships (Cheek & Piercy, 2008; Howell & Pierce, 2000). Likewise, the quilting project afforded the girls the opportunity to learn to sew and to sit and talk to one another, an opportunity not often afforded to children within the context of the school day. Schools and ASPS should consider ways in which children can be engaged in learning new skills while also developing connection and friendship with one another.

In reflecting on the quilting project, I was often struck by the ways that the girls positioned themselves with one another: Face-to-face at tables or on the floor, sewing together and talking. It was no surprise to learn from the girls that they enjoyed sitting and talking together most of all. What was unexpected was how differently they positioned themselves relative to how we typically positioned them within the club over the course of the previous 5 years. In prior years, we typically set up the environment so that the girls would be speaker-focused, meaning that their attention would be focused on the person teaching or speaking, whether that was a club sponsor, guest speaker, or club member. Positionally, this would place the girls shoulder-to-shoulder or side-by-side.

With the quilting project, the girls were permitted choice in where they would work and with whom. Consistently, they positioned themselves so that they could see one another and talk to each other as they worked. This also facilitated helping one another. Surprisingly, my co-sponsor and I found that the girls worked quietly (even though we had not admonished them to be quiet while they worked) and productively. Almost all of the girls were able to complete their work. This finding was counterintuitive to what I had been taught with regard to classroom management as a teacher. Teachers are taught to make sure that every student present can see them and that they should set up tables and desks to encourage their attention and a quiet learning environment. With the quilting project, the girls were learning, attentive, and productive, despite their attention being diverted from the adults. They were still speaker-focused, but the speakers that they were focused on were their friends and fellow club members.

The implication of this finding is challenging because it requires a realignment of values within the campus and classroom culture. The idea of free choice in seating is not new, but permitting children free choice in working together in groups that permit and encourage talking together in order to foster social connection and friendship is. This involves a realignment of intention in lesson planning and program planning. Going further, a realignment of intention would also permit opportunities for free activities and choices outside of the classroom within the school-day and after-school, as well. Research has shown that recess is beneficial for school-age children from a physical and mental standpoint (Brez & Sheets, 2017). Because recess also affords children the opportunity to talk to one another and spend time with each other, the playground

environment could also be designed with the intention of fostering social interaction and friendship.

Previous research has shown that ASPs focused on academics or homework for school-age children were negatively associated with program engagement (Durlak et al., 2010). In light of this, ASPs should consider improving the climate and engagement of these programs by focusing on child-directed activities and activities that foster connection and friendship. Community members and families have expressed their desire for children to participate in after-school programs in which children have the opportunity to learn new skills that interest them (Afterschool Alliance, 2020). This research confirms that. The girls enjoyed learning new skills and wanted to continue to do so, while at the same time talking together and remaining in connection with one another.

### **Implications for Policy**

School districts and policymakers should consider ways to foster connection and friendships through the development of policies and practices that encourage children to learn new skills of their own choosing and that permit them to engage in sustained conversation with one another. This means choosing curricula that embeds social and emotional learning within academics. It also means revising standards and accountability testing so that children have more opportunities for developing social skills and friendships within the school day while also shielding teachers from policies meant to reward them for higher academic test scores.



This also means protecting the integrity of recess and free play within the school day by expanding recess minutes and protecting blocks of time within the school day for free-choice play. Developmentally Appropriate Practice should consider the equitable access of all learners to programs and strategies that enhance their learning (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2020). Equitable access means that children have a voice in their learning as well. Giving children a voice in the skills that they will learn is a radical idea within public education. I was pleasantly surprised to find how enthusiastic the girls were in voicing their opinions about what they wanted to learn and how successful that they wanted to be in learning adult skills, such as sewing and cooking. With all of the talk about standards-based learning and accountability (especially in Texas), it would be a novel idea to actually talk with children about their own goals and objectives in learning.

### **Implications for Theory**

Three frameworks were used for this study. The results support the Erikson's (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997) contention that school-age children love to learn new skills in preparation for adult roles and that they also desire connection with one another, a major position of Carol Gilligan's feminist relational framework (1993, 1996). Stitching together both frameworks provides an interesting synthesis. Gilligan's (1993) criticism of Erikson's psychosocial theory was that it was based on research done with males. Here, I found that girls have the same desire for learning new skills as boys. The results support the positions of both theories equally.

This study also used social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997) as a guiding framework. Again, stitching the theories together revealed that the girls were using information about others, as well as their own performance on the sewing tasks, to assess their abilities. In some cases, the girls did not feel that they had done well with sewing. The girls who had assessed themselves poorly also experienced the most stress and frustration. This knowledge can guide practitioners as they seek to enhance the learning environment for children who judge their abilities poorly. Had I realized how much stress the girls were experiencing during the quilting project, I would have provided more support to them or would have modified the project. Parents and teachers should be aware of the underlying stress experienced by children when they express negative self-efficacy.

The final theme, boredom (O'Brien, 2014), revealed that the girls had grown tired of the work. In education and in children's extracurricular activities, we often push children to complete projects for which they have no intrinsic motivation. Sometimes, we ask children to do things that they have grown weary of. The girls in the club were well-behaved and entertained by talking together. Had they not had the opportunity to sit with their friends and talk, I might have had a different outcome, one in which the girls behaved badly to express their frustration and fatigue. This finding reveals that program leaders and teachers should consider the amount of time that a project will take and should be prepared to modify it if it should become tedious for the children involved. It also reveals the value in asking children their opinion and giving them the space to answer honestly without repercussions.

