

Exploring the potential of embroidering as a therapeutic intervention in occupational therapy

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Abstract

This research evolved from a perceived need within occupational therapy to better understand the therapeutic potential of specific craft activities, to create evidence for reviving their use within contemporary practice. Historically, it was observed that such activities enhanced health but research showing the mechanism was lacking and so their use largely fell out of favour within the profession. With current interest on exploration of the influence of arts on health the investigation focused on embroidering as a contemporary but under-investigated craft. The research question aimed to establish how embroidering can influence meaningful change in relation to a person in the context of their everyday life.

This qualitative narrative inquiry-based study was situated in the United Kingdom and draws on social-constructionist epistemology with a relativist ontology. Theoretical assumptions were further grounded on Occupational Science, occupational therapy as a complex intervention and narrative theory. Discursive data were gathered through unstructured interviews which included examination of embroideries, observation, participation in embroidering and visiting embroidery related events in partnership with five women who regularly embroidered. Data were transcribed verbatim and interpreted through narrative analysis.

The findings suggest that embroidering can promote meaningful and purposeful change in a person's everyday life through an agential companionship involving body, mind and materials. This solitary and reciprocal relationship is intimate, situated, and develops over time and this is proposed as the means for therapeutic potential. In the development of such a close affiliation the person and product become inseparable. Entanglement transpires through deep and sustained engagement with tools and materials.

Once established this agential companionship can provide resources that are used to cope with everyday life. Embroidering offers diversity in techniques in order to meet a variety of personal needs which range from relaxation and escape to excitement and risk. Correlated responses range from sedative to stimulative. The combination of responses become meaningful experiences associated with embroidering. Contextual narratives promote or inhibit engagement, including initiation into the field, female stereotype, amateurism and ambiguity of an embroidery as a product.

The power of the agential companionship may explain the recent enthusiasm for crafting and supports research that shows how the arts can promote health and well-being. Consideration of mutual agency within the body, mind and material companionship is needed to further explore the transformative potential of engagement in specific crafts so that occupational therapists can return to using crafts as media for improving and sustaining health and well-being in line with global health initiatives.

Definition of terms

Characters and actors: The object acts (actor) but it can't be motivated; motives are projected by humans (character) (Frank, 2010).

Events: A Sequence of happenings that usually occur within a temporal order (Andrews et al. 2013)

Health: A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Fancourt and Finn 2019).

Narrative: Sequences with a specific order, temporal or otherwise, which takes it beyond description and by a particularity that distinguishes it from theory (Andrews et al. 2013). This definition clarifies that a narrative does not necessarily have to involve actual happenings or events within a temporal order.

Occupation: All the things we need, want or have to do (Wilcock 2006).

Occupational therapy: Occupational therapy is a client-centred health profession concerned with promoting health and wellbeing through occupation. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to enable people to participate in the activities of everyday life. Occupational therapists achieve this outcome by working with people and communities to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do, or by modifying the occupation or the environment to better support their occupational engagement (WFOT 2012).

Occupational therapy process: Occupation and the construction of a healthy occupational life is the overall aim of occupational therapy processes. Occupation as the means of therapy is subject to the various understandings of occupation. In some therapeutic contexts, a narrow perspective of occupation may be enacted, linked to a demonstrable process of change: for example, when occupation is primarily considered as 'physical doing' and is employed to develop muscle strength or range of movement. When more complex

understandings of occupation are used, it becomes possible to consider the person who is belonging and becoming through their being in and with an occupation in their context (Pentland et al. 2017).

Self: Yerxa (2009) explains the self as consisting of the 'I' and the 'it'. 'Self', in this respect is taken to constitute an internal being invisible to others which incorporates the conscious 'I' who intends, feels and perceives and who has a history, emotions, goals, views and interpretation all of which are part of one's experience of living. The 'I' also has an external 'it', which is interpreted by others as observable behaviour.

Therapeutic potential of occupation: The potential to enable a person to maintain, develop, enhance or compensate for loss of function/capacity in physical, cognitive, affective, spiritual and/or social domains. (Developed by author from 'Occupational therapy defined as a complex intervention' (Creek, 2009).

Abbreviations

LTP:	Long term Plan
WHO:	World Health organisation
WFOT:	World Federation of Occupational Therapists
RCOT:	Royal College of Occupational Therapists
NHS:	National Health Service

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Finally, I would like to dedicate this study to my parents Diane and David Maxwell for their unfailing love; you always encouraged me to do my best and here it is.

Declaration:

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed: Heidi von Kurthy

Dated: 9th April 2020

"I love the way embroidery gives you a kind of 3D effect, it's much more tactile. It's the fact that it allows you to 'make something your own', which is special". Every stitch has a tale to tell which makes it so appealing to a younger generation who are as aware of climate change as they are used to the instant gratification social media brings. Embroidering provides an antidote to modern life and isolation by inviting people to slow down, make conversation, create new narratives that are intergenerational and intercultural . . . everyone remarks on how therapeutic stitching is".

(Banks-Walker 2019)



Banks-Walker. (2019). Why embroidery is sew hot right now.
<https://www.ft.com/content/01d8b11a-e9b7-11e9-a240-3b065ef5fc55>.

Chapter 1

Background and introduction

Justification of global and local relevance of study

This study is about the potential therapeutic effect of embroidering. Embroidering seems to be having a resurgence in popular culture (Banks-Walker 2019), but despite the suggestion that the activity is therapeutic, there is very little research about this phenomenon. Embroidering is thus considered as an untapped resource for health promotion.

The NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) aims to relieve pressure on services and ensure sustainability for future years (NHS 2019). The health priorities of the future aim to keep people healthy for longer and emphasise prevention rather than treatment. This is in a health arena where the principal issues in the UK include mental health, diabetes, multi-morbidity, cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, children's health and the continuing demand in growth from an aging population (NHS 2019). Social prescription is planned to benefit 2.5 million more people with new support mechanisms in place to support people in managing their own health (NHS 2019). Many of the current health problems appear to be to occupational issues, alleviation of which is the prime focus of occupational therapy (Wilcock 2006, Yerxa 2009). Occupational therapy is thus considered crucial in the development of new services based on professional knowledge of the connection between occupation and health.

There is growing evidence that engagement in art occupations can potentially impact both mental and physical health through prevention and promotion, management and treatment (Fancourt and Finn 2019). In this context, 'art' includes a variety of diverse activities including craft (see page 16 for further clarification). As

such arts activities will become a major contributor to meeting the NHS LTP. A recently published World Health Organisation (WHO) Health Evidence Network synthesis report (2019) supports the implementation of arts interventions, encourages health practitioners to share knowledge of effective interventions and supports further research in arts and health and in particular the feasibility, acceptability and suitability of new arts interventions.

The increasing interest in relation to arts in health relates to a shift in global health policy towards a greater focus on supporting good health and well-being and increasing human capital within societies to potentially promote resilience and equity throughout the life course (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Health is re-considered as a dynamic process that is fundamentally about having the capacity to self-manage (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Art activities are accordingly considered as complex and compound interventions that combine manifold components that are known to be health promoting. These can involve aesthetic engagement, imagination, sensory activation, evocation of emotion and cognitive stimulation (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Hence, art activities are considered ideal to address the complexity of the challenges of being healthy and well because they can operate simultaneously on an individual's physical and mental health needs as well impact on broader social issues. The evidence in the WHO report (2019) is compelling, however the notion of interventions as complex and multimodal presents issues in understanding the way such activities help promote health and the actual processes that make this happen. For this reason, it is necessary to research particular art activities in order to establish the specific combination of components that can promote health.

This chapter will provide an overview of the background and purpose of the study. The reader will be introduced to occupational therapy, occupational science and the intrinsic link between health, well-being and occupation. The study is justified and positioned in the context of the current attention towards the role of arts in health.

A critical appraisal of theory, literature and research will serve to highlight the gap in knowledge that has led to the research question and aims of the study. A reflexive and in particular diffractive (Barad 2007) approach has been used throughout the study and thus the account is written in the first person.

Background to the political context: Art, Health and Well-being in the UK

The recent interest in arts and health appears to be developing in the context of criticism to the limitations of the medical model. This relates to a resurgence in consideration of mind, body and spirit when treating disease, together with an interest in the connection between arts and health (Royal Society for Public Health Working Group on Arts 2013). As a profession founded on this concept in 1913, it could be said that thinking in occupational therapy was a hundred years ahead of its time, but unfortunately, many therapists have overlooked this important source of knowledge. It is also significant that the expense of medical interventions has become unsustainable (Corkhill 2015) causing health experts to look for alternative and cheaper remedies.

Prior to the recent WHO publication, The Royal Society for Public Health Working Group on Arts (2013) report provided an extensive overview of how the arts and humanities could contribute to health and wellbeing in the UK. The report emphasized the importance of an agenda on health promotion, resilience and personal responsibility, and provided information about how some art activities were being used to promote health and well-being across the UK. Emphasis was placed on raising the profile of arts in health to show the pivotal and complimentary role that it could play in healthcare and public health systems. Reported benefits included increasing patient empowerment, reducing dependence on medication, promoting growing confidence, and self-resilience in both individuals and communities (Royal Society for Public Health Working Group on Arts 2013). Support for a government policy on working towards

partnership, empowerment and individual responsibility for healthy living could then lead to art projects meeting the five ways to well-being, as established by the NHS. These were to connect, to be active, to take notice, to give and continue to learn (Thompson 2008). A limitation of these reports rests with attention focused on community participation in visual art and music projects and subsequent neglect of individual engagement in the production of art or crafts.

An older report written for the Arts Council of England referred to the benefits of engaging in art for general health promotion rather than the treatment of illness and disability (Devlin 2009). This report provided anecdotal testimonies from people who reported that they had personally benefited from participation in art. Emphasis was placed on the powerful capacity of the arts to affect and change an individual and consequently make a positive impact on people's wellbeing. Focus was on arts participation rather than art therapy and the intention was to raise the general profile of arts in health. The concluding manifesto highlighted that everyone has the right to participate in arts and crafts as a fundamental aspect of human expression; to develop culture, identity and community; and to promote personal, social and economic benefits for participants, their families and wider communities. Although craft was mentioned within this report, no distinction was made between the terms 'Art' and 'Craft'. The report focused almost exclusively on art rather than craft with some examples of the benefits of participation in other 'creative activities' such as singing, dancing, playing an instrument, drumming and creative writing. In addition, as with similar reports, there appeared to be an over emphasis on the social benefits of engagement rather than those that might be achieved in crafts undertaken at home, although engagement in one's own time on their own terms was mentioned. This kindled my interest in more mundane everyday participation in crafts.

The recent publication of the WHO report (Fancourt and Finn 2019) provides a much firmer foundation in support of the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being. This also places the issue within a global rather than national context. Although the evidence in the report covers many arts activities, there is very limited reference to crafts that may be considered as domestic and everyday. These are the very activities that I previously used and currently teach in my practice as an occupational therapist and I found their exclusion both interesting and neglectful. As I examined this inattention, I began to re-consider definitions of art and craft within the research context and more specifically within occupational therapy. The demarcations of art and craft are understandably complex, and this promotes lack of clarity in research findings.

Defining arts: World Health Organisation

Arts are considered as conceptually difficult to define possibly because of diverse cultural practices (Adamson 2010), however the WHO report (Fancourt and Finn 2019) indicates that there are some cross-cultural characteristics. These include the art object being valued beyond its utility, the capacity to provide an imaginative experience, provocation of an emotional response and in requiring novelty, creativity or originality and specialised skills in its production. In relation to health research considered within the report, engagement with the arts is extremely broad and include the performing arts, visual arts including design and craft (painting, photography, sculpture and textiles), literature (writing, reading and attending literary events), culture (visiting museums, galleries, exhibitions concerts and the theatre), community events (festivals and fairs) and online, digital and electronic arts (film-making and computer graphics. Importantly, these categories are considered to transcend cultural boundaries, combine active and receptive engagement and allow new art forms to develop. Crafts are therefore considered within the arts.

Due to the diversity of activities considered under the art umbrella, it is suggested that different combinations of health promoting components are possible with a number of different effects on health (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Therefore, particular art forms are considered to influence certain health conditions. This justifies the need to research specific art forms in order to establish how they might influence health. In the report, activities undertaken in everyday life are differentiated from bespoke therapeutic art programmes or art therapy in that they are considered beneficial for health rather than designed with targeted health or well-being goals.

Defining arts and crafts: Occupational therapy

Within the WHO report, there is no reference to occupational therapy. This is a serious and significant exclusion which I believe is the outcome of a deep-seated problem in the profession that I will discuss later in the chapter. Like art therapy, current occupational therapy intervention is based on targeted health goals based on the understanding that health and well-being is influenced through occupational engagement, including the arts. As indicated above, the WHO report considers craft as a form of art (Fancourt and Finn 2019). This is also the case in occupational therapy where 'art' is often affirmed as being synonymous with 'craft' as demonstrated by the commonly used term 'art and craft'. The genesis of this may relate to the influence of the art and craft movement. In my opinion, unification of art and craft is unhelpful because it prevents consideration of the possibility of inimitable therapeutic potentials. In this vein I believe that there may be some conceptual and theoretical gains from considering the dissimilarities of art and craft.

Outside of the health field, Adamson (2010) describes craft as a radical non-art that is differentiated from art by the fact that craft is practised within an enormous range of cultural environments that have nothing to do with aesthetics or museums (Adamson 2010). Fidler and Velde (1999) describe craft as purely functional with

aesthetics simply as a consequence. Adamson (2010) states that craft is not a movement, a list of trades or a discipline, but rather a set of concerns fluid and relative in cultural terms. This promotes craft as trade rather than as practiced habitually in daily life. Consequently, plurality within the concepts of 'art' and 'craft' reflects a complexity of human activity that is at the heart of this study. Within my research I purposely disconnect craft from art justified in the notion that different combinations of health promoting components are possible in art and craft activities with several diverse effects on health (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Study of the particular is key to understanding the possible combinations and health promoting components. I also believe that it is important to scrutinise domestic crafts in their own right and what they may offer in terms of a legitimate and significant contribution to health and well-being.

Defining craft: for the purpose of the study

For the purpose of this study craft is seen as the processes involved when a person makes or constructs something from natural and/or synthetic materials (Sennett 2009). Each craft is considered to involve different processes with associated products. Craft practice draws on how we learn and develop particular skill through dialogue with these materials (Sennett 2009). Engagement in craftwork involves certain skills in order to produce something pleasing. This potential is seen as innate in all humans (Sweeden 2017). Craftwork can also be described as a unique human characteristic of being engaged (Sennett 2009) with the non-human and material world. Theory suggests that skilled engagement in a craft involves routinized instinctive patterns of behaviour, described as tacit knowledge (Sennett 2009), and bodily interaction with materials and equipment (Riley 2011) that can take people out of themselves, is absorptive, deeply engaging, rhythmic, meditative and thus, reportedly pleasurable (Sennett 2009, Riley 2008).

Skill is learned only through the experience of undertaking an activity and is then developed through multiple repetitions, or practice, through interaction with materials and equipment (Sennett 2009). Therefore, mastery in craft should require a high degree of internal motivation and an eagerness to practise and learn. A person needs not only to be competent, but confident enough to explore new concepts and problem solve (Riley 2008, 2011).

Clearly, what is being described is a highly complex and involved relationship between a person and the environment that should be understood if crafts are to be effectively utilized as a therapeutic intervention. Significantly, although different crafts inter-relate, it is suggested that they are also grounded within a unique historical and cultural context and as such, practice may be peculiar, particular and non-transferable (Riley 2011). This idea confounds the grouping of diverse occupations into more general concepts such as creative activities, arts, crafts and more specifically textiles and needlework. Like Jefferies (2016) I suggest that it is important to distinguish between different kinds of making in order to understand the contributions that they make.

On a professional level, I advocate that, rather than distance the profession from its roots in craft, occupational therapists need to better understand the therapeutic potential offered through crafts, especially at a time when 'hobbies' such as knitting are being re-considered as health promoting activities (Corkhill 2015). Modern culture is beginning to view art related activities in a new light, and we are now living in a society where crafts have become a popular leisure pursuit across genders and generations. Occupational therapy deserves a voice in the context of recent interest in the link between arts, health and well-being established by the government and other medical professions (Royal Society for Public Health Working Group on Arts 2013, Fancourt and Finn 2019).

The professional problem: personal perspective

Occupational therapy has been defined as a complex intervention which recognises people as occupational beings (Pentland et al 2018). Occupation is positioned at the core of occupational therapy with the underlying philosophy that occupation is fundamental to survival, development across the lifespan and to the construction of society (Pentland et al 2018). The profession realised the potential of arts and crafts for health promotion and recovery at its inception over 100 years ago (Anderson et al. 2017). Some occupational therapists continue to use such interventions within current practice in order to enable people to construct a healthy occupational life. In my opinion, the profession is ideally situated and essentially obliged to add to the growing evidence base that now recognises the added health value of engagement in the arts. There are numerous professional issues, however that appear to have inhibited the engagement of occupational therapists in the current debate, as I will briefly explain.

I began my research journey over 10 years ago inspired through a personal, professional aspiration to better understand the therapeutic use of crafts in occupational therapy practice. During my investigation I found that the first occupational therapy interventions were craft based however, these became neglected as the profession matured. As an experienced occupational therapist and educator, I was troubled by the professions apparent distain for using arts and crafts as acceptable forms of intervention (Perrin 2001). Through my clinical experience in mental health settings, I appreciated how engagement in arts and crafts apparently made a significant difference in people's recovery. I believed that occupational therapy convention had unwisely dismissed such interventions because they appeared unsophisticated when compared to the scientific and technological mediations used by other professions. This idea has seemingly become more of a reality as indicated in the recent interest of the potential of arts for health improvement (Fancourt and Finn 2019). At the inception of my study I did not anticipate that my

research would enter this 'new' health context. At the time, my issue was profession centric and I felt that occupational therapy perceived arts and crafts as too simplistic, crude and basic. Contrary to this I saw human engagement in crafts as complex. I was keen to engage in further and deeper investigation in order to begin to understand how people respond when they make or create things and why this might occur. This became my research mission. It is also, the basis of my 'bias' and I was careful to remain aware of this through reflexivity. On reflection my perceptions were timely.

Increased attention in the health benefits of particular craft activities was in part inspired by Corkhill (2015) who, as a physiotherapist affirmed that, as a skilled and creative occupation, knitting had the therapeutic potential to be used as an alternative to the medical interventions used in order to manage the experience of pain, mental health, dementia and addiction (Riley et al. 2013). Corkhill (2015) described current health care in the United Kingdom (UK) as unsustainable and argued that further research was required in order to understand the body's own mechanisms for healing. This affirmation amplified fresh consideration of occupations previously acknowledged as merely a pastime. This, combined with more recent research evidence, provided justification for my research beyond the original professional issue towards public health. Within this political framework, crafts such as knitting were no longer considered 'simply a hobby' and became legitimately placed on the global health agenda (Fancourt and Finn 2019).

My investigation of literature (chapter 2) ultimately identified that although the research evidence clearly advocates the use of the arts in health promotion, it still appears to fall short of considering *how* such occupations might stimulate health and well-being. This understanding is essential for occupational therapy practice but is now also relevant to the wider health context. Whilst the WHO report (2019) explores the wide-ranging effects of different types of arts activity, my research was designed to explore the particular. This

Field Code Changed

thesis ultimately aimed to consider how one specific craft might influence meaningful change for a person in the context of their everyday as well as other effects of their practice that may have impacted on their health and well-being.

Occupational therapy and the therapeutic use of occupation

The foundations of occupational therapy practice are based on the contextual understanding that positive change in health occurs as a result of peoples' engagement in occupation (Kielhofner 2009). Occupations are thus considered as transformational. Applying the occupational therapy concept of person-in-context (Pentland et al. 2018), the therapeutic potential of a craft would be located in the *doing* aspect of occupation (Wilcock 1998). From this perspective occupational therapy is said to be a dynamic process undertaken to enhance the health and well-being of people (Pentland et al. 2018).

Occupational therapy is based on the causative assumption that doing and change are indivisible, and intervention aims to use occupation in order to facilitate intended change (Pentland et al. 2018). Change is said to occur through both understood and unexpected mechanisms of impact. These changes occur within a contextualised body/mind/environment relationship defined as person-in-context. Associations in this process can support or inhibit engagement as they stimulate different responses in the person.

Occupation in occupational therapy is defined as all the things we need, want or have to do, based on the assumption that the person and context are interrelated within the act of doing (Wilcock 2006, Pentland et al. 2018). From this perspective, people are regarded as occupational beings with a biological and psychological need to participate in occupations. The principal transformational concept is the interaction of a person with the environment through occupation (Christiansen 2015). Occupation is thus regarded as central in the promotion of health and becomes the means and the ends of occupational therapy intervention (Pentland et al. 2018).

Occupational therapy generally identifies itself as a field that appreciates the importance of occupation in human life, addresses the problems of restriction of activity and endorses the use of occupation as a therapeutic tool (Kielhofner 2009). Occupational therapists are interested in the role of occupation in general health promotion and in the treatment of pathology (Pentland et al 2018). In my opinion however, the profession tends to focus on the functional outcome of intervention at the cost of understanding the prospective transformational potential of occupations. Nevertheless, the core principle of the occupational therapy process is that doing can and should be used to cause positive change within a person-in-context (Pentland et al. 2018).

Fundamental to the theoretical framework of this thesis is the notion of occupational therapy as a complex intervention (Creek 2003, Pentland et al. 2018). This incorporates appreciation that certain types of doing can be used to cause positive change, with the added recognition that the person and context are interconnected. Wilcock (1998) advises that doing + being, becoming and belonging = health. Importantly, context is considered as distinct from the wider environment and concerns the unique combination of environments, personal factors and histories that influence the person-in-context at any one point in time (Pentland et al. 2018). The unique person-in-context is understood as being in a constant dynamic state throughout the temporality of life, informed by and expressed through the doing of occupations (Pentland et al. 2018). This warrants study of people-in-context in order to understand the concept of change that occurs as a result of engaging in occupation. In this respect, I suggest that narrative understanding appears to be inherent in the occupational therapy process.

Narrative Inquiry and occupational therapy

Narrative is considered central to understanding the relations between person, occupation and environment and in understanding

and utilising doing as a mechanism for change (Christiansen 2015). Occupational therapy models and associated clinical practice tend to value storied understanding and narrative is considered as the basis for the occupational therapy process (Mattingly 1998). Individual narratives provide the foundation for synthesising and interpreting meaning in discourse. A personal story, gathered from conversations and observations will include perspectives on person, occupation and environment within a temporal framework of past, present and future (Christiansen 2015). Narratives can be used to provide a clear picture of the dynamic relationship between a person-in-context and their environment. In this way, occupational therapists understanding of a person's occupational life (clinical reasoning) is fundamentally based on the interpretation of narratives (Kielhofner 2009, Mattingly 1998). Narrative inquiry was therefore considered as an ideal research methodology in order to study the meaning of the changes that occur as a result of embroidering in everyday life. The study consequently developed as a narrative inquiry exploring the potential of embroidering as a therapeutic intervention in occupational therapy.

Historical position of occupational therapy

At this point it is helpful to explain how occupational therapy developed as a profession in order to understand the proposed significance of the professional expertise in arts and health. The profession developed during the latter part of the 19th century, through a combination of social deconstruction and reform. During the industrial age, people left rural areas for cities and faced the poor conditions in factory work, unemployment, poverty and homelessness (Friedland 2003). At this time, physical illness was seen as incurable and the mentally ill were ignored by society. Social ideology and political reform aimed to counteract this belief and activists sought to promote change. Of particular interest was the idea that industrialization had changed society, not just by the means of production, but by creating a chasm between people and nature.

Theorists of the time believed that being out of touch with the environment had a negative effect on the soul (Friedland 2003). The remedy was believed to be engagement in arts, craft and horticulture. Such activities were considered to have the potential to fill the empty spaces in people's lives because of their morally uplifting properties (Friedland 2003, Hocking 2008). Perhaps this problem is evident in our current society which has witnessed a resurgence in participation in the arts.

The Arts and Crafts Movement, the Settlement House Movement and the Mental Hygiene Movement emerged as a result of inspiration from the Romanticism Movement (Hocking 2008). They all focused centrally on craft in order to address individual, community and societal needs. The Arts and Crafts Movement recognized activities associated with art and craft as offering an antidote to industrialization for individuals and even whole communities. They purported that such engagement would promote benefits to health. The Settlement House Movement utilized art and crafts as a means of promoting a mixture of cultural classes. It was believed that this would help to support social reform. The Mental Hygiene Movement developed within mental institutions where it was observed that engagement in craft reduced the requirement for the physical restraint of certain patients (Hocking 2008).

During the Second World War physical rehabilitation was practiced across Europe, the United States and Canada. It embraced crafts including basketry, embroidery, drawing, raffia work and carpentry. Their use with injured troops, as curative occupations, was compatible with social thinker and philanthropist John Ruskin's belief that such engagement provided medicine for both mind and body (Friedland 2007). Crafts had been used similarly in large army camps across the UK for the rehabilitation of the wounded from the First World War (Eastbourne 2015). Between 1918 and 1955 The Disabled Soldiers' Embroidery Industry was considered exceptional in its focus on embroidery (McBrinn 2016). Combinations of such

provisions inspired the foundation of the first occupational therapy schools in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom (Friedland 2003, Friedland 2007, Hocking 2008). The first School of occupational therapy in the United Kingdom, Dorset House, opened in 1930. Although more established in the UK, America, Canada and Western Europe, occupational therapy as a profession continues to grow globally with practices developing in Eastern Europe, India, Asia and Africa.

Although occupation-based practice is heralded as key in modern practice the use of crafts has appeared to have lost favour. Friedland (2007) suggests that this trend started at the end of the First World War, when the profession became more aligned to the medical model, with emphasis on graded activity for remedial treatment of physical injury rather than for diversional purposes (Keam 1945). However, Hocking (2008) writes that the romantic ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris continued to influence the profession well into its adolescence.

An historical review of occupational therapy journals between 1935 and 1962 (Hocking 2008) reveals a tension between romantic ideals and the rational approach of the medical profession. Occupational therapists at the time began to approach their intervention more sagaciously with efforts to document and categorize observations, organize the knowledge base through development of theories and develop mechanical knowhow. The aim was to remediate dysfunction and provide therapeutic programs that encouraged independence and reduced the impact of impairment (Hocking 2008), especially in relation to young male patients and the working class (Association of Occupational Therapists 1946). There was a call for therapists to diversify from crafts towards activities that were better associated with the domain of everyday life (Moross and Gillis 1957). The perception of so-called handicrafts as being non-vital to recovery, meant that their use was no longer considered to be part of the occupational therapists' role (Addison 1957, Casson and

Foulds 1955, Henson 1955). Aspects of therapy relating to the enhancement of well-being that were not directly observable or easy to quantify began to lose validity in both psychiatric and physical settings (Hocking 2008). The call was raised for more knowledgeable and scientific understanding of how activities could specifically be used in relation to treating psychiatric as well as orthopaedic conditions (Astley-Cooper 1941, Licht 1949, Atkinson 1980).

In practice, crafts seemed to be considered as too difficult to evaluate scientifically. Scientific realism that emphasized knowledge based on objective measures, and rational theories with tangible interventions, began to dominate practice (Hocking 2008). Some occupational therapists, however, suggested that crafts should not be abandoned (Perrin 2001, Hocking 2008), but researched in more detail in order to begin to understand their therapeutic potential (Riley 2011). Today, craft is largely absent from pre-registration occupational therapy training in the UK, Canada, USA, and Australia but not continental Europe. However, it remains as integral to occupational therapy practice mainly in mental health settings as discussed in chapter two. As an occupational therapy tutor, I teach crafts such as felting, pottery, sewing, embroidery, knitting, macramé, rag-rugging and enamelling to MSc Occupational therapy pre-registration students. I have also run craft workshops for clinicians keen on re-integrating crafts into their practice settings.

Occupational Science

Occupational Science is an academic discipline introduced as a foundation for occupational therapy and for public health in the 21st Century during the late 1980's (Yerxa 1990). Dedicated to the study of humans as occupational beings, the resultant knowledge aims to explore the occupational needs of people in society and how these related to their health or conversely ailment (Wilcock 2006). The intention was for the world community of occupational therapists to influence health through detailed knowledge of everyday occupation,

in the context of everyday life (Wilcock, 2006) and to foster a practice that facilitated capability and adaptation in order to contribute to the life opportunities for people both with and without impairments (Yerxa 2000). This relates to the broader understanding of health as state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity defined and endorsed by the WHO (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Further, as a science, its purpose was to generate knowledge about the form, function and meaning of human occupation in order to inform occupational therapy (Zemke and Clarke 1996) and other disciplines interested in public health (Wilcock 2006).

Occupational Science provides an occupational perspective on health that has enabled therapists to question some of the professional assumptions that had materialized over the past decades (Wilcock 1991, Wilcock 2006) including the emphasis on independence in functional activities of daily living. This occupational perspective of health is considered as fundamental to advancement of the potential for the use of arts in healthcare. Fundamentally, my research is grounded in occupational science as it aimed to uncover detailed knowledge of the health promoting potential of embroidering when practiced in the context of a person's everyday life in order to inform occupational therapy and other disciplines interested in improving health.

Justification for focus on specific craft

In order to further understand craft as a therapeutic occupation and because of its complexity I argue that we need to focus on explicit practices. The idea that occupational therapy could benefit from a multifaceted understanding of the essence of occupation through direct examination of specific every-day occupation was embraced by Dickie (2011). In line with occupational science she advocated that occupational therapy practice could benefit from research that aimed to discover the links between occupation and

health by observing people who were engaged in real life occupations. The participants in her study engaged in quilt making with a view to achieving a sense of well-being or health in both daily life and at times of crisis (Dickie 2011). Riley (2011) suggested that lack of research into the occupational form of each craft created a problem in understanding and utilizing research findings. Riley argued that understanding the meaning of occupation was dependent on a deeper understanding of the diversity in origin, breadth and complexity of each occupational process (Riley 2011). This is based on the supposition that more refined knowledge about the multiple dimensions of occupation could stimulate the development of potential therapeutic techniques, result in better prepared therapists who guide the profession to a trajectory that is in keeping with its time-honoured recognition of the importance of human occupation in terms of health and well-being (Zemke and Clarke 1996). Whilst I agree that understanding the form of an occupation is necessary, I propose that we also need to study the function and meaning if we are to consider the health potential.

Focus on embroidering

I have so far advocated that public health services including occupational therapy can be informed through the study of people engaged in particular occupations in the context of their everyday lives. This was based on the perceived need to study the complexity of occupations within daily life by paying attention to how they were constructed, situated, enacted, and evolved over time (Yerxa 2000).

Understanding of the processes involved in a specific craft should also increase wider appreciation of the link between the arts and health. The purpose in this study of the specific was to recognise how participation in one occupation might enable change to occur and the related meaning of any potential transition. For this thesis, I selected embroidering as an example of a craft worthy of further and deeper investigation. I could have chosen many craft activities and

considered knitting, crochet, pottery, weaving, spinning, furniture making, jewellery making, sewing, for example. I chose embroidering as I found that it was under-researched as a specific craft practice and because I knew people who considered embroidering to be a significant part of their everyday lives. Embroidering was also highlighted as a potentially beneficial activity in Riley et al. (2013) survey; however, data related to this was removed from the final study.

The final decision to concentrate on embroidering related to my co-authoring of a paper on the experience of embroidering which suggested that practice was deeply and significantly engaging and merited further investigation (Gregory and von Kurthy 2018). Embroidering is accordingly used as an exemplar to demonstrate the possible relevance of the study of particular crafts in the effort to better understand the link between arts and health.

Embroidering and occupational therapy

Embroidering can be described as a form of needlework which is generally included under the branch of crafts known as textiles (Harris 2011). Textiles crafts include; needlework, weaving, tapestry, rug weaving, lace, dying and printing, knitting, netting and knotting, crochet, felt and bark cloth (Harris, 2011). Needlework can be defined as the occupation of sewing normally with a hand-held needle. It includes the practical application of the task such as mending, patching, seaming, and hemming, referred to as plain work, and the artistic application involved in embroidery, crewel work, needlepoint and patch working, referred to as fancy work (McHugh Pendleton 1996).

It is important to recognise that the term 'needle' might relate to a sewing needle or a knitting needle. This means that both come under the umbrella of needlework. Embroidery, however, is normally considered to be non-practical compared with knitting, mending or hemming as it is seen to be undertaken simply for decoration. For the

purpose of this study, embroidery is defined as a method of decorating an already existing structure with a needle (Harris 2011). As such it differs from other textiles which involve processes of construction (Riley 2011). Embroidering has a long history within human culture and has symbolic connotations with power, facility, captivity, identity, connection, protection, protest, loss, community, place, value, art work voice, endings, (Hunter 2019), gender (Parker 2010), and occupational therapy (Cooper 1940).

During my background reading, I discovered that embroidery may have been natal to the founding of occupational therapy as a profession. Men who returned shell-shocked and traumatized from the First World War were considered to have lost a hold on life and required a new approach to healing that provided 'psychological support as well as physical repair' (Hunter 2019 pp42). Handicrafts played a major role in post war rehabilitation and embroidering became an unlikely but valued occupation for thousands of ex-servicemen (Hunter 2019). A so called 'craze for cross-stitch' was considered to have been stimulated, not just by the increase in leisure time for women caused from return from war work to the home, but also by the use of crafts such as embroidery as a convalescent occupation for ex-servicemen (McBrinn 2017). Embroidering was considered a 'nerve cure', which was a form of rehabilitative therapy to distract and sooth the mind and restore dexterity to damaged and impaired motor skills (McBrinn 2017 pp294).

Contrary to its use with servicemen, embroidering has been culturally defined in the modern western understanding of the feminine (Parker 2010). Parker argues that embroidery is a construct of the cultural representation and consequent confinement of women during the Edwardian and Victorian era (Parker 2010). Although decorative tasks undertaken in the domestic field can be highly skilled, they are also undervalued because they are neglected into the female category and thus defined as amateurish (Jefferies 2016).

This may have influenced the limited attention given to embroidery within current occupational therapy literature; however a dated source defines it as a traditional craft used primarily with women (Fidler 1999). However, taking a historic viewpoint needlework has been utilised as a therapeutic activity to provide emotional solace, promote recovery of mental health (MacDonald 1938), as an outlet for artistic capacity, individuality, hard work and increasing concentration (Astley-Cooper 1940, McHugh Pendleton 1996), to provide distraction from emotional issues (James 1940) and pain (Smith 1945), in the rehabilitation of army personnel (Thornely 1948), in recovery from Tuberculosis (Cox 1947) and to improve fine motor, cognitive and perceptual skills (McHugh Pendleton 1996).

Clearly, early doctors and subsequently therapists noticed, valued and harnessed the potential of embroidering as a therapeutic occupation with practical understanding of how it could influence both body and mind. This understanding was based on professional experience rather than research. Today, the organisation 'Help Heal Veterans' (2020) continues to send craft kits to veteran patients which includes embroidery and cross-stitch. Despite this 'grey' evidence, there is a paucity of research literature about embroidery and how it might influence health. As previously stated, the work of Riley et al. (2013) has shown a re-ignition of interest in textiles and specifically needlework. This international survey of over 3500 knitters suggested that people who knit regularly self-report reduced stress and greater happiness with increased social engagement. The quantitative survey, developed from the written narratives of bloggers on the website Stitchlinks (Corkhill 2015), also included stories from people who embroidered. These stories are moving, personal and inspirational when considering the therapeutic potential of needlework. Similar stories are recited on the website endorsed by Fine cell Work; a social enterprise that trains prisoners in paid, skilled, creative needlework undertaken in their cells to foster hope, discipline and self-esteem (Finecellwork.co.uk 2015). The knitting

survey focused on knitting and did not analyse data about embroidering. Embroidering was therefore identified as an everyday craft worthy of further investigation in order to answer the research problem.

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have introduced the relevance of the research problem in the context of the health needs of the future population with a focus on participation and prevention (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Art and in this case, crafts have been identified as important and significant influencers on health, and well-being (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Domestic crafts are justified as important contributors to health and well-being in their own right. As a profession occupational therapy appears largely absent from the current debate on the correlation between arts and health, and this has been related to an enduring historical discourse. I have proposed however that occupational therapy, through its focus on understanding of humans as occupational beings, is well-placed to develop further understanding of the effects of craft on health.

The basis for study of the specific is the notion of arts interventions as complex and multimodal (Fancourt and Finn 2019). The need has been proposed to begin to understand not just in what way such activities help promote health and moderate illness but detail the possible processes that make this happen. For this reason, I have argued that it is necessary to research particular craft activities in order to establish the specific combination of components that can promote health. With respect to occupational science and furthering understanding of arts and health the intention of the following study is to provide detailed knowledge of the therapeutic potential of embroidering, in the context of everyday life (Wilcock, 2006).

Research Question

How can embroidering influence meaningful change within the context of a person's everyday life?

Outline of the document and chapter content

Outline of chapter two: Literature review

Chapter two will provide a critical review of relevant literature in two sections. Section one will provide a critical discussion of current literature about the use of crafts in occupational therapy and research about the experience of engaging in creative activities including crafts. In section two a number of pertinent papers which focus on the experience of engaging in textiles will be critically appraised using the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) checklist. The gap in the literature will be identified and the research question accordingly justified.

Outline of chapter three: Methodology

This chapter begins with an introduction to the philosophical foundations of the research including ontology and epistemology. The beginning of the research journey has been summarized in order to provide the context for this investigation. The research methodology follows with a justification of the suitability of narrative inquiry as a theoretical position. Five key narrative theorists are introduced with indication of their theoretical influence. Finally, rejection of other potential methodologies is discussed followed by a chapter summary.

Outline of chapter four: Method

Chapter four provides detail of the generation of data including population, recruitment and methods. Ethical considerations are considered together with the process of ethical and research governance. The chapter continues with a critical discussion of rigor.

This chapter provides a justified overview of the method of narrative analysis which includes a brief history. This research incorporates two distinct approaches to narrative analysis in correlation with narrative inquiry theory. The methods of analysis are justified, and the processes explained in the latter part of the chapter, followed by a summary.

Outline of chapter five: Findings

Individual embroidering stories from the first stage of analysis are followed by presentation of the findings which include: the influence of contextual 'grand' narratives, combined with the need to embroider, the collaborative embroidering companionship and mind/body responses which become experiences.

The first section includes a synopsis story of the how embroidering was situated with the historical context of each individual person's life. In keeping with narrative theory, these stories are considered as necessary for the reader to gain full appreciation of the findings. This section concludes with a summary that presents the possible shared elements of personal embroidering stories. The second section presents collective key narrative themes that show the potential therapeutic effects of embroidering. Pertinent abridged stories and photographs are used to illustrate each narrative theme.

Outline of chapter six: Discussion

Following discussion of the potential meaning and implications of the environmental influences, this chapter explores the concepts of the influence of contextual embroidering narratives, combined with the themes of the need to embroider, the collaborative embroidering companionship and mind/body experiences. The ensuing argument shows how this study supports prior research, relates to theory and importantly presents new and original findings. The chapter highlights the original contribution of the thesis. Strengths and limitations of the study are discussed.

Outline of chapter six: Conclusion

The conclusion reiterates the principle and secondary findings with conceptual conclusions and a statement of the contribution to knowledge and implications for practice. The chapter ends with agenda for future research and a strategy for dissemination.

Chapter 2

Literature review

Position statement in relation to the initial research problem.

This thesis was originally inspired through a problem identified within a professional setting. The issue related to my use of craft in an acute mental health setting and more latterly in teaching craft to pre-registration occupational therapy students. Although I had witnessed how craft could influence health and well-being in my practice, I felt that I was ill equipped to justify this to other professionals. Professionally, I felt the need to know more about what happens when a person undertakes craft occupations.

Justification for narrative approach to literature review

Narrative research by definition is based around developing an account or plot and thus advocates for an inductive approach to the research process. Answers not apparent from the beginning reveal themselves during the research journey as events unfurl and interrelate (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Adoption of a narrative approach within my learning enabled the research to evolve as I used the literature to shape my thinking (Ravitch and Riggan 2017). Importantly, although I learnt much from the literature, my thinking was also heavily influenced though thoughtful interaction with my students, friends, colleagues and supervisors.

In keeping with the chosen methodology, the following literature review is constructed within a narrative rather than systematic approach which aims to provide a scholarly, judicious and creative summary of research experience from experts rather than answer a narrowly focused research question that is pre-defined at the outset

(Greenhalgh et al. 2018). This supports an interpretive understanding of the current state of knowledge of the relationship between engagement in craft occupations and health and well-being. Research evidence is selected purposively, through involvement of experts from a wide range of disciplines in order to undertake a multi-level interpretation of the current evidence base, but also unearth potential ignorance and uncertainty of what is known, how we know what we know and where the unanswered questions lie (Greenhalgh et al. 2018). One overarching feature of a narrative approach is that stories change as they evolve and this has certainly been the case with this review. For this reason, the process of searching and finding new research has been iterative with constant updates and insertion of new information and understandings.

Search techniques

Data bases searched

In order to locate current research, I predominantly used OneSearch as a search platform that aggregates most of the library's electronic and print resources, making them all searchable at the same time from one central location. This includes the library catalogue, most of the databases, the Institutional Repository, and Digital Collections.

Databases included in the OneSearch platform:

- [Allied and Complementary Medicine \(AMED\)](#)
- [Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature \(CINAHL\) Plus](#)
- [Embase](#)
- [Health Research Premium Collection](#)
- [MEDLINE](#)
- [PsycINFO](#)
- [PubMed](#)
- [ScienceDirect](#)
- [Scopus](#)
- [Web of Science \(WOS\)](#)

Overview of purposive selection of literature

Current topical research was identified from a wide range of disciplines (Example of search log in appendix 1). Boolean operators were used in order to focus results in relation to the research topic. Examples of search terms include: "health and wellbeing" AND (embroidery OR craft) AND " occupational therap* ", " occupational therap* " AND (creative activity OR creative therapy), "health and wellbeing" AND handicraft, "creative therapy" AND (craft OR embroidery) AND (health OR wellbeing), "Health and wellbeing" AND (craft or textiles), "creative Needlecraft", "Art and Craft" AND (occupational therap*). In addition, I also engaged in routine hand searches based on reference lists taken from identified relevant papers, reports, and studies. Supervision of craft related MSc student research projects enabled further exploration of the evidence base. During this process it became apparent that some research related to community art projects with a health promotion focus. Due to the large amount of data identified, I made the decision to extract community art projects from the review as I felt the topic was sufficiently different from the research question. Research from the perspective of art therapy was also discounted as this is a distinct form of psychotherapy which requires further training (Futterman Collier 2011, Griffiths 2008).

As I was also interested in the historical context, I undertook an in-depth narrative review of the journal of the Association of Occupational Therapists, (renamed the British Journal of Occupational Therapy in 1974), from first publication in 1938 to 1995. Using the search terms 'craft', 'art', 'creative activity' I was able to identify the dominant narrative within the profession and critically review the use of craft and art occupations over time. Accomplishment of this task gave me important insight into the influence of the historical context on current practice.

The following literature review begins with my interpretive consideration of the current state of knowledge of the possible link between engagement in craft occupations, health and well-being. The aim is to integrate and synthesise existing work and its multiple and practical contexts and to place myself as transparently as possible in order to present informative critiques of theoretical or empirical work as well as my own biases and professional assumptions (Ravitch and Riggan 2017). In addition, the problem of how we understand the therapeutic potential of such occupations will be argued with justification towards the relevance of the current research question. The final literature review included primary studies that focused on group or individual participation in creative activity, textiles or specific crafts and health and/or well-being from 1997 to 2019. Papers have been critically analysed using the CASP qualitative checklist (example in Appendix 2). The summary of this chapter leads to the research question and aims.

Quantitative research: Current understanding of how engagement in creative activity, art and/or craft relates to health and well-being

Published research that focuses on the relationship between health, well-being and participation in craft or other activities in the arts almost entirely resides within the qualitative interpretive paradigm (Perruzza and Kinsella 2010). There are a few exceptions, however and a handful of available quantitative studies attempt to remediate the paucity of experimental research (Caddy et al. 2012, Drori et al. 2014, Eschleman et al. 2014).

Unfortunately, these quantitative studies tend to fall short of their goal of providing evidence of the relationship between health and engagement in craft or other art related activities. The foremost issue is that researchers define, and group together, some activities (that may promote elements of creative thinking), as an independent and obvious phenomenon i.e. creative activity. For example, one study incorporated participation in physical exercise, arts, games and

health education as creative activity (Drori et al. 2014). Another illustration was a study that aimed to show the therapeutic relationship between mental health outcomes and participation in creative activity (Caddy et al. 2012). Creative activity included *any* art, craft or expressive art-based activity. Although the results showed improvements in all outcome measures and demonstrated a correlation between participation in creative activity groups and improvements in mental health, the complexity of variables (Caddy et al. 2012) and in my opinion, acceptance of creative activity as a distinct construct limited the possibility to make conclusions. The authors highlighted the need for a return to qualitative work with a focus on patient stories and they considered these might further support the study findings.

Perruzza and Kinsella (2010) undertook a matrix method literature review of the use of creative arts occupations in occupational therapy. The authors concluded that qualitative research advocated that engagement in creative arts occupations may positively affect health and well-being and may have value in therapeutic practice. More importantly, the authors highlighted the paucity of research into creative art occupations, particularly in relation to physical health. Interestingly, they endorsed the common choice of qualitative methodology in this field with limited discussion of the lack of alternative methods or justification for their proclamation. Despite these limitations, six themes were identified within the 23 articles included in the review: enhanced control, building a sense of self, expression, transforming the illness experience, gaining a sense of purpose and building social support (Perruzza and Kinsella 2010).

A more recent critical review of research literature, with a specific focus on the potential of visual arts-based practices on mental health recovery in adults, selected 23 articles with qualitative, quantitative and mixed method design (Van Lith et al. 2013). This comprehensive review was clear in the focus on the specific

intervention of visual arts which included painting and clay but neglected to differentiate between studies that concentrated on psychotherapeutic art therapy or those that signified visual art as an activity as part of mental health recovery. As such the findings interconnect the relationship between the art therapist and art as a psychotherapeutic medium used to explore the sub-conscious and the experiences of engaging in visual art as an activity that aided health. Deductive thematic analysis was used to identify meanings from the 23 research articles in relation to six pre-defined recovery dimensions which included reduced symptoms, personal/psychological and social recovery, occupational and environmental engagement and self-care (Van Lith et al. 2013). The findings of the research provide some implications for my research. Firstly, the authors recognised that that the lack of specification of art-based practise prevented understanding of the specific mechanisms within the practise that aided recovery and recommended that future research should be clear about the practise that was being studied (Van Lith et al. 2013). This is a message that seems to have made an impact as research post 2013 begins a trend in research focused on specific occupations especially in relation to knitting. Further to this, but not discussed in the critical review was the importance of discriminating between art therapy, occupational therapy and engagement in art-based practices as an aid to health and well-being. Both art therapy and occupational therapy are professionally recognized titles which involve extensive training and client therapist engagement in a specific therapeutic process based on underlying professional theories. Research is not sufficiently clear about whether the study is about art therapy or art as therapy, a distinction which is made clear in the recent WHO report (Fancourt and Finn 2019). The final remark about the significance of this study resides in the finding that the reviewed qualitative research lacked critical appraisal in the methodological framework which prevented presentation in a robust manner in order to identify the strengths, limitations and level of trustworthiness.

Qualitative research: Current understanding of how engagement in creative activity, art and/or craft relates to health and well-being

Before I discuss the qualitative research, I need to highlight some general methodological issues. Initially, it is important to recognise that research trends have changed. There appears to have been a slight intellectual shift after Van Lith et al's (2013) critical review as indicated above. Before this, like quantitative research qualitative studies also tended to focus on multifarious concepts where different art or craft practices were studied together as inseparable phenomenon. This practice is still evident in recent research for example (Pöllänen and Hirsimäki 2014, 2015 and 2018) and sustained through the use of umbrella terms which include; **creative activity** (Caddy et al., 2012; (Doyle and Cole 2007); (Drori et al. 2014); (Griffiths 2008); (Griffiths and Corr 2007b); (Holder 2001); (la Cour et al. 2005); (la Cour et al. 2007); (Mankertz 2001); (Müllersdorf and Ivarsson 2012); (Müllersdorf and Ivarsson 2016); (Eschleman et al. 2014), **arts** (Caddy et al., 2012; (Doyle and Cole 2007); (Drori et al. 2014); (Griffiths 2008); (Griffiths and Corr 2007b); (Holder 2001); (la Cour et al. 2005); (la Cour et al. 2007); (Mankertz 2001); (Müllersdorf and Ivarsson 2012); (Müllersdorf and Ivarsson 2016); (Eschleman et al. 2014), **art and craft** (Deok 2017),; (Reynolds 2008, Reynolds et al. 2009); (Stanford et al. 1995); (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011) and **craft** (Friedland 2003); (Maidment and MacFarlane 2009, Maidment and Macfarlane 2011); (McLean 2004); (Pöllänen 2013, Pöllänen and Hirsimäki 2014, Pöllänen 2015a, Pöllänen 2015b). This has been critiqued by various researchers as it presents a confused and ill-defined knowledge base and re-emphasises the point that research needs to focus on specific occupations rather than nonspecific categories (Van Lith et al. 2013, Riley et al. 2013).

Published research has therefore established a link between engagement in various, but not specific, art and craft activities and

health (Fancourt and Finn 2019) except for knitting (Riley et al. 2013, Adey 2018, Brooks et al 2018) and quilt making (Dickie 2011). The overall message is that evidence shows some success of interventions that utilise the creative arts, predominantly within mental health (Griffiths and Corr 2007, Griffiths 2008, Leckey 2011, Fancourt and Finn 2019). The problem is that clinical utility is difficult to justify due to lack of clarity of research methodology, and the many interpretations of the concepts that impact on the effectiveness of the creative or art activities in which people engage (Leckey, 2011).

Many of these qualitative studies do not indicate the skill level of the participants and, as such, one is not sure if the results are the experience of engaging in skilled participation of the activities or in learning them. This influenced my study as I wanted to research how embroidering might influence change rather than change that occurred as the result of learning how to embroider. The relevance of the non-specificity of skill differentiation is highlighted as problematic in Reynolds (2004a) study of textile artists, in the discussion offered by Kenning (2015b) in relation to how creative exploration develops with confidence in crochet lace making and Dickie's (2003) study of learning in quilt making.

Much of the older published literature has tended to recruit participants with pathology (Reynolds 2006, Reynolds 2007, Symons 2011, Timmons and MacDonald 2008, Spandler 2007, Griffiths 2008, Leckey 2011, Pierce 2003, Reynolds 2004, Reynolds 2003, Reynolds 2008, Van Lith et al. 2013) which, whilst important, assumes underlying awareness of the therapeutic potential of the activity, which I have previously indicated as lacking.

As with the quantitative research, the inclination to recruit participants who partake in their activity as a member of a group possibly influences the recurrent finding of building social support (Perruzza and Kinsella 2010). More recent literature has recognised this tendency and emphasised the need to focus on individual peoples everyday participation in crafts (Pöllänen 2015a, 2015b and 2018),

textiles (Kenning 2015), knitting (Adey 2018; Brooks et al 2019, sewing (Clarke 2019), and tapestry (Demecs and Miller 2019), which is of particular relevance to my study. The issue remains, however that activities such as textiles and sewing involve diverse practices.

With the above critical notifications in mind the following section provides a summary of the research identified which is associated with the experience of engaging in a variety of art and/or craft activities in relation to health and well-being. These papers were identified through a process of repeated reading of findings of qualitative research and identification of common 'themes' across papers. This process continued through the 6 years duration of my study and new themes were added as they were identified in newly published research. Interestingly, the findings of new research such as Adey (2018) does not tend to fall outside of the themes outlined below. Research into the therapeutic potential of crafts and specifically textiles seems to have become rather static. In my opinion this relates to the limited methodological approaches utilised by researchers in the health field.

Enhanced control, mastery and skill development

The literature suggested that craft-making was empowering as engagement offered a variety of features that linked to well-being including possibilities for personal growth, development of physical and cognitive skills (Brooks et al. 2019), control of one's body, thoughts and feelings and also social and cultural dimensions (Pöllänen 2015b). Craft was defined as an intentional activity that led to a continuous process of setting and achieving personal goals through control of external conditions (Pöllänen 2015b). Where everyday life was considered chaotic, the routinized repetitive nature of craft was considered to offer stability and order (Horghagen et al. 2014). This was especially the case with knitting (Riley et al. 2013 Brooks et al. 2019).

Cohen (2006) suggested that engagement in arts provided an opportunity for promotion of a feeling of mastery which he linked to

neural development and an enhanced immune system (Cohen 2006). In a study which focused on pilots outside of their work, Eschleman et al. (2014) found a positive association between engagement in creative activity and a sense of mastery and control that had a direct effect on work performance. Although the researchers of this quantitative study developed their statistical findings using Likert scales and self-reports, they suggest that organisations may benefit from encouraging employees to consider creative activities in their efforts to recuperate from work. Critically, scales that use ordinal rather than interval or ratio data cannot be mathematically interpreted which makes the findings of this study limited.

Mastery over materials is also significant where a sense of control was experienced through manipulation of tools, and other resources essential to practice (Clarke 2019, Pöllänen 2015a). Art based practice, that encouraged ownership over art-making, was also shown to promote increased independence due to a sense of empowerment that extended beyond diagnosis (Van Lith et al. 2013) and a mastery of one's own body (Pöllänen 2013).

Riley (2008) proposed a concept of body intelligence which is the ability to use the body in a highly distinct and skilled way and suggested that the therapeutic potential of craft is released when body intelligence is engaged within skilled occupation. For example, when a person is diagnosed with a life changing and degenerative condition, their life can be defined through loss of skill as a result of disease progression. The concept of body intelligence is described as morally uplifting since even despite the diagnosis and loss of usually gross motor skills people are able to use their body to develop a new and even highly distinctive skill and that this provides a feeling of enhanced control (Riley 2008). Art or craft activities appear especially important in that they seem to offer many opportunities to grade effort and produce maximum effect from relatively limited physical capacity requirements (Reynolds et al. 2009). More recent research suggested the textiles were particularly versatile so that

they could be adapted to meet physical or mental needs (Dickie 2011, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019).

Development of skill appears significant across a number of studies that suggest that art-making emphasized what a person could do which offered a sense of hope (Kelly et al. 2012, Sticklely et al. 2007). Specifically, the products of making were testimony to the skills of the maker which counteracted feelings of worthlessness imposed through chronic illness (Reynolds et al. 2009). Finished products appeared extremely important as they testified skilled actions and abilities, especially when physical capacity or mental health was compromised (Hunt et al. 2014, Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds 2003, Sticklely et al. 2007, Reynolds and Prior 2003). To produce useful and aesthetically pleasing products which makers connected to a specific time, elicited warm and pleasing feelings which were related to well-being (Pöllänen 2015b). The opportunity to learn, to challenge self and develop were linked to feelings of joy and satisfaction as well as increase in self-worth through pride in visible achievement (Kelly et al. 2012, Maidment and Macfarlane 2011, Reynolds et al. 2008, Sticklely et al. 2007) which challenged stigma (Reynolds et al. 2009). Engagement challenged thinking and tested skills which enriched inner worlds and provided motivation to push self and enter new and more complex challenges (Reynolds et al. 2009). This sense to push beyond the possible promoted feelings of personal development, confidence, and a sense of mastery that steered projects to completion (Reynolds 2009). To produce something was also found to manifest aliveness; concrete proof that one was alive which also provided focus towards the future in the form of small and manageable projects (Reynolds et al. 2009). Ownership of both the process and the project enabled the craft-makers to develop their own sense of agency which heightened their feelings of empowerment (Pöllänen 2015b). The sense of control offered through the potential to develop a new skill despite the limitations of the physical body (Cohen 2006, Reynolds et al. 2009,

Symons 2011) or due to deterioration through illness (Cohen 2006, Reynolds 2007, Spandler 2007) or age (Pöllänen 2013) appears to be significant in older literature.

Identity

One overriding theme is participants' discovery of art or craft as a new venture either directly as a result of their diagnosis such as cancer, neurological condition or depression (Griffiths 2008, la Cour et al. 2005, Reynolds 2006, Reynolds 2007, Spandler 2007, Timmons and MacDonald 2008) or in relation to a life event (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007). This contradicts the advice advocated within occupational therapy literature to only use activities that already hold meaning to an individual. Potentially this might relate to the loss of role that often accompanies diagnosis with a chronic condition the void of which can be filled with participation in craft (Hunt et al. 2014, Reynolds and Prior 2003, Reynolds et al. 2009) or as a surrogate for a previous profession (Hunt et al. 2014). People described that through loss of their work role they entered a process of reframing their leisure pursuits as they began to accept the limitations of living with a chronic illness. Craft enabled them to live more fully within the constraints rather than concede to them (Reynolds et al. 2009). Engagement in art was found to compensate for loss of career and fulfil the need of a new occupational role which became a major source of identity (Reynolds 2003, Reynolds 2010) and also provided a sense of well-being for those entering retirement (Reynolds, 2010). Artistic endeavour also offered the opportunity to restore status leading to personal growth, and continuity of roles which enabled an ongoing sense of being despite the onset of cancer (Reynolds 2008) arthritis (Reynolds et al. 2011) and Multiple Sclerosis (Hunt et al. 2014). As a new discovery, jewellery making specifically was told as a life changing experience where a whole new world opened with which participants were hopelessly and happily addicted (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007).

Described as a self-imposed obligation (Pöllänen 2015b) and addiction (Adams-Price and Steinmann, 2007) making has been linked to enhanced self-worth, increased confidence and identity (Maidment and Macfarlane 2011, Pöllänen 2015b, Van Lith et al. 2013). Craft was described as an arena where personal identities were developed and expressed (Pöllänen 2015a) through a self-transcendent experience where inspiration and imagination combined to allow the mind freedom to wander (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007). Identity or status was expressed through defining self as an 'artist' or through their craft stating, 'it is me' or 'who I am' (Coulter et al. 2004, Timmons and MacDonald 2008, Griffiths 2008) justifying life away from disability (Horghagen et al. 2014). The connection between making and identity appears significant in relation to providing an identity outside of pathology, the person that was there before and still exists (la Cour et al. 2005, Reynolds 2007, Spandler 2007). Craft provided an arena which protected and promoted identity (Reynolds et al. 2011) where interests, values and personal identity outside illness could be developed and expressed (Pöllänen 2013, Reynolds and Prior 2003, Reynolds et al. 2008). More recently, research has suggested that the potential in crafts to express identity outside of life roles was extremely important (Clarke 2019). The inter-relationship between art, identity and the expression of 'I' was seen as essential to being, a place to say what needed to be said and a desire for life (Stickley et al. 2007). The value attached to the material product significantly provided a concrete reminder of success, something participants could feel really proud about (Griffiths 2008, Symons 2011, Timmons and MacDonnald 2008, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019). Participants spoke about how the objects created interconnected with themselves as people, their values and attitudes (Coulter et al. 2004, Tzanidaki & Reynolds 2011, Clarke 2019, Brooks et al. 2019). The process of making seems deeply related to the identity of a person; in *doing* the person *becomes* a 'crafts person' (Wilcock 2006).

The inside and outside world

The effect of raw materials is significant across a number of studies and considered to be a source of inspiration (Pöllänen 2015a, Pöllänen 2015b). Research within a clinical context shows that creative activities (pottery/embroidery/painting/textiles/visual art-making) may provide relief from pre-occupation with illness and enable participants to focus outwards on positive life experiences (Griffiths 2008, Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds 2006, Timmons and MacDonald 2008, Van Lith et al. 2013) and reflect positively on life meaning (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007). Despite researchers expecting that the process and products of art-making would have symbolic significance findings suggested that this was not the case and art provided a means to put cancer to one side (Hunt et al. 2014, Reynolds 2008), focus on the outside world (Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds 2009) and self-forget (Reynolds et al. 2009, Futterman Collier 2011). Crafting was seen as a flexible resource to forget challenges within one's life-situation through focus on the making (Pöllänen 2015b). This seems to be reference to the powerful effect of diversion from illness, or perhaps that people wish to concentrate of the art of living rather than dying.

In retirement participants in Reynolds (2009) study suggested that engagement in art-making provided a variety of experiences that promoted feelings of connectedness with the wider physical and social worlds. Art-making seemed to generate the desire to pay particular and deep attention to physical surroundings; in particular shapes, textures and colours (Reynolds 2009). The physical environment was a stimulus with which participants appeared compelled to interact (Reynolds 2009) describing a sensuous pleasure inherent in art-making which enriched perceptions of colour and pleasure and provided a vitality that distanced self from bodily discomfort (Reynolds 2008). Through craft making people remained engaged with the outside world even when they were house-bound as their recollections were incorporated into new projects (Reynolds et al.

2009). For those living with chronic illness, in looking at form, colour, movement, light and harmony participants described a process of re-defining meaning in their much diminished life which prevented suicidal ideation (Reynolds et al. 2009). In Jewellery making, the connection to the earth through gemstones enabled transcendent connections to God or to others enabling deep reflection on life's meaning (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007). Here the materiality of craft appears to offer solace (Horghagen et al. 2014), and also suggests involvement of the limbic system with experiences of smell, touch, vision, sounds, proprioception and memory.

Although many studies suggested that art-making provided an opportunity to socialize, these studies often recruited from social groups rather than recruiting lone workers. The older people interviewed in Reynolds (2009) study provided another picture in which artmaking provided a window to the outside world when people could no longer participate within it due to physical incapacity. Many people within this study used memories of the outside world as inspiration for their work but participated in their art-making only within the home. Art-making offered an escape from the confines of the body and the home so that people could travel in the imagination (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011). Though making products for charity, exhibitions or family and friends connected them to the 'healthy' social world and helped them maintain relationships and feelings of acceptance as a person of value (Reynolds 2009, Reynolds et al. 2009). Many studies indicate that participants tend to engage in their occupation within the home (Riley et al. 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Clarke 2019).

Craft as a coping mechanism

Participants across many studies described using craft as a coping strategy to combat pain, loss, change, stress, and mental illness. The creative space seemingly promoted a 'spark' or an 'ignition' and it was this that served as a distraction, a time out from symptoms (Van Lith et al. 2013), daily life, worries and routine (Adey

2018, Pöllänen and Voutilainen 2018, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019) or a space to release emotions (Symons 2011). Spandler (2007) proposed that art, rather than being a distraction, enabled participants to get back to life or to feel part of everyday life giving them a reason to get up in the morning. Reynolds (2009) found that art-making gave a reason for living and a way to forget the less pleasant things such as pain, grief or ill-health. Focus on creative tasks took attention away from illness or worry; instead thought was directed or channelled towards a creative problem; even if not directly working on the project at the time (Reynolds 2007, Kelly et al. 2012, Pöllänen 2015a, Spandler 2007, Timmons and MacDonald 2008). Craft was specifically revealed as a coping resource that participants knew from experience would help them manage stress as they became consciously engaged in an individual and goal orientated process (Horghagen et al. 2014). Making art and craft was described as a therapeutic addition to conventional treatment both of which reduced experience of symptoms (Horghagen et al. 2014, Kelly et al. 2012). One person gave up counselling for pottery stating that rather than talking about herself, she wanted to forget herself (Timmons and MacDonald 2008).

Pöllänen (2015a) described an ethos of self-management in a study that revealed women had used craft as a means to develop the feeling of control in one area of their life. The women in this study actively organised their making around other domestic activities in an effort to improve their well-being. Similarly, a narrative study of adults accessing mental health services described the joy they experienced when crafting in groups which seemed to free them from the constraints of mental illness (Horghagen et al. 2014). Participants from this study highlighted that the routine procedures of making allowed them to go home and engage in other casual activities (Horghagen et al. 2014).

Time and space

Research seems to suggest that significant life events such as chronic or life limiting illness (Hunt et al. 2014, Reynolds 2008), and retirement (Reynolds 2009) distorted experience of time. Participants across several studies re-counted that certain events created an excess of time, often described as a void. Abundance of time was considered stressful and at such times art-making provided a lifesaving role which enabled people to use up time meaningfully and essentially giving a reason to live (Horghagen et al. 2014, Hunt et al. 2014). People living with cancer described spending a lot of time alone which promoted the need to do something that was all consuming; a need fulfilled through practice in art activities (Reynolds 2008).

Women who described craft to reduce stress suggested that craft gave them their own time and space where they could slow down for a moment, take privacy away from obligations, and make free choices (Pöllänen 2015a). In this example house-hold chores were always present demanding time and energy where the end result was not always visible. Craft was described as a form of escapism to break free from other roles; one's own world, a quiet place for their own thoughts and reflections away from domestic or role obligations (Pöllänen 2015a). These women crafted in private where time disappeared, and a feeling of order and balance replaced stressful intrusive thoughts or physical pain.

Pöllänen (2013) highlighted how participants described craft as an escape from the present moment; a space to think about other things. Interestingly this mental space did not provoke worrying or intrusive thoughts but a calm and peaceful space that healed the mind and made them feel complete for the day. Participants in Stickley et al's (2007) study described art as a distraction that offered escapism from the mind. Adey (2018) found that knitters experienced calmness, slowing of the mind and a 'zen' like space as they engaged in repetitive, low demand and manageable stitching.

This was similarly found in another study on knitting (Brooks et al 2019). Art-making of various types appears to promote an intense and deep absorption, a sense of timelessness or being in the zone which distracted the mind (Hunt et al. 2014), from evil thoughts which was expressed as a way to flee the present moment Horghagen (Horghagen et al. 2014). For some crafted items were considered significant as they provided a memory of the making at a certain time which provoked feelings of warmth and satisfaction where items were crafted with love (Pöllänen 2015b).

Experience of the body and mind

Participants described pushing their bodies and minds to the extreme in order to accomplish something worthwhile which relieved feelings of pain, sickness and sorrow (Reynolds 2009). Some participants described that they were so engaged in textile craft activity that the hook went into their skin while they carried on stitching (Horghagen et al. 2014). Qualitative evidence suggests that participants would unquestioningly continue to make their crafts as long as they could, despite physical complaints (Symons 2011) and worried about the possibility that they might not be able to do this (Brooks et al. 2019). Participants across studies relayed a fear of losing physical or mental capacity to continue with their practice (Hunt et al. 2014, Reynolds 2009) and many adapted activities to meet their fluctuating needs, for example using a machine rather than hand to embroider (Reynolds et al. 2011). Participants in Timmons and MacDonalds (2008) study stated that ceramics was easily adapted to changing physical abilities which enabled participants to engage despite physical limitations. Similarly, within Symon's (2011) study one participant discussed how they adapted the activity in order to remain engaged despite pain and fatigue. Although some interviewees reported that they controlled pain through art, some expressed that at times the pain was too intrusive and prevented participation (Reynolds et al. 2011). Participants in Pöllänen's (2013) study stated that participation continued even

when participants were no longer able to physically engage in craft making due to physical limitations through handling raw materials and products. Some studies suggested that the repetitive or static positions adopted during engagement in art or craft activities encouraged pain although this did not appear to prevent continued practice (Reynolds et al. 2011).

Within the qualitative evidence there is significant support for the suggestion that engaging in art or craft can provide substantial relief from physical or emotional pain (Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds et al. 2011, Reynolds 2008). Bereavement, depression, sleeplessness, physical pain or weakness seemed to be relieved through the deep concentration involved in making (Timmons and MacDonald 2008). Participants in various studies described that engagement in craft was a way of not thinking of the pain (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011, Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds 2007) that tapestry worked better than pain medication (Reynolds 2006) and that through doing they either forgot the pain or did not feel it at all (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011). Analysis of written narratives established that craft relieved the feelings of sickness and pain to the extent that participants described how they could push away feelings of agony through putting bodily activities into action (Pöllänen 2013).

Maintenance of physical and mental capacity

Examples across the studies reviewed show a possible relation between making and physical and cognitive functioning. Crafting offered the occasion to work with the hands and at the same time make plans; hands and mind working together (Pöllänen 2015b) through a problem-solving process of sourcing, construction and finalisation (Horghagen et al. 2014). Repetitive occupations such as knitting were purposely used to occupy the hands in order to concentrate on other activities such as watching the television, lectures or conversations. Sitting and doing nothing also appears not to be an option (Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019). Crafting was seen as a mental resource that enabled stay at home mothers to manage

their everyday lives (Pöllänen and Voutilainen 2018). Making was described as helpful for maintaining physical functioning; that it was better for hands to work with clay than do exercises (Timmons and MacDonald 2008). Participants in a qualitative project involving interviewing patients attending an art programme as part of their physical rehabilitation, claimed that art provided a repetitive task that promoted exercise, the opportunity to improve hand function and to re-build stamina, and also improve duration of attention and concentration (Symons 2011). Craft orientated daily routine and provided context in relation to current and topical issues but also met the needs of those disorientated in time and space as it involved performance of familiar and repetitive tasks (Pöllänen 2013).

Making is connecting

Connection to others is another significant theme that emanates across research into participation in craft; beginning with the person who instigated their interest (Bedding and Sadlo 2008), people who influenced participation (Van Lith et al. 2013), and people who recognise their skill (Bedding and Sadlo 2008, Hunt et al. 2014, Pöllänen 2013). Social connection enabled participants to both define themselves and distinguish themselves from others (Griffiths 2008, la Cour et al. 2005, Reynolds 2007, Spandler 2007, Van Lith et al. 2013). Feedback and recognition from others confirmed capabilities and continuity of self which motivated continued practice and was related to increased self-esteem (Pöllänen 2015a, Reynolds 2008, Reynolds et al. 2009). Some experienced new understandings of themselves through a more intimate connection with past generations and family traditions (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011). The making of beautiful things to give others was also important (Kelly et al. 2012, Pöllänen 2013, Pöllänen 2015a). This included how the recipient treated the object, almost as if it were an extension of themselves (la Cour et al. 2005, Reynolds 2007) as material objects crafts had symbolic meaning (Pöllänen 2013). Symbolism dwelt in the giving of gifts or making for charity rather than

representation of personal experiences (Reynolds 2008). Participants described a feeling joy when their friends and family expressed pleasure from their works (Horghagen et al. 2014, Pöllänen 2015a). This undertaking was described as an intimate caring role without words (Horghagen et al. 2014). The context for making appeared to be the home (Horghagen et al. 2014, Pöllänen 2015a, Pöllänen and Voutilainen 2018, Clarke 2019), but the products as gifts nurtured feelings of togetherness with family and friends; concrete evidence of kinship, love and strengthening of family ties (Pöllänen 2015b). The human relationships made the making process and the product meaningful illustrating that crafts act as a personal reminder of the maker and their origin (Pöllänen 2013).

Connection across generations appeared as a theme in a number of studies where participants described an intimate connection between family members (Pöllänen 2015a) continuation of skills and family traditions (Reynolds 2008). Older age adults appreciated copying based crafts as they meant the continuation of traditions and the passing of family heirlooms (Pöllänen 2013). Young women are suggested as being nostalgic for the past in an era of imbalance where they are knitting their way back to their grandmothers (Humphreys 2008).

Many studies suggested that participation predominantly occurred in groups, although recruitment methods almost certainly encouraged this finding. The opportunity to engage in art and craft within a social network, however, offered relief from social isolation (Stickley et al. 2007). This phenomenon included the virtual environment (Humphreys 2008). The social setting was considered important to participants including learning from others, mentoring, exchange of ideas, interaction with others, value of meeting people who shared a common interest, kinship and a place where you can share experiences and ideas (Cohen 2006, Hunt et al. 2014, Riley 2008, Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011, Van Lith et al. 2013). For those attending a mental health centre, having craft in their hands helped

people to socialise and move in and out of conversations (Horghagen et al. 2014). Guild membership involved a meaningful pattern of activities specifically within the social agenda; making tea and coffee or setting up the room; putting on a show and promoting the craft (Riley 2008). Exhibitions presented a challenge for some who reported high levels of well-being despite living with a chronic illness (Reynolds et al. 2011). Being judged alongside the able-bodied promoted feelings of equal status for those living with a chronic condition (Reynolds et al. 2009). In Symon's (2011) research, the social relevance extended beyond the group with participants explaining their desire to discuss art with family and friends. Contrastingly, the need for solitude was a significant theme for people who engaged in textile crafts although this was not discussed by the author who focused instead on the importance of social connections (Pöllänen 2013). When crafts were used as a coping resource, they were still used as a source for positive relationships not through social crafting but through connection in the giving of gifts (Horghagen et al. 2014) or helping others through the sale of products (Maidment and Macfarlane 2011).

The deep respect and desire to maintain skills handed down from previous generations was of utmost importance to all participants in a qualitative study of older women in Crete (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011, Reynolds et al. 2011). Likewise, in textiles, tangible physical connection to past masters was expressed in the appreciation and development of skills passed down through the generations of their pupils (Riley 2008). Through making a durable object the past can somehow live on into the future (Riley 2011). The impact of globalisation has allowed connection with techniques and practices learnt through a link with other cultures which evokes new and even more complex practices (Riley 2011). Guild members tended to value the preservation of their craft and reported it their duty to pass on tacit knowledge, in order to prevent it from disappearing (Riley 2011). Craft also reflected values in sustainability where the process

involved repairing, recycling and responsibility for actions that lived on into the future (Pöllänen 2015a).

An implicit need to create is highlighted by Cour et al (2005) in their qualitative study which found that people who were experiencing life threatening illness stated that for them creative activities promoted the feeling of being connected to life, which suggests a spiritual dimension to participation. Likewise, Tzanidaki and Reynolds (2011) found that five of twelve participants from a Cretan culture felt a heightened sense of spiritual or religious connection through their art-making, although the art researched was making religious icons so perhaps this was inevitable. Within a palliative care setting people engaging in art and craft further related to the need to express themselves but also to exist in a symbolic way so the creations live on in the future; the objects become something to remember them by (Reynolds 2006, Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011) and a memorial to leave behind (Reynolds et al. 2008). Continuity of self was expressed as significant by older women who viewed later life as an opportunity to achieve valued goals (Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011).

The unfolding creative process

The unfolding creative process is a theme stemming from the satisfaction gained from the feature of not knowing how a creation would turn out (la Cour et al. 2005). Clear goals were not always present on the outset of a project and the sense of flow experienced in making encouraged continuation although this was in relation to the design process rather than in reproductive crafts (Pöllänen 2013). Experimentation or perceived lack of control or predictability seemed to greatly enhance the sense of enjoyment and was a source of constant stimulation (Stickley et al. 2007, Timmons and MacDonald 2008). A sense of play, testing and experimentation (Pöllänen 2015a) was expressed as inherent within the art-making process and joy, pleasure and deep satisfaction was experienced through discovery and unexpectedness (Reynolds et al. 2009). This highlights

an area of ambiguity as there is limited distinction made between activities that offer a sense of control and those where a lack of control is particularly significant. Making of this type although underdefined, involved entering a process of creating something that was not present before; following something as it grew and not knowing how the creation would turn out (la Cour et al. 2005). This unfolding process of creation was described as deeply engaging, causing the occupied person to forget time, their worries and their illness and being in the 'zone' (la Cour et al. 2005, Kelly et al. 2012, Reynolds 2007, Spandler 2007). To experience a creation growing from the work of hands and body reportedly created a feeling of happiness, elation, joy, pride and satisfaction (la Cour et al. 2005, la Cour et al. 2007). When a person makes something by hand it can create an amazing feeling of achievement (Pöllänen 2015a) and this can alter the way they perceive and present themselves and this has a direct effect on their participation in occupations in the future (Griffiths 2008, Spandler 2007).

Summary of qualitative research related to the experience of engaging in art and/or craft activities in relation to health and well-being.

Within the research discussed so far, the creative process was described by many as one that provided a variety of experiences that enriched and energized mental life, promoted resilience, relaxation, feelings of peace, release of tension, satisfaction, contentedness and freedom which captured attention and distracted from negative experiences. Participants described feeling deeply engaged, stimulated, forgetting time and being happy. Despite methodological limitations the literature shows developing evidence regarding some positive psychological effects of engaging in creative activity, typically from a subjective health perspective. The themes discussed are extensive and relate to a number of distinct areas for further investigation. In particular, the recent demand is to understand specific occupations participated in everyday life in order to begin to

understand the distinct processes that might have a positive effect on health and well-being (Riley 2013). Researchers seemed to have reacted to this request and some recent research has particularly concentrated on textiles (Riley 2011; Pöllänen 2015) and specifically in sewing (Clarke 2019), quilting (Dickie 2011) and knitting (Riley 2013, Adey 2018, Brooks 2019).

Specific and influential research: Textiles

This section of the literature review aims to focus on specific research that was particularly influential to my study. This will begin looking at specific studies about textiles and then particular types of textile as mentioned above. Finally, the limited research on embroidering will be discussed with justification for further study of how embroidering might influence health and well-being. The criteria for inclusion included papers published within the past 10 years (from 2010), focus on textiles (including embroidery), and that there was an implicit link to health and or well-being in the purpose or findings. This limitation has excluded work from the field of textiles, a point which I return to at the end of this thesis.

The domain of textiles has loosely been described as the manipulation of threads to construct or re-construct fabrics or create patterns (Kenning 2015b) which incorporates techniques such as knitting, crochet, needlework, sewing, lace-making, braiding, weaving, spinning, felting, and tapestry (Riley 2008, Riley 2011). Riley (2008, 2011) further defined textiles to be a multi-media and hybrid craft that mean to weave or plat from the Latin verb *texere*. Essentially, textile refers to a group of practices involved in the construction of material or fabric. From this perspective it could be argued that embroidering as decoration of an existing structure is not a textile practice. Research into textiles, however is the closest possible evidence base in which my study resides.

Textile crafts can be traced back to the beginning of many civilisations and appear to fulfil the human need for protection,

clothing and decoration (Riley 2008). One of the stated features of textile crafts was the union of human skill, tools and traditional practices to transform a raw material into an end product in the form of a crafted object (Riley 2008). The human relationship with cloth was considered familiar, ordinary and symbolic where its decoration evokes meaning in the context of the culture in which it is produced. Crafts associated with textiles traditionally involved makers in skilled bodily interaction with equipment and materials and were claimed to incorporate a set of culturally recognised principles (Riley 2011).

Shaping Textile-making: Its occupational forms and domain

Jill Riley 2011

By taking a more contextual view of textiles, Riley (2011) was able to separate what was done in a socio-cultural and historical context from the subjective experiences of doing it. Riley (2011) incorporated a reflexive Ethnographic method of which focused on a Welsh Guild of weavers, spinners and dyers with the aim of understanding the occupational form. Riley suggested that occupation can be considered an entity separate from the subjective experience of the individual and as such can be explored as an occupational form in itself. Occupation in this context was defined as a purposeful, meaningful and goal-directed doing that is historically, socio-culturally and temporally situated and as such could be understood as a thing in itself which Riley explored as a process of making. The research questions focused on understanding the traditional nature of textile making, its occupational forms, processes and the skills required in order to participate. Fieldwork took place between 2004 and 2005 and followed a constructivist grounded theory approach within a reflexive ethnographic framework (Riley 2011). Data analysis identified themes across the data which were further analysed drawing on literature and theory to establish socio-cultural context and temporal and historical significances. This study appeared to be based on data from a previous one which made the design ambiguous. The findings, however were supported by

verbatim quotations and answered the research question. It must be recognised, however that the participants were highly skilled and members of the same Guild which makes the findings context specific which might limit transferability.

Riley (2011) found that textiles have a unique set of traditional and cultural patterns, processes and habitual patterns in which individuals participate. Traditional practices were passed from one generation to another and are kept alive through family businesses and the influence of passionate Guild members. These practices, however, were constantly developing with the impact of globalisation and textile-makers utilised an eclectic range of techniques that were influenced through travel, attendance of courses, the internet, journals, magazines and books.

The process of textile making was found to be lengthy with the maker moving through an often-cyclical process including planning, preparation, construction and culmination in an end product. These processes depended on the particular textile being constructed, the design, end-product, and the nature of the materials and equipment used during the project. Significantly makers combined traditional methods with personalised and creative procedures and materials thus bringing an aspect of themselves into the production and product.

The crafts of weaving, dying and spinning appeared to require individuals to acquire unique skill and understanding through repeated and active technical and practical engagement with tools and materials used in practice. Tacit knowledge was contended to be accumulative where through repetition the maker no longer needed to think about what they were doing. Other ways of developing skills included learning together, analysing and examining textiles as objects, responsibility in passing on skills and knowledge, travelling to learn from other cultures, changing and reshaping existing practice through creative innovation, being open to new experiences and opportunities, pushing boundaries, thinking laterally, and

experimenting and exploring. Whilst the traditional processes, practices and skills defined the occupational form the study highlighted how traditions are situated and how creativity, individuality and innovation shape textile-making beyond traditional practice. Participants expressed interest in exploring the potential of a diverse range of materials including linen, jute, hemp, wool, foils, sweet wrappers and other more unusual items such as ear tags from sheep. The interaction between textile-maker, and materials was thus considered highly significant and related to an individual loyalty and personal capacity towards their medium. Consequentially understanding the nuances of the materials and tools used in textile-making and how they would behave in certain circumstances was also considered highly important. In conclusion Riley calls for further research into the impact of cultural traditions on occupational forms and domains and how creativity innovation and technology shape occupation. This validates further research into embroidering in the context of a person's life through a social constructionist lens which is grounded in social and cultural customs.

"Fiddling with Threads": Craft-based Textile Activities and Positive Well-being

Kenning 2015

Kenning was interested in how domestic textile activities such as knitting, hand weaving, crochet and lace making were considered derivative to other art-based activities. Criticism derived from perceptions that these activities were conservative, constrained by tradition, resistant to change with little sense of innovation or uniqueness (Kenning 2015a). With the concept of creativity linked to originality these activities have been dismissed as of limited creative merit as they copy, re-create and reproduce existing patterns from pre-existing templates, models, diagrams or written instructions. In this article craft-based textile activities are those that involve manipulation of threads to construct fabrics or create patterns. Conventions from cultural studies contrariwise suggest that these activities are acts of everyday creativity when not undertaken

exclusively for economic purposes and as such contribute to the discourse of the importance of creativity. The author argues that the potential of domestic craft-based textile activities needs to be re-considered based on the revival in modern society in order to understand the innovative potential offered. The resultant experimental art research project used digital media technologies to explore the creative potential of crochet lace making as a specific craft-based activity.

With a focus on the process of making crochet lace patterns, Kenning (2015a) utilised a digital environment to explore the key properties that made change possible within the spatial, iterative, modular and informational characteristics of the activity. In all instances crochet lace patterns were found to possess the properties that made it available for change and development. Kenning pronounced that the act of replication was not in itself restrictive but determined by three human factors; limited expectations of practitioners due to legacy responses, focus on the object and neglect of the innovative potential within the processes and hegemonic and historic pressures that encouraged conformity and discouraged innovation. Craft practitioners were found to make primarily in order to be challenged and engaged in the process of creating rather than to produce a predictable outcome (Kenning 2015a). Innovation and authenticity once located within the object was now shown to reside in the processes and experiences of the practitioners and thus further exploration of everyday creativity was advocated as warranted in order to realise the creative potential. A recent study supported this view of everyday creativity in knitting where participants felt that they could creatively express themselves by playing with colour, materials, textures and patterns (Brooks et al. 2019). This goes against the view that repetitive textiles were mundane therapy as postulated by Dickie (2011). Kenning's research provides justification for study of every-day domestic activities as they are under-represented in the literature.

The well-being of women who create with textiles: Implications for art therapy

Futterman Collier (2011)

Understanding the connection between well-being and the engagement in textiles was the focus of a study by art therapist Ann Futterman Collier (2011). The survey design included returned questionnaires for 821 women who engaged in 19 different textile crafts. The survey was developed by the researcher from a literature review and used Likert scales to measure the subjective opinions of the sample group in relation to 23 pre-defined reasons that they practiced craft. Well-being was examined through the International Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Short-term Form and 'flourishing' scores were created through the ratio of the total negative and positive affect scores. This study is limited as the scores were based on the ordinal data taken from Likert scales and as such are non-measurable, so statistical calculations offer a standpoint rather than empirical evidence. The findings suggested that knitting was the most common textile practiced followed by sewing, crochet, weaving and embroidery which was practiced by 47% of the population. The participants had tried an average of 11 different textile crafts and engaged on average in 2.6 techniques over the past 3 years. Most women participated in textile crafts out of pleasure with some of the reasons provided as; beauty, love of colour, love of touch, sound or smell, part of identity, need to make things, self-expression, personalised gifts, rhythm, to change mood, to help me cope, to forget and because they have time. Summary scores for each reason were calculated and averaged and in order of frequency identified as: aesthetic need, feeling grounded, psychological coping, to do for others and social fulfilment. Participants provided other reasons for practice that were not specified in the survey which included: a cognitive process that stimulated and calmed mental processes, a need for busy hands and as an outlet for coping with illness and pain. These findings are similar to other studies into textiles.

The researcher was particularly interested in participants who used textiles in order to cope with difficult moods and compared textile 'copers' with those who did not use crafts in this way. A significant difference was found in quality of life, health and anxiety and depression scales where textile copers were found to be of a greater risk for depression and anxiety, in poorer health, had tried more textile techniques and used them more frequently and masterfully. The results suggested that textile copers were more successful at changing mood, feeling rejuvenated and engaged when involved in textiles as a coping activity compared to non-textile copers regardless of baseline levels of depression, anxiety, health, quality of life or overall mastery. The implications for art therapy practice recommended that use of textile art as a distraction was more beneficial than the more common approach of focus on the problem as this created short-term mood repair and increased resilience. Further to this therapist should explore textile history when considering therapeutic use even if the client is not obviously engaged in making textiles. Finally, the opportunities for development of skill and flow within textile practice combined with the desire to create an aesthetic object and feel grounded were considered as motivations that could be accessed if using textiles as a therapy with clients faced with turbulent life events. Although the findings of this study presented some insight into the therapeutic potential of textiles, it is limited due to its survey design. Questions were pre-defined, based on 19 different textile crafts and responses based on opinion. Understanding of the mechanism or means of therapeutic potential was thus partial and restricted. This research justified qualitative study using a methodology that permitted detailed and focused exploration with people who engaged in a specific textile in their everyday life. Embroidering was found to be a common textile practiced by the women together with knitting, sewing, crochet and weaving thus justifying it as a legitimate craft for study.

Elements of crafts that enhance well-being: Textile craft makers' description of their leisure activity

Sinikka Pöllänen 2015b

Pöllänen has written previous studies in relation to crafts in general, however this study purported that it focused on textile craft makers'. On close inspection however, this is unclear and possibly questionable as woodwork is mentioned in the findings. This study highlighted that within a Scandinavian culture, crafts were considered a popular leisure activity which warranted further study as the meaning of craft and leisure was unexplored. The purpose was to understand the central meaning of craft making as it was experienced and expressed in the craft-makers lives, to depict elements of craft making that enhanced well-being and to highlight to describe the meanings behind this. Pöllänen collected and analysed 59 written narratives from female textile makers using an inductive content analysis and a hermeneutic approach as its methodological base. The final stage of analysis involved coding data against a pre-defined psychological theory of self-management and psychological empowerment (p63-64). The findings emphasised the significance of the product of textile making as an artefact which was physical evidence of the effort unlike other domestic tasks such as cooking or cleaning. The human relation to the project and product made it meaningful. Here the researcher suggests that tools, materials might have meaning beyond the conditions of their use (p65) and that control over external conditions enabled feelings of fulfilment and self-management. The context for making was the home but craft makers considered that they could still connect to others and live into the future by passing down their traditions. As such, the giving of artefacts was extremely important. Crafts were seen as a turning point in life where personal identities were expressed and developed to the extent that engagement was considered as lifesaving (p69). Success in making was experienced as rewarding on such a deep level that it created a desire to repeat the endeavour. The repetitive nature of tasks slowed the pace of life, contributed to feelings of

calmness and relaxation, and provided a reflective space where thoughts of the day could work in peace. On the other hand, tasks that required full attention to challenges enabled makers to focus and go into the head so that they could lock themselves away. Pöllänen differentiates between ordinary crafts which are prescriptive or repetitive and holistic which involved ideas, designing, preparing and assessing the process and product. In this way makers actively organised their craft making in a way that it increased their well-being; a flexible resource for managing life challenges. Finally, engagement with the body and particularly that hands was considered as significant including handling and looking at materials, and development of skill. Craft was considered as a friend, entertainer and comforter and makers had an emotional bond with their practice. Pöllänen concludes that craft as a meaningful leisure activity has positive effects on the makers well-being by fostering feelings of self-management and empowerment. This research clearly demonstrates the problems related to study of diverse occupations under broad terms such as 'textiles' or 'crafts', thus supporting a focus on a specific form such as embroidery. The findings are also cumbersome due to the large sample of narratives analysed which provides justification for more intense focus of a few people over time.

Experiencing Therapy through doing: Making quilts

Virginia Dickie (2011)

Interested in the long-held belief of the therapeutic nature of creative occupations and with a specific interest in the cultural, traditional and healing nature of quilt-making, Dickie (2003) embarked on a two-year ethnographic study to further explore the occupation. Results from the ethnographic study, that included participant observation with 9 quilt guilds, review of quilting websites and interviews with 18 women quilters revealed learning through quilting and quilting as therapy as recurring themes (Dickie

2003b, Dickie 2011). Each of these concepts were explored through individual studies as branches from the original ethnography.

The article on quilting as therapy re-analysed the original ethnographic data and extracted all reference of the term 'therapy' for re-analysis of coding based on grounded theory (Dickie 2011). The findings suggested that quilting was used as a way to achieve a desired positive mood or state of being and that quilting was explicitly used during difficult life situations. Dickie (2011) merged these situations into two types of therapy; mundane and exceptional.

Mundane therapy was incorporated into the everyday routine where problems encountered were minimised when women engaged in quilting. In this situation quilting activities were reported as being relaxing, creative, and predictable providing a break from work, commutes and stressful family relationships. Related to providing a sense of restoration the author indicated that quilting afforded a sense of balance, of being in control, satisfied the need to keep hands busy, and helped people manage times of liminality such as illness or recovery. Mundane therapy was done with little conscious thought, was regular and built into routines. Quilting also allowed for modulation depending on mood or physical state so people could vary specific quilting related activities depending on their situation. This also involved the creation of a physical space within the home where the activity could spontaneously take place. The sensory nature of the fabric appeared to help some participants who washed, ironed or handled the fabric for sensory stimulation and thus therapeutic effect. Quilting was sometimes undertaken in a group setting and those that participated in guild meetings or on-line forums shared expertise, skills, joy, trials and difficulties and described quilting groups as therapy.

Quilting as exceptional therapy was specifically selected at times of personal crisis for example during cancer diagnosis and treatment. Quilting undertaken at this time filled time and gave the quilter a voice so that women could express difficult emotions and experiences

in physical form. The findings also showed that women quilted as a response to world disasters such as 9 11 where the need to do something, to seek comfort and feel safe again was channelled into the production of a quilt.

The discussion suggested that the participants in this study used quilting therapeutically as a way to achieve emotional health and well-being. Quilting involved a prepared field including a physical space, equipment, tools and skill, and may not be as accessible as some activities, but Dickie suggests that quilting may uniquely provide opportunity for variability and challenge. The concept of flow is discussed with the suggestion that quilting offers various levels of challenge and demand. Further exploration of observation of this variability was limited however, as at times women were said to be consumed by their occupation and at others it became second focus, automatic and combined with other activities such as socialising or watching television. Seemingly conversely, quilting was found to be mentally engaging and stimulating, mindless, repetitive and mechanistic. From this perspective inclusion of 'creative' with 'relaxing' and 'predictable' within the concept of mundane therapy also appears contradictory. Finally, in dialogue with the idea of quilting as extraordinary therapy, Dickie proposes that there is always a narrative that goes along with a handmade quilt and that this relates to past and present identity and the opportunity to express a more integrated self when the crisis is over.

Dickies (2011) study was not originally intended to focus on the therapeutic potential of quilting and the author reports that simply knowing that she was an occupational therapist may have influenced the participants to focus on the therapeutic nature of the occupation. A keen quilter herself, Dickie states that she does not conceive quilting as a personal therapy even though it has a beneficial effect on her state of well-being which and leads one to query her concept of therapy. Finally, Dickie states that the findings do not show that quilting is different from any other activity with regard to therapeutic

effect despite identifying the possibilities offered by the variability of the activity, the specific physical space and tools required, the narrative potential and the sensory nature of smell, touch and vision. The conclusion suggests that study specifically focused on the therapeutic benefits of quilt making could provide a richer understanding of this phenomenon. This study highlights some of the drawbacks of ethnographic study and also how undertaking such a venture might not necessarily answer my research question. I also became aware of the homogeneity of such a population which made me reflect on the need to explore individuals engagement in occupation who were not necessarily involved in a group or Guild.

The benefits of knitting for personal and social well-being in adulthood: findings from an international survey Jill Riley, Betsan Corkhill and Clare Morris (2013)

Building on the potential of the on-line knitting community, Riley, Corkhill and Morris (2013) placed knitting within the health arena in their study which asserts the benefits of knitting for personal and social wellbeing in adulthood. Research that had established the well-recognised link between purposeful occupation, goal directed doing and health and well-being was criticised because was based on general categories of occupation including leisure, work, textiles or creative activities rather than on specific occupations (Riley et al. 2013). Within the study knitting is clearly described as a combination of repetitive tasks and physical and cognitive skills with the enjoyment of creating a product. The occupation is further detailed to involve a constructive process with a single and continuous supply of yarn which results in a looped fabric produced using hands, needles or a machine. This differentiates it from embroidering but links it to the process to crochet. Motivation for the study related to limited understanding of the relationship between specific activities and health and well-being. The purpose was to explore the impact of knitting on individuals self-perception of their mental and social well-being and establish how and why people knit, how it affects mood, feelings, thinking, social activity and self-development. The research

recruited a wide population of knitters was through distribution of a bespoke and un-verified survey via an on-line web-site. Responses were received from 3545 knitters of which 3514 were valid within two weeks of the survey going live. Nominal and ordinal data was organised and managed using the BOS analysis system with quantitative data transported into SPSS 16 for descriptive statistical analysis and qualitative data coded in NVivo 8 to establish categories and themes. The majority of the respondents (98.8%) were female and the number of responses from males ($n = 42$) was considered too low for comparative analysis and thus discarded from the results. This is a limitation as it could have lead to important insight into actual rather than perceived gender differences.

The results indicated that the majority of respondents (98%) knitted at home with younger women (≥ 40) knitting on public transport or in café's. Of the respondents 33% reported having a medical condition including a range of psychological, physical and neurological problems. The main reasons given for knitting related to the perceived psychological benefits such as relaxation and relief from stress, which were connected to the repetitive rhythmic qualities perceived as therapeutic and meditative. Knitting was also identified as a means of being productive while also engaging in passive activities such as watching television or traveling or during unproductive time such as waiting for an appointment or queuing. Knitting frequency was high with the majority of respondents knitting at least 3 – 5 times a week.

Frequent knitters were likely to report as feeling calm after knitting and related this to the rhythmic nature of the craft. Although respondents reported that knitting sometimes made them feel stressed, the majority described it as a stress reliever and a way to unwind from the pressures of work. The results showed that people often stated that their mood was more elated after knitting with 81.1% reporting that they felt happier afterwards. The complexity of

the project, difficulties encountered, and the impact of the colour and texture of the yarn also effected the mood of more people than not.

The majority of participants felt that knitting improved their thinking, memory and concentration. Just under half (47%) indicated that knitting helped them think through problems, 37% said that it helped them forget their problems and 39% said that it helped them organise their thoughts. Other cognitive benefits of knitting included; thinking more fluidly (55%), aided memory (59%), and improved concentration (61%). Statistical calculation suggested a strong relationship between these variables and knitting frequency. The challenges offered through the process of knitting included working out a complex pattern, learning new skills, the need to assimilate and remember instructions and patterns and were linked to improved cognitive skills. Commonly, by keeping the hands busy described as requiring just enough concentration to keep occupied but not enough to tax enabled people to focus or pay attention to other things such as music, lectures, watching television or engaging in conversation more easily.

Knitting was found to be a social activity with just over half of the population knitting in groups. Of this population 90% stated that they had gained friends, 86% felt a sense of belonging and 70% suggested that they found it easier to talk to other knitters. Knitting was described as a good way to start a conversation and a medium to socialising either via the internet or face to face. Statistical analysis revealed a significant difference between those that knitted in company and those who knitted alone in they were more likely to feel calmer, happier, excited, useful and better about themselves ($p < 0.001$). No significant difference was found for people that rated themselves as sad, anxious or depressed, however for people with depression there was a significant connection between being a group member and feeling happier ($p = 0.015$) and better about themselves ($p = 0.044$). Whether this is about being in company rather than knitting is questionable. Critically, statistically analysed data was

based on self-report, which as previously stated in mathematically erroneous. Surveys do not allow questioning of participants, thus necessitating supposition of correlation or cause.

For those that knitted with others the sense that the group provided the opportunity to learn new skills was found to be significant. These skills included knitting skills but also other abilities such as crochet, sewing, beading, spinning, weaving and dying, designing, decorating D.I.Y, information technology and other transferable skills including coping, practical, cognitive, social and coping skills. The practical learning was associated with feeling more adventurous and confident in trying new things, in being able to create new items out of recycled materials which led to feeling less materialistic, bringing creativity into everyday life and learning how to be more self-sufficient. Cognitive learning involved improvement in mathematical skills, planning and organising depending on the complexity of the knitting project which included mental arithmetic for calculating and counting stitches or altering size or gauge of an existing pattern. Development of other spatial awareness skills involved the ability to think in a three-dimensional way, conceptualise a finished item and work out the relationship between different components of an item such as a jumper or cardigan. These skills transferred into other areas such as budgeting, thinking resourcefully, and resourcing materials and equipment. Finally, respondents reported that knitting helped them through difficult or stressful life situations by inducing feelings of calm or gaining emotional control; through taking one stitch and one minute at a time you can get through a difficult situation or event.

The ensuing discussion reflected on the possibility that the high response rate of the survey reflected the passion that knitters had for their craft. Participants tended to be younger women which was said to be indicative of the nature of the survey, the resurgence of traditional crafts amongst younger women and indication of the gendered nature of knitting (Riley et al. 2013). Knitting was defined

as a process and product orientated craft and although the discussion did not go into detail about this relationship, the process was advocated as beneficial in relation to occupational engagement and thus the main focus of the study. The repetitive and rhythmic features of knitting were associated to stress reduction, coping with difficult life events, and symptoms of pain, anxiety or depression. The finding that knitting did not help those with very low mood was remarked upon within indication that more research was required to investigate this phenomenon. Other issues indicated as important to occupational therapists included further consideration of the contraindications with regard to the prescription of knitting as a therapeutic agent, and the impact of texture and colour. Knitting was considered to offer more than a diversion from boring tasks; from the potential to induce flow, free-up thinking and promote reflection. Further the potential of knitting to offer skill acquisition, connection to others, and significant cognitive improvement was taken as a whole to indicate the therapeutic potential of knitting; to promote quality of life and social and personal well-being for those who participate in it as a meaningful occupation (Riley et al. 2013). The limitations of the study were reported as bias consequent of the self-selecting sample which prevented representation across age, gender, culture and language. There was an assumption that knitters who used an internet site were experienced, and further reported indication that some questions related to frequency of knitting were miss-interpreted and had to be re-coded during analysis which impacted on reliability (Riley et al. 2013). Taking this into consideration, the knitting survey offers a unique, comprehensive and current view of knitting as a flourishing and meaningful occupation in contemporary society. Of interest to the current study, the authors have developed their study into a 'stitchlinks' community Interest Company (CIC) which is a non-profit organisation (Corkhill 2015). Stitchlinks aims to provide a supportive community to people who enjoy the therapeutic benefits of crafts, develop research into the benefits of knitting and social

activity groups and offer a resource to people with an interest in the therapeutic use of knitting. Although specifically interested in repetitive movement and activities that involve crossing the midline, there is also some reported evidence that embroidering offers potential therapeutic benefits. Further reading of quotations on the website introduce cross-stitching as well as knitting. For me, this survey offers clear justification to warrant the study of the therapeutic potential of embroidery as a stitching process. The limitations in methodology and method further justify focused qualitative study with a small number of participants in order to gain detail in understanding.

Literature pertaining to embroidering

Despite this growing evidence base into the potential health benefits of textiles and in particular knitting there appears to be a paucity of research into embroidering as a potential therapeutic activity. Of the three studies identified, one was based in South Africa and focused on an embroidering project which helped emancipate women from a patriarchal society which offered little opportunity for them to gain employment in South Africa (Segalo 2011). A further study analysed an embroidery undertaken in a psychiatric hospital in 1960 (Blakeman et al. 2013). Finally an opinion article suggested that mindful stitching with needle and thread might positively influence well-being (Swinerton 2015). This scarcity is considered as clear justification for a study on embroidering. I will briefly outline these papers in the section below.

Our lives through embroidery is a narrative study which recruited three women who had been involved in the project from the beginning to share individual narratives through interview with the researcher (Segalo 2011). In addition, the researcher ran, and later translated one focus group with 18 women engaged in the project. Although the research question, aims, methodology and analysis were rather ambiguous, the findings presented some interesting

themes from the women involved related to embroidering. One theme related to the self and how through embroidering the women described feeling a new sense of self. Through embroidering the women felt that they had discovered a talent and skill that gave them a sense of freedom through financial independence. Embroidering at home became a productive and essential use of time rather than just sitting at home in a labour market that offered little opportunity for an uneducated woman with no work experience. The women within the study stated that making embroideries had become part of their lives, and an intricate part of who they were in and outside of their homes.

A further paper explored Black South African woman's experiences of suffering and healing through embroidery as narrative (Segalo 2014). This aimed to provide a way for the unheard and undisclosed stories of the suffering experienced by women living through apartheid in South Africa to be acknowledged. The author intended to use stories to introduce a powerful voice that challenged the dominant linguistic based master narratives, uncovering what had been excluded in order to make sense of the present. Embroidery was presented as an alternative and suitable vehicle for the construction of counter stories that enabled women to document their pains, struggles, voices, subjectivities and dreams, as they perceived them. Little detail is provided about what was considered as data and how this was analysed. Close reading suggests that data included the interviews preceding the embroidering, the embroideries themselves and the meetings between researcher and participants using thematic analysis. Three subthemes were presented which the author considered demonstrated the interconnections between the individual women's narratives and how their experiences could not be separated from those of their families and communities. The experience of family disintegration, being under constant surveillance and hiding and resistance and the fight for freedom were presented with a single embroidery and a story. In the discussion Segalo

(2014) articulates that through producing the embroideries the women were able to break their silence and highlight the inequalities that they had to contend with in their lives. Use of embroidery in this way is a very novel way of empowering a hidden voice to be heard. The women involved in this research received a form of therapeutic intervention in the form of embroidery and group therapy through their engagement in the research. Regrettably, the research itself provided insufficient detail about recruitment, relationship of the researcher to the participants, methodology, method, and analysis in order to render the results transparent, authentic or representational. On the other hand, the research identifies the potential of artistic forms such as embroidering to allow a visual narrative that offers voice to the unspeakable that lends itself to multiple and varying interpretations (Segalo 2016). Visual images can tell stories that enable people who have survived horrific material, psychological, social, cultural and bodily assaults to reclaim them and to re-stitch their lives and re-position themselves and their identities.

A further qualitative inquiry analyses an embroidery created by a patient with Schizophrenia in the 1960's that hangs in the Glore Psychiatric Museum in Missouri (Blakeman et al. 2013). The researchers used a qualitative research design based on document analysis and grounded theory integrated with bracketing, triangulation, and content analysis to analyse the words depicted on the embroidery. History of the embroidery was taken from the founder of the museum who was an occupational therapist that worked with the patient at the time. Although the design of this study was limited because it quantified qualitative data, the results and following discussion provided some vision into the experiences and special activities that were important enough for the patient to record in her embroidery. The authors are clear in their explanation that the embroidery gave purpose to the person who was incarcerated in a psychiatric unit for over 30 years. The attempt to quantify the content of the embroidery did not hide understanding

the importance of how it provided a non-traditional way for a person in care to voice their emotions, experience, activities, places, likes, dislikes and abilities. In this case embroidery was seen as very effective way to enable a non-verbal patient to respond to experiences in her internal and external world and provide her with a daily mission or purpose. The authors also recognise the way that embroidering humanised the patient and showed her as a person and not a diagnosis thus reinforcing the nursing priorities of individualising care and communicating with patients (Blakeman et al. 2013). Embroidering in this case was used as a therapy but understanding this requires further study.

A topical article that advocates the use of mindful stitching in order to influence well-being identifies the lack of research into the therapeutic use of embroidering (Swinnerton 2015). Swinnerton suggests that hand embroidery is less widely practiced as knitting and crochet, which have made a revival in recent years. Differentiated from knitting which is said to engage both hemispheres of the brain, embroidery was argued to require a more mindful state because it is less dependent on tools and size and placement of stitch. This understanding is entirely based on the experience of the researcher. Swinnerton expresses the benefits of the combination of mindfulness and stitching on her own well-being and articulates the need to research embroidering in more detail. Swinnerton specifically suggests enquiry into how different embroidery techniques influence mood, the materials, environments, senses and techniques that are most successful, the influence of creating or copying from a pattern and how freedom of choice of colour, composition, and scale affects attention. This offers the basis of my study.

Summary of relevant papers with justification for study on embroidering

In summary, the relevant and most recent papers provide some evidence of the possible health benefits of textiles and to some extent embroidering. This research exclusively recruited women and therefore the findings cannot be transferrable to other genders. Where men were recruited, they were purposely removed due to low numbers (Riley et al. 2013) or based on the suggestion that their engagement in textiles differed (Pöllänen 2015b). The female participants all performed their particular form of textiles as part of their everyday life in order to fulfil a desired mood (Dickie 2011, Pöllänen 2015b, Clarke 2019, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018) or deal with trauma (Dickie 2015). Although it was found that textiles might offer a variety of techniques that were seen to be purposely organised to help deal with difficulties (Dickie 2011, Pöllänen 2015, Riley 2011, Gregory and von Kurthy 2019), understanding of this appeared to be contradictory and inconsistent. For example there is both consistency and discrepancy in Dickie's (2011) mundane versus exceptional therapy and Pöllänen's (2015b) ordinary or holistic crafts. Because the recent research tended to concentrate on knitting, and sewing, which the researchers found emphasised conformity rather than originality, the sedative potential was highlighted in stitching for escape, distraction and diversion (Riley et al. 2013, Pöllänen 2015b, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019) This tended to involve repetitive, predictable, 'mindless', semi-autonomous actions prompted by following a procedure, pattern, or conforming to instructions. This action then stimulated feelings of calmness, relaxation and meditation which offered relief from external stress or trauma, as long as the procedure went to plan. Participants considered this as time out from life as they shut themselves away from the outside world, distracted and diverted from problems in a form of mind wandering. This was reported as a means of being productive whilst engaged with other activities such as watching the television or

listening to lectures. Keeping the hands busy in order to concentrate on other things. The productive element of the process also gave meaning and purpose to otherwise idle or passive occupation, waiting for an appointment or travelling for example. This suggests that activities that promote repetitive actions are experienced as relaxing; both in body and in mind. Additional appreciation of the sensory or aesthetic qualities of fabrics and materials seemed to encourage continued engagement (Pöllänen 2015b). These were collected, coveted and secretly hoarded and passably justified in relation to sustainability (Pöllänen 2015b: Gregory and von Kurthy 2018). In addition, the creation of a tangible object gave purpose to the process (Pöllänen 2015b), provided external evidence and related validation of effort (Clarke 2019) and mastery over materials (Pöllänen 2015b), enabled people to express their identity to others (Brooks et al. 2019) and live into the future within the object created (Clarke 2019). Accolade from others was suggested as extremely important (Brooks et al. 2019). As such the material product could become symbolic (Dickie 2011, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018) an expression of the self (Clarke 2019) or record of a significant life event (Dickie 2011). The second type of stitching that was identified involved innovation, creativity, design and judgement. This provided the opportunity for development in skill, pushing traditional boundaries, an outlet for self-expression, originality, challenge and experimentation. This was associated with more skilled textile artists and was promoted as a gateway to freedom (Dickie 2011). This was more evident in sewing rather than knitting. Finally, all of the articles reviewed emphasised the social elements of stitching, despite comparable evidence that most making was undertaken within the home and offered time for the self. Themes such as belonging to a community, social engagement, connection to others, the importance of passing on tradition and skills were prevailing and vehemently related to enhanced well-being. Frustration was mentioned in relation to learning new techniques (Riley et al. 2013, Clarke 2019)

or working with new materials (Pöllänen 2015b). Guilt associated with the perceived self-indulgence associated with sewing, embroidering and knitting was apparent with participants suggesting that they needed to earn their craft time by engaging in domestic chores beforehand (Clarke 2019).

Summary: Literature review

In conclusion, this review of literature has provided some insight into the extent to which creative activities, crafts, arts and specifically textiles might influence health and well-being. There appears to be consensus that this research has established a number of recurrent, recognisable and relational themes of the consequences of engagement. The medical world acknowledges a link to arts and health, and emergent research indicates current interest and evidence on the potential of using various art activities for health promotion. So far, the evidence base does not include detailed evidence about crafts, but advocates for more research on art activities (which includes crafts) and in understanding the mechanisms involved which impact on health (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Knitting, sewing and specifically quilting has received some attention and research seems to have established an association with these activities and health-related factors which have begun to be heard within wider society. Social prescription appears to be the new vogue with knitting clearly on the agenda. However, there is still limited research on the mechanisms involved in the transformative potential of specific, and in particular, craft occupations studied within context of everyday life. In summary, published research advocates the need for further research focused on understanding the health benefits of specific traditional and cultural forms of making. In addition, limitations in methodology have prevented exploration of *how* the process of engagement might promote therapeutic change. This is the gap in knowledge which my research aimed to answer.

Embroidering appears to be experiencing a resurgence in popular culture, especially within the fashion industry (Banks-Walker 2019). Despite this revival, and the interest in the health promoting aspects of everyday activities, to date there is no published research on the possible health promoting potential of embroidering. As an occupational therapist, I perceive myself to be concerned and adequately qualified to suggest that based on the evidence presented and in the current political health environment and renewed national interest in crafts as verified within social media, in broadcasting, and the fashion industry, embroidering can be considered a current and potentially transformational occupation worthy of investigation within and extending from the field of occupational therapy.

Further to this, I advocate that the focus of such a study needs to understand not just the potential effects of engaging in a specific craft which in this case is embroidering, but *how* this engagement may possibly promote change or transformation. Although the literature suggests an interest in 'how' arts can transform health, scholars seem to research is 'in what way' i.e. the effects but not 'by what means'. Findings of such studies provide a list of unrelated potential outcomes or responses to engagement that falls short of the intrinsic and extrinsic mechanisms which explain how these reactions might occur. The need to consider the means as well as the ends of engagement is essential in order to understand the therapeutic potential. The research question as defined in my research aims to achieve this purpose.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Background to narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a rich but diverse and complicated form of inter-disciplinary qualitative research that pursues a way of knowing through exploration of narratives or stories (Kim 2016). Narrative approaches to research developed within different disciplines which accounts for the variety of approaches (Livholts and Tamboukou 2015). Livholts and Tamboukou (2015) provide an overview stating that sociologists and anthropologists focus on understanding narratives as complete life stories with Riessman as one of the main theorists. Socio-linguists engage with shorter narrative sections through Labov's (1980) structural analysis, whilst psychologists follow Bruner in the temporal ordering and progression of episodes within narrative. Finally, psychoanalysts tend to concentrate on questions of desire, subjectivity and emotional content of narrative. Approaches to narrative differ further according to the ontological and epistemological frameworks taken including the structuralist and post-structuralist approach (Livholts and Tamboukou, 2015). In this vein, narrative is difficult to define which requires the narrative researcher to reflect deeply on the purpose of their specific research. It also offers methodological potential as different typologies can be creatively combined in order to fulfil research needs (Bonsall 2012).

The terms narrative and story are often used interchangeably within narrative research. Kim (2016) suggests that narrative is a recounting of events organised in temporal form and that this makes a story. Riessman (2008) argues that the difference is complex. From her perspective narratives are composed for particular audiences, are historically situated and draw on taken for granted discourses and values within a particular culture. Narrative do not

speak for themselves or offer a window into an “essential self”. Narratives require close interpretation which can be undertaken in a number of ways depending on the objectives of the investigation (Bruner 1990). In telling a story a person connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants the listener to take away from the story. Important events are selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful for the audience (Bruner 1990, Polkinghorne 1995). Alternately Frank clearly remarks that stories need not be defined in essence, and relates to what they do rather than what they are (Frank 2010). Frank (2010) maintains that people’s stories are living, personal and specific and always in dialogue between teller and listener. Rather than representations of experience, stories become reality; we believe that we are having experiences because of stories (Bruner 1990, Frank 2010). In this sense stories shape rather than simply reflect human conduct and understanding. Narratives are loosely outlined as templates from which stories are constructed and depend on shared cultural and literary narrative resources (Frank 2010). Riessman (2008) concludes that there are major differences in narrative work among scholars working with personal first-person accounts however all work with conditional sequence and contingency. Beyond this commonality, the narrative concept is operationalised differently (Riessman 2008). Whatever the content, stories require consequential linking of events or ideas. Narrative shaping entails imposing a meaningful pattern on what would otherwise be random and disconnected (Andrews et al. 2014). This makes it quite different from other research methodologies that categorise data into themes.

My research focused on the collection and interpretation of personal stories in order to understand how embroidering can promote change within the context of a person’s everyday life. Narratives analysis allowed detailed explanation of the potential shared narrative experiences and wider cultural and social templates

that influenced embroidering practice for the participants in my study.

In the case of my research narrative was selected because it can be particularly useful in answering such profound questions that require detailed and comprehensive investigation of the specific rather than the generic principles across cases (Polkinghorne 1995). The result is to explain more about how embroidering can promote change and therefore better understand occupation as a means rather than end in a therapeutic situation (Pentland et al.2018). Understanding relates to the energy created by the new and dynamic viewing of the situation and in grasping the complex and unintended consequential results of human action of into a unified whole (Ricoeur 1984) rather than into separate themes. In this case narrative inquiry was ideal because it is designed to capture the distinctiveness of human action, which Polkinghorne (1995) describes as the outcome of the interaction of a person's previous learning and experiences, present situation and proposed goals and purposes. My research thus allows detailed understanding of the complexity of embroidering in everyday life and the meaning, value and engagement of participation in context (Nyman et al. 2013). Ultimately, narrative research aims to develop practical knowledge, which I consider essential to occupational therapy practice by enabling researchers to reveal tacit processes underlying practice through a reflective (a point to which I discuss further in this section) conversation with the materials of the research situation (Willis et al. 2007). The result of my narrative inquiry will be a collection of individual cases in which attention moves from case to case rather than case to generalization (Polkinghorne 1995).

Narrative concepts within study design

My research developed over time in response to my professional need to better understand the therapeutic potential of crafts in occupational therapy. In essence, I framed this as a *narrative*

problem because it relates to the transitional and contingent nature of individual experience or activity within a social and cultural context. I was interested in both the creation of meaning and the structuring of action in relation to embroidering in everyday life. The fundamental attraction is the possibility that narrative offers in the study of doing, being, becoming and belonging (Wilcock 1999) within an individual and social context. Continuity is considered fundamental from a narrative perspective where experience has a history, is ever changing and always going somewhere (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Narrative inquiry is therefore considered as an ideal way to approach study of the meaning of doing everyday activity within people's lives (Josephsson and Alasker 2015, Willis et al. 2007).

Occupational science is based on an underlying belief that narrative thought influences everyday life based on Ricoeurs' concept of emplotment, or the organisation of events into a coherent story (Bonsall 2012). Bonsall (2012) identified three ways that narrative was used in in order to understand experience in occupational science literature; narrative in everyday life, in clinical reasoning and as a research method. As a research method narrative is particularly useful in understanding how people use previous experience to structure and attribute meaning to future action (Bruner 1990, Mattingly 1998). Narrative is considered as a framework for understanding and transmitting meaning within cultures and stories are co-constructed to create cultural scripts which generate templates for action (Bonsall 2012). Narrative research attends towards narratives and stories by which people make sense of and explain everyday life. In this case on how embroidering can be seen to influence past, present and future action. This is because in everyday life narrative builds a bridge between an individual's current state and one that is desired (Mattingly 1998). Narrative research can also allow understanding of the point at which commitments are made which structure future action (Bruner 1990). Due to its significance

in everyday life, narrative offers an important tool to researchers in understanding how occupations and in this case, embroidering can facilitate meaningful change (Bonsall 2012).

Within occupational science and occupational therapy, resultant research has examined narratives in relation to life changing disability, illness or injury for individuals or families (Bonsall 2012). Despite the strong paring between narrative and occupational science (Bonsall 2012), it has rarely been employed as a research methodology in order to understand everyday occupations. Narrative research seems to be superlative in understanding problematic, difficult or turbulent life events (Frank 2010), but not the routine or mundane. In my estimation, it seems that as a research methodology it is remarkably suited to understanding meaning in everyday activity. In relation to craft and textiles, published research tends to be qualitative and use paradigmatic or categorical methods to analyse data which is criticised because it fragments stories and thus distorts meaning (Frank 2010). Even when narrative inquiry is used as a method, data is paradigmatically organised, for example in the study 'crafting the self' by Coulter et al. (2004). Methodological exceptions are the survey designs used by Pöllänen (2015) and Riley et al. (2013) and ethnography utilised by Dickie (2011) and Riley (2011). In the case of my research narrative inquiry will be used to compliment and contribute to previous research which has identified various themes which suggest the ways in which engaging in crafts might influence health and well-being. Because stories are told and occur within social situations, narrative become the framework for transmitting *and* understanding meaning in the research context (Bonstall 2012).

Research Aims

In addition to answering the research question on page 34, utilising narrative inquiry my research aims:

- To understand the meaning of embroidering as situated, practised enacted and evolving within a person's life.
- To understand the therapeutic potential of embroidering in order to inform occupational therapy practice and wider health disciplines.
- To contribute to the understanding of crafts as complex occupations within everyday life and how they can support and improve health and well-being.

Theoretical perspectives

The central theoretical foundations of my research are defined as follows:

Professional assumptions:

- People are occupational beings (Wilcock 2006).
- Occupation, health and well-being are linked: As occupational beings, people need to engage in a range of meaningful activities in their daily lives in order to sustain health and wellbeing (Wilcock 2006, Pentland et al. 2018).
- Occupational therapists can influence health through application of detailed knowledge of everyday occupation, in the context of everyday life (Wilcock 2006, Pentland et al. 2018)

Narrative assumptions:

- The physical world exists outside of human experience as the context in which our acts are situated and these might provide reasons for our actions (Bruner 1990).
- Individuals live within a physical and social/cultural context, with a certain amount of agency.
- Individuals are dynamic and experience varies from person to person (Bruner 1990, Frank 2010).

- The physical world is constantly changing and as part of the world humans are always in a process of becoming (Wilcock 2006, Frank 2010).
- Narratives are a network of individuals assumptions with intersubjectively shared meanings. Narrative connects individual with context (Bruner 1990)
- The researcher is part of the research phenomena; mutually implicated, combining participant, researcher, academic, embroiderer, and therapist with context (Barad 2007).
- Our knowledge of the world is socially constructed, carried by individuals, shared and most importantly – storied (Bruner 1990, Frank 2010).

Interpretive framework

Qualitative researchers study people in everyday situations and attempt to make sense of or interpret the meanings that people bring to research phenomena (Denzin 2005). Interpretivism proposes that rather than search for generalizable truths or laws about human behaviour, we should concentrate on local understanding (Willis 2007). Interpretation is considered to be as far as research can go. This is because people in the research setting are mysterious thus we can only explore, catch glimpses, illuminate and then try to interpret fragments of perceived reality (Holliday 2002). Language defines reality and talk involves a constant interpretive process with no definitive understanding or truth (Benton and Craib 2011). This implies a relativism where different societies and cultures have their own social rules implicit in meaningful behaviour.

The interpretivist perspective offers a platform from which to view culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of social phenomena (Crotty 2012) such as embroidering. Interpretive research aims to create meaning in our understanding of different contexts and situations where we thoughtfully make decisions about our own practice within a reflective (Polkinghorne 1995) process.

Understanding is the result of reflection of the historical and existing context of the subject and that of the researcher. Consideration of the relative historical and cultural basis of craft activities and the complexity of specific crafts such as embroidery was considered fundamental to the study design.

With the understanding of reality as a construct, the only way to begin to understand this is through considered and focused thought of embroidering practice as it is situated. Interpretivist philosophy challenges the idea that objective reality exists when it comes to human behaviour (Willis et al. 2007). This is not an outright rejection of the existence of a material or physical world, these realms are just considered as different and require different ways of knowing (Polkinghorne 1995). Polkinghorne (1995) identifies three possible conditions of human experience; the material, the natural and the mental. He suggests that human consciousness has evolved beyond the biological realm of the material and natural levels of existence; humans are not only able to experience the external world through their senses, but also create interpretations through tools such as language and culture (Willis et al. 2007, Polkinghorne 1995). This idea of reality relates the constructionist movement where meaning is constructed within a social context through cultural tools and traditions. These ideas suit the professional realm of reflective practice where clinicians are encouraged to engage in a reflective process to develop deepened understanding within a practice context (Schon 2008). Such understanding is not considered to be the truth and cannot be exported to other settings but provides practical knowledge that informs the practitioner through creation of examples. From an interpretive perspective there is no one correct telling of a situation and that in every telling dwells a different and equally meaningful narrative (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, Riessman 2008).

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is implicated with social constructionism which suggests that the world, as we perceive it and in which we live, is structured by shared human constructions and conceptions which to a large extent are expressed and interpreted through language (Maxwell 2012). These are framed within narrative structures (Bruner 1990). Embroidering can be recognised as such a construction. Like interpretivism, social constructionism is based on the view that meaning is constructed rather than discovered (Crotty 2012). Concepts such as craft, embroidery, stress and anxiety are generated in the human realm of meaning (Polkinghorne 1995); they are socially constructed. In the case of the act of embroidering, the focus is the matter of the individual mind as well as on the collective, especially when the purpose of the research is related to dissemination to a wider social context. Along with the researcher, this brings the audience into the equation and the notion that stories can cause others to act, promote change or empathy over other forms of communication in order to establish certain ends (Riessman 2008). Justification relates to the cultural and historical influence, which may be evident in embroidery. It would be meaningless to suggest that the activity of embroidering existed outside of this environmental context. Nonetheless, it is of equal importance to consider the uniqueness and situatedness of the person-in-context but widening this into the social context within which practice takes place. Further thought has been directed in relation to this matter in the choice of an interpretive paradigm.

As an interpretive exploit, my research aims to focus on individuals within their social context. Attention is drawn towards exploit of embroidering as a taken for granted and under-explored aspect of daily life. Though interpretation of the specific, I aim to understand the meaning of the changes that occur when a person embroiders rather than provide a causal explanation. At the heart of my study is the belief that experience is storied, interpreted, told, re-

interpreted and re-told (Bruner 1990). We learn through sharing stories and that these provide us with the foundations of our reality expressed as narrative structures or templates (Frank 2010). Further, temporality is fundamental and change and adaptation are at the basis of being human (Bruner, 1990).

Narrative inquiry is primarily concerned with epistemology which places emphasis on reconstructing experience that is personally and socially relevant (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). The person-in-context (Pentland et al. 2018) is of prime interest and the sense of what the phenomenon is changes over time (Lindsay 2006). This was very apparent in my research where the research question changed several times in response to the evolving investigation. Narrative research, however, begins with a research problem rather than a theory and is interested in experience as expressed in lived and told stories (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). In addition, the researcher is implicated in the research from the beginning temporally and personally present in the situation being studied in a relationship with co-participants (Lindsay 2006). This emphasises the notion of a physical world outside of ourselves as the context in which our acts are situated and which might provide reasons for our actions (Bruner 1990). Adoption of a narrative stance does not deny that the physical world exists independently of human perception but rejects that it is possible to have an objective or certain knowledge of it (Maxwell 2012) due to our human limitations (Ball 2018). From this perspective it is possible to acknowledge the body as being a physical entity within the practice of embroidering, and to recognise the presence of tools and materials within the process. This is essential, because it is congruent with occupational therapy interventions that aim to influence positive optimal change through interaction between the person-in-context, the environment and their engagement in occupation (Pentland et al. 2018). Particular attention, however is given to the transitional experience of embroidering and the possible meanings that become apparent in the storied life of the participants

as they recollect, reflect and re-story participation in embroidering. Importantly, this situates the researcher as an agent inside the research phenomenon and accepts the existence of different and legitimate accounts and interpretations (Maxwell, 2012). The interpretive approach that I have taken builds on the typical act of a reflective or reflexive researcher. Adopting a concept from Barad (2007), I prefer to think of my involvement as diffractive rather than reflexive in practice. The latter concept suggests separation between the researcher, participants and research phenomenon. Alternatively, diffraction proposes inseparability and legitimises engagement of myself as a researcher, academic, embroiderer, and therapist. From this perspective I can read diffractively for patterns of differences that make a difference within the data (Barad 2007). So, in this way I become significant within interpretation, reading insights through one another, building new acumens, and attentively and carefully looking for differences that matter in the fine details of the data. I am not separate or external to the process but entangled and this allowed me to think within the stories and reveal new patterns and thus insights into how embroidering made a difference to the participants within the context of their everyday life. This is consistent with current occupational therapy theory which appreciates the interaction of the therapist-in-context in any situation (Pentland et al. 2018) but develops this into a process of intra-action (Barad 2007). My position, as a researcher, academic, amateur embroiderer and professional occupational therapist, is thus central to furthering a better understanding of optimum ways in which to achieve the very best of excellent patient centred care.

Influential Narrative Theorists: relation to research

One criticism of narrative research is that it lacks a formulaic base (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). This can make researchers concerned that narrative thinking is somehow less acceptable and lacking in rigour, certainty and precision (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). Novice practitioners, including myself can find this

challenging and try to inject various theories in order to provide structure in the form of gender, power, race, class or culture. I have purposely avoided doing this because Clandinin and Connelly (2000) clearly state that the main issue for narrative inquirers is pragmatic; to identify a narrative view of experience. The theoretical and methodological frame focuses on participants and researchers co-constructed narratives of experience situated and lived out on storied landscapes. As the work proceeds, the phenomena begin to unveil, and the inquirer is more able to define the research problem and relate this to theory (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). As I have stated, this was certainly the case in my research and I have developed a theoretical explanation into my discussion. There are a number of narrative theorists that have been influential in the construction of my narrative inquiry. A brief introduction of each is provided in the next section with indication of how they inspired my research methodology.

Jerome Bruner

Jerome Bruner is seen as one of the main contributors to narrative inquiry who established narrative as a legitimate research methodology used to generate knowledge in social science (Kim 2016). He distinguished the paradigmatic or scientific mode of understanding from the narrative mode that establishes plausibility by creating good stories that are lifelike (Bruner 1986). This latter mode of thinking uses stories to understand the meaning of human actions and experiences (Riessman 2008). Bruner went further to say that narratives structure perceptual experience, organise memory, and build the events of life (Bruner 1986, 1990). He argues that individuals become the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives. To be understood, these private constructions of identity must mesh with a community of life stories, or narrative structures about the nature of life in a particular culture (Bruner 1990). Action is thus intentionally based and situated in a cultural setting and the quest for meaning within culture are the causes for

human action. The value of these ideas is that human nature is not seen as independent of culture and our culturally adapted way of life depends on shared meanings and concepts. This eschews a subjectivist view of human reality and substitutes this with a shared, negotiated and connected world of meaning. Bruner's (1990) cultural psychology is not pre-occupied with behaviour but with intentionally based situated states of action. Intentional states are beliefs, desires and meanings that become roles and ways of life. The reciprocal relation between our perceived ideas of the outside world and our intentional states creates a dramatisation in human action which informs a narrative structure. Narrative structure is composed of a unique temporal sequence of events, mental states and happening that involve people as characters. In order to understand the meaning of the narrative configuration, the interpreter must grasp the configuring plot and its constituents, which must relate to the structure (Bruner 1990). In this sense narrative is seen as the link between the inner world of experience, the self as agent and the outer world which is considered autonomous of experience (Bruner 1990). Research is the process by which we can begin to interpret and understand the transactions involved in the construction of meaning in human action. My research aimed to identify the possible narrative structure of embroidering. Importantly to the findings of my research, this is based on humanist ideology which has been criticised as honouring human as supreme agent, with the unshakable capacity to pursue individual and collective perfectibility in the world (Braidotti 2016).

Donald Polkinghorne

In his book *Narrative knowing and the human sciences* (1995), Polkinghorne suggests that human reality resides within three differently organised but inter-related realms; the material, natural and mental. He considers narrative as the primary form by which human experience of these stratified realms is made meaningful. Narrative meaning is thus presented as a cognitive process that

organises human experiences into temporally meaningful episodes called plots. Because it is a cerebral operation Polkinghorne suggests that narrative meaning is not an object available to direct observation. Individual stories however, and histories that emerge in the creation of human narratives are accessible for interpretation and these narratives are considered as the focus of social research (Polkinghorne 1995).

Polkinghorne (1995) suggests that narrative meaning resides in the mental realm, however, understanding is based on the notion that human cognition both affects and is affected by the organic system of the body. The mental realm thus functions to organise elements of physical and cognitive awareness into meaningful episodes. The emergence of human beings from life in general to the reflective consciousness and language is defined as a social change that has brought about a unique level of reality that he calls the order of meaning. Because human existence is embedded to various degrees in the material, the organic, and the mental states, it includes within itself the three basic structures of reality; matter, life, and consciousness. Polkinghorne stresses that it is the combined interaction of all material, natural and mental systems that produces the human realm, and that this extends beyond the individual through shared narratives, to the orders of cultural rules and language systems in which individuals or joined in social groups.

This understanding relates well to a study that aims to comprehend a human practice such as embroidery that exists within all three realms, bodily, natural and material, and extends from the subjective into a shared or combined reality. Narrative inquiry of this type is about study of uniqueness in practice, which appreciates difference and diversity, but the interest is not simply individualistic, but situated within the material, natural and cultural world within which we exist (Livholts and Tamboukou 2015).

Although understanding meaning is always conjoined with material and organic realms, for Polkinghorne (1995) it exists as a

purely human endeavour. Narrative is considered a human condition; something that we all do in order to make sense of our reality and give meaning to our lives. From a humanist perspective narrative is one of the ways in which we create meaning from our interactions with the world. For Polkinghorne, narrative meaning is focused on the aspects of experience that concern human actions or events that affect human beings. The meaning of each event is produced by the place within the whole episode, in this case embroidery practice. The aim of research is to ask about the significance of the relation of the connections between action and events, as well as the contributions that the events and actions made in bringing about an endpoint or conclusion of the episode. So, the interest is in uncovering the events and actions involved in embroidering practice and asking how they combine in the creation of embroideries as an end product.

Plot is considered as the organising theme of the narrative. The function of the plot is to transform a listing of events into a schematic whole by recognising the contribution the events make to the development of the outcome of the story. A plot can weave together a complex of events to make a single story. It takes into account the historical and social context in which the events took place and to recognise the significance of unique another occurrence. A plot also has the capacity to articulate and consolidate complex threads of multiple activities by means of the overlay of subplots.

Development of the plot is complex and requires moving back and forth comparing proposed plot structures to revise the plot structure according to the principle of best fit. Emplotment is the way that the narrative form joins concepts into wholes and creates meanings. Emplotment composes meaning by a process that asks not what really happened but what did it mean. Therefore, emplotment is not the imposition of a ready-made plot on ready-made set of events. It is an interpretive process which discloses the significance and allows them to be grasped together as part of one story. In occupational therapy emplotment of this type is endorsed

by Alsaker and Josephsson (2015) a good example of research being narratives of women living with chronic rheumatic conditions (Alsaker and Josephsson 2011). Another example is Mattingly's (1998) healing dramas and clinical plots which emphasises the narrative structure of experience in occupational therapy practice.

Polkinghorne proposes two types of narrative research including descriptive and explanatory. Descriptive research aims to understand historical accounts which are used by the individual to order and make temporal events meaningful. Examples in occupational therapy involve creating meaning through a life history approach where significant life events correspond to a chronological portrait (Bonsall 2012). Explanatory narrative research aims to construct a narrative account explaining a situation or event involving human action, for example Horghagen et al's (2007) study of the use of craft activities as an occupational therapy treatment modality in Norway during 1952–1960 (Bonsall 2012). Research of this type ties together and orders events to make apparent how they caused the happening under investigation.

The aim of my research is to provide a narrative explanation of the meaning and situatedness of embroidering practice within the everyday lives of embroiderers. Based on Polkinghorne's notion of explanatory narrative the research will identify the multitude of events and actions connected to embroidery practice and select those that are most significant to answering the research question. Analysis will draw together various situations, episodes and actions that show how change occurs as a result of embroidering.

Catherine Riessman

Riessman has written extensively about narrative analysis rather than inquiry the former which she explains as a family of methods for interpreting oral, written and visual texts that have in common a storied form (Riessman 2008). Attention to sequences of action distinguishes narrative analysis from other forms of qualitative research as the investigator focuses on particular actors, in particular

social places, at particular times (Riessman 2008). Narrative data is described as material for scrutiny and can range from the lifespan of one individual to incidents recounted by many people (Bonstall 2012). Analysis of data is indicated as one component of the broader field of narrative inquiry. Riessman (2008) considers narrative inquiry as a way of conducting case-centred research. Cases can be individuals, groups communities, organisations or nations. Histories of cases are preserved resulting in an accumulation of detail that is assembled into a fuller 'picture' of the individual or group. The field is described to have realist, postmodern and constructionist strands with no agreement on the origins and ways to construct analysis. The general approach can show how knowledge is constructed in the everyday world through an ordinary communicative act of storying. Narrative inquiry provides new ways to talk about or link self with society. Importantly, narrative inquirers position themselves as part of the field of study and in interpreting the participant in dialogue with the self. Readers can expect narrative analysis to take diverse forms precisely because investigators rely on diverse theories and epistemologies (Riessman 2008).

As narrative enquiry is grounded in the study of the particular, analysis is interested in how a speaker sequences events and uses language and/or visual images to communicate meaning to an audience. While useful for making general statements across many subjects, other qualitative approaches eliminate the sequential and structural features that are hallmark of narrative (Riessman 2008). Honouring individual agency and intention is difficult when cases are pooled to make general statements. In narrative inquiry attention shifts to the details of how and why a particular event is storied, what the narrator accomplishes by developing a story in that way, and the effects on the reader or listener. This allows narrative research to include many voices and subjectivities (Riessman 2008).

Crucially, Riessman (2008) suggests that it is generally acknowledged in the human sciences that the researcher does not

find narratives but instead participates in their creation. In this sense she suggests that although investigators don't have access to the real thing, only the speakers, writers or artist's mimetic representation, they still allow researchers to infer something about what it feels like to be in that story world. In this sense narratives do not merely refer to past experience but creates experiences for their audience. From Riessmans perspective, narratives engage audiences through modes of artistic expression, illustrated in writing, painting, and performing arts. Stories are seen to highlight commonalities and enable connections which can mobilise others into action. A good narrative analysis should prompt the reader to think beyond the surface of the text, towards a broader commentary which enables social change.

Cheryl Mattingly

The place of narrative within occupational therapy is largely associated with the work of Cheryl Mattingly who was employed to study the clinical reasoning of occupational therapists in the United States in the mid 1980's by the American Occupational Therapy Association (Mattingly 1998). She engaged in a project that involved two years of ethnographic data collection with a wide variety, of mainly female, therapists. As a result of the study Mattingly (1998) argued that occupational therapists engaged in a type of narrative thinking that she called 'therapeutic emplotment' where they identified critical moments within their intervention which served as transformative moments along a path from illness to recovery (Mattingly 1998). During interventions Mattingly observed patients and therapists constructing and negotiating interpretations of their experiences into a story or plot and that these became fundamental to the transformative nature of their relationship. Stories can transform identity because they facilitate construction of a culturally and personally understandable plot in which images of possible futures are considered against interpretations of the past (Mattingly 1998). Construction and the recounting of stories can offer a way to make meaning of what is otherwise unthinkable or concealed in the

complexity of human action. The idea that stories, and constructed interpretive narratives, offer a way to make meaning of the intricacy of human action in both a cultural and personally meaningful way was distinctly appealing in relation to my study. The ideas provided by Mattingly also helped me understand why narrative inquiry was so attractive as it made sense to the therapist in me as I could relate the ideas of therapeutic emplotment in my own clinical experience. My research, however concentrates on people's participation in everyday life rather than patients receiving occupational therapy intervention.

Mattingly's use of emplotment offered further insight into its use as a method in configuring stories from different data generation episodes into a coherent whole. Mattingly's (1998) process of narrative analysis is an analysis of action which depends on the notion of dramatic time when we would say that something significant happened. Through emplotment a researcher is able to analyse the narrative properties of dramatic time. Resulting narratives attend to the small movements of everyday life and explore and create possible worlds (Mattingly 1998).

Finally, Mattingly (1998) writes that to consider life narratively is to consider how people form and attempt to carry out commitments in their lives. She relates this to the philosophical ideas of Bernard Williams who argues that one's sense of identity is deeply rooted in our commitments to certain projects in our lives and that these projects relate to our ongoing life struggle to become something other than who we currently are; these are deep narratively organized commitments of our future selves. With this idea in mind, Mattingly legitimises study of narratives in order to understand the relationship between identity and action and how this might relate to the construction of a therapeutic plot of becoming something other (Mattingly 1998).

Summary: Methodology

In summary, this study can be defined as an interpretive narrative inquiry that aims to explore how embroidering can influence meaningful change within the context of a person's everyday life. Narrative inquiry is considered as a legitimate methodology distinguished from the paradigmatic mode of research, that uses stories to understand the meaning of situated human action and experience (Riessman 2008). Stories and wider narratives are considered as the forming aspect of experience as they organise perceptual information and memories and build the events of our lives over time (Bruner 1990). Although autobiographical narratives begin as private constructions, they must combine with social and cultural narrative structures in order to be understood (Bruner 1990) and considered meaningful as shared narratives (Polkinghorne 1995). Human reality is said to reside in the material, natural and mental realms of meaning and narrative emplotment is a central form through which experience is integrated and sequenced and thus made meaningful (Polkinghorne 1995). Narrative inquiry is about the study of uniqueness as situated within the social and cultural context (Livholts and Tamboukou 2015). Additionally, identification of the influential experiences of the researcher is regarded as important as I am implicated in the research findings from the beginning (Bruner 1990, Riessman 2008).

The focus of this research is to interpret the unique intentional states, happenings, sequence of events, and stories involving people as characters in order to understand the transitions involved in the construction of meaning of embroidering in everyday life. Attention is given to the exclusive, distinctive and situated meaning as well as the shared social and cultural associations. Personal stories will be used to illustrate particular and shared meaning as these are considered powerful resources that can and do have a profound effect on us in order to intervene in the world to affect something and make a difference (Frank 2010). The recounting, construction, reconstruction

and co-construction of stories are used in order to make meaning of everyday practise that is otherwise concealed in the complexity of human action (Mattingly 1998). In this case to consider life narratively allows a diffractive view of how people form occupational commitments in their life and how they relate to ongoing life events (Mattingly 1998). The relevance and use of narrative within the occupational therapy process via clinical reasoning (Kielhofner 2009, Mattingly 1998) is another clear reason for their power within research and a clear justification for their use in order to continue the discursive debate regarding the use of crafts such as embroidery in modern occupational therapy practice.

Chapter 4

Method

Generation of data

The purpose of my research was to begin to understand the transitional feature of embroidering and how engagement might influence change within the context of a person's everyday life. The narrative nature of this task called for collection of data that provided detail of situation, intentional states, happenings, sequence of events, and stories suitable for narrative analysis. The outcome of analysis shows both the significance of embroidering for a person-in-context, but also interpretation of a shared narrative structure that illuminates the transformative potential of engagement. Narrative inquiry of the type used here combines narrative theory with narrative analysis in order to focus on both unique and shared meaning. This ensures that I answer the research question and remain faithful to the situated and temporal elements which distinguishes narrative from other types of research. In order to assemble the required data, I decided that it was necessary to collect accounts from individual people who embroidered as part of their everyday life. As previously suggested, I wanted to explore embroidering as experienced and not the experience of learning to embroider. Following recommended procedure, I conducted multiple interviews with the same person. (Riessman 2008). I ultimately recruited five people who regularly embroidered as part of their everyday lives. The unit of analysis were accounts of skilled individual embroidering practice. In this case focus on a small group of embroiderers over an extended period of time enabled collection and analysis of multi-level data about individual embroiderers every day embroidering practice (Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

Recruitment and sampling

Sampling was purposeful because the purpose of the research was not to generalize but to explore complexity and situatedness of embroidering practice over time. The participants needed to embroider on a regular basis as part of their routine. Gender, age, and experience were irrelevant; however, I did want to ensure that participants were not reliant on embroidering as a form of income, that they were not learning how to embroider and that participants were actively engaged in their craft on a daily basis. I further used convenience and chain referral sampling in order to approach people who were easily accessible and to take opportunities for obtaining a sample where it existed (Holloway and Freshwater 2007). Chain referral sampling was also used where participants suggested further individuals who fitted the inclusion criteria.

Recruitment e-mails and posters (appendix 3) were sent to individuals and settings Art Galleries, Schools, local Embroiderers Guild groups, local textile groups, National Trust Properties and various Facebook sites. I also attended various Embroiderers Guild meetings where I presented the purpose of the research at a group meeting. Interested people were requested to contact me via Facebook, e-mail or telephone. Once contact was initiated, I gave a brief description of the study and provided a participant information form (appendix 4) via e-mail or post. The participant information form instructed potential participants to re-contact me if they would like to participate in the study. At the point of contact I made sure that the person met the inclusion criteria and was committed to the purpose and requirements written in the information form. People who did not meet the entry criteria or were unable to commit to six months of data collection were thanked, given reasons for non-inclusion and given the opportunity to receive final products of the research process. Recruitment was slow and required me to visit a number of embroiderers' guilds. One guild turned my invitation down stating that their members did not want to talk about their embroidering

practice. Although I did receive an initial enquiry from a male embroiderer, I did not manage to recruit him to the study. In the end, I recruited five women between the ages of 20 and 90 to the study.

Selected participants were invited to an initial meeting at a place of their preference following the Universities lone working policy. During this meeting I answered any final questions and gained consent via signature of a consent form (appendix 3). Once the consent form was signed the participant and I arranged our first meeting.

Inclusion criteria

- Participants who were willing to engage with me as researcher in an intensive data gathering relationship lasting approximately six months.
- Participants who were willing to meet with me at their home and local environment.
- Participants who usually embroidered on a daily basis.
- Participants who were willing to share their embroidering activity with me.
- Participants who were prepared to share their work and agreed for me to take photographs with the view of inclusion in any future publication.
- Participants living within a two-hour (approximate) distance of my home town.

Exclusion criteria

- People under the age of 18.
- People who did not comfortably speak English.
- People who were financially dependent on income related to sale of their embroidery.
- Participants who were in an acute phase of illness.
- People who were very new to embroidering

Participants

Five participants were recruited for the purpose of this study and each was involved in 3 – 8 meetings (Table 2). The participants chose their own pseudonym.

Table 1: Overview of participants

	Olivia	Michaela	Millicent	Victoria	Becky
Experience in years	60 years	20 years	75 years	60 years	40 years
Embroidering methods used	Hand	Hand	Hand and machine	Hand and machine	Hand
Number of interviews/ meetings	Five Home	Three Home	Six Home	Five Home	Five Home
Content of interviews/ meetings	Talking Embroidering together Looking at embroideries	Talking Looking at embroidering and equipment	Talking Teaching and learning Machine embroidering Looking at embroideries Attending embroidery exhibition where exhibited	Talking Looking at embroideries Attending embroidery exhibition where exhibited	Talking Embroidering together Looking at embroideries Visiting embroidery exhibition

Methods of Data Collection – informal meetings

Involvement in the research required the participants to commit to the study for at least six months of data collection, although in practice contact lasted much longer as the women were intrinsically interested in my study. This extensive period was considered necessary to enable richer data and to establish trust in the relationship where I became part of the participants on-going enacted embroidering practice (Riessman 2008, Nyman et al. 2012). Storying was encouraged and the meetings were seen as narrative occasions where conversation was stimulated so that interviewees could develop narrative accounts rather than answer specific questions. In this case the speaker and researcher collaboratively render events and experiences as meaningful and oral data collected and finally transcribed is seen as co-constructed (Riessman 2008,

Clandinin and Connelly 2000). The model of a facilitating interviewer who asks questions to a respondent who gives answers is replaced by two active participants who jointly construct the narrative meaning. The goal is to generate detailed accounts of their particular practice. As I found, narratives can come in many forms from a few words, through conversations that develop into brief stories, or long narratives that build over the course of several interviews (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, Andrews et al. 2013). One story can lead to another as narrator and researcher negotiate openings for extended turns in the conversation and shifts in topic (Andrews et al. 2013). The aim is to encourage the speaker to use their own words, by asking simple and open questions, in order to try to shift power towards the participant (Riessman 2008). I was able to do this through regarding the participant as the expert as I myself was a novice embroiderer. I also asked participants to teach me stitches so that they could show me how they practiced techniques. With my professional training and background working in mental health I was able to listen and use emotional attentiveness in an attempt to forge dialogic relationships with greater communicative equity (Riessman 2008).

Due to the intensity of the data gathering it was also important to propose a point of completion of data and the ending of the relationship. I spent approximately six to ten hours with each participant over a six-month period of data gathering. All participants were re-visited and thanked at the end of the data gathering period where possible. All of the participants continued to share their new embroidery projects with me and I continued to meet them at Guild meetings when I was invited to speak about my research to members.

Data collection

It was initially thought that participants would initiate all meetings and invite me to join them for significant embroidery related events (Nyman et al. 2013). In actuality, however, I tended

to contact each participant after a few weeks to ask if we could arrange another meeting. This included regular checking that the participant was still happy to be involved in the research. Each meeting (after the first) began with a discussion about what had happened since my last visit in order to re-orientate ourselves to the past conversation (Nyman et al. 2013). Participants were encouraged to share the embroideries that they were currently undertaking and those that had a significant meaning for them. Several meetings involved embroidering together. In addition, one participant taught me to machine embroider and another cross stitch (I enjoyed the former but hated the latter). I visited two exhibitions with two different participants where reflexive field notes were taken. I also visited all of the participant's homes where they showed me where they embroidered and how they used the required tools and materials.

Where possible and with permission given, digital recordings were undertaken of each meeting and transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Based on Nyman et al. (2013) where field notes were taken, these were spoken into a digital recorder and transcribed as soon as possible after the event. With permission, I also took lots of photographs of materials, equipment, spaces and embroideries. The varied data generation was important because of the nature of the research. Video was considered as a possible data-gathering tool however, it was rejected due to its potential to intrude within the participant and researcher relationship. Participant departure from the study was aided through the research agreement and continued opportunity for participants to remain in contact once data gathering has ceased and gain a copy of the results of the study (Nyman et al. 2013, Polkinghorne 1995).

I transcribed verbatim all digital recordings of our meetings. Names