The quilting metaphor used to “stitch” the frameworks together was helpful in synthesizing seemingly disparate theories. Using the three paradigms in a complementary way enriched the analysis process. The shortcomings of Erikson’s (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982, 1997) theory (research was done with males and the theory views females as lacking in autonomy) were “patched” with the feminist relational theory (Gilligan, 1993) and social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1997). In addition, the girls’ expressions were stitched together to reveal the underlying themes of connection, industry, self-efficacy, and boredom. These expressions revealed how the girls felt and what they hoped for; their expressions revealed their voice (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1993). Their voices were forceful and full of emotion. Recognizing the power within the voices of young girls is to recognize their agency and their strength.

The use of Code Group Quilt Blocks in organizing and theming data could present opportunities for qualitative researchers to engage in a visual, feminist approach to scientific research. The use of this method invigorated my analysis and strengthened the trustworthiness of my results. Coding can be a tedious and monotonous task, but I found that creating the Code Group Quilt Blocks energized and stimulated me in such a way that I found myself working for hours with no sense of time.

### **Reflections of the Researcher**

My desire in conducting this study was to amplify the voices of the girls in my after-school club and to explore their experiences with our quilting project. I feel that I succeeded in doing both of these things. This study allowed me to tell the story of how the SMART Girls Club came together and how this program affected the school where it

was located. I learned a lot about the girls, but mostly, I learned a lot about myself: as a teacher, a researcher, and an individual.

As a teacher, I realized how much I had forgotten about children's friendships. Engaging deeply with feminist research reminded me how much joy and sorrow had come into my life through friendships. I realized that my preschool and elementary school classrooms were set up for learning but not for connection. This is a paradigm shift: How would I have done things differently in my classrooms if I had focused on the development of connection, as well as the development of learning? How might I have conducted the after-school club if I had read Gilligan's (1993) work prior to setting up the program?

As a researcher, I am a novice. I realized this as I read the transcripts of the program evaluation. I had learned a lot about the program, but I would have learned more had I allowed for more space in the interviews and had let the girls speak more. Though I was not conducting the interviews for the purpose of this study, I still realized that I could have done a better job of listening to the girls. I suppose that there is always room for improvement.

I conducted this study during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time of great confusion, isolation, and mourning in the United States. I was unable to complete the quilting project with the girls of the SMART Girls Club due to the shutdown ordered by the governor of Texas in March 2020. I was disappointed that I could not meet with them in person during the 2020–2021 school year due to the safety protocols in place on campus. As a result of the program evaluation, I had created lessons and plans for the new school year

that I was certain would be pleasing to the girls. Because we could not meet, I felt as though we had missed these opportunities. For myself, the pandemic and the resulting isolation were difficult on a personal and professional level. Teaching online presented new challenges, coupled with overseeing my own children's online learning. Meeting with friends and family virtually was not the same as being able to see them in person.

In the final days of writing this dissertation, I am encouraged by the hope that the pandemic is coming to an end. I was finally able to see my mother and brother recently, thanks to the availability of the COVID vaccine. After a scary year, things are improving. For that, I am grateful. In the days to come, I will create the Code Group Quilt Blocks in fabric. I am looking forward to creating a lasting representation of the work that I did in a colorful, tactile form.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of nine girls involved in a quilting project in an ASP. The girls expressed that they enjoyed the opportunity to learn to sew and to sit and talk with one another while they did so. They experienced the joy of learning and of spending time together. Some of them also expressed the challenges of sewing, the stress that it caused them, and that they had become bored with the project after a while. The results of this study align with the theoretical paradigms of Gilligan's relational feminist framework (1993, 1996), Erikson's psychosocial framework (1963; Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), and Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977, 1997).

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APPENDIX A

Program Evaluation Questions for the Principal



Program Evaluation Questions for the Principal:

1. What, if anything, has been beneficial about having SMART Girls on campus?
2. What, if anything, has been the drawbacks of having SMART Girls on campus?
3. We've done several projects. How do you feel that those have impacted the students, first, those involved directly? Next, those involved indirectly?
4. What could we do to improve the program?

## APPENDIX B

### Program Evaluation Questions for the Girls

Program Evaluation Questions for the Girls:

1. What did you enjoy the most about SMART Girls Club?
2. What did you enjoy the least?
3. If you could change one thing about SMART Girls, what would you change?
4. Let's talk about our quilting project. We didn't get to finish it, but tell me: How did you feel about this project?
5. When you think about the next school year, do you feel that the lessons you've learned in SMART Girls will help you? In what way, if at all?
6. What could we do to make SMART Girls better and more fun?
7. What are some things that you wished we did more of?

## APPENDIX C

### Program Evaluation Questions for the Parents

Program Evaluation Questions for the Parents:

1. What has been most beneficial about SMART Girls?
2. What has been most challenging?
3. How did you feel about the quilting project?
4. Did you provide support for your daughter while she was sewing? If so, what type of support?
5. What effect, if any, did this quilting project have on your daughter? On your family?
6. What would you like to see the SMART Girls program do next year?
7. How could the program help your family?
8. If this program were offered at another site in The Colony and were offered more days a week, would this be something you would be interested in for your daughter?
9. Would you place a value on the SMART Girls program? In other words, would this be a program that you would pay for?

## APPENDIX D

Program Evaluation Questions for the Co-sponsors:

Program Evaluation Questions for the Co-sponsors:

1. What was the most successful aspect of SMART Girls this past year, in your opinion?
2. What was the least successful aspect?
3. What did we do well?
4. How could we improve?
5. What did you think of the quilting project?
6. What would you like to do in the fall?
7. What are we not doing that you'd like to see us do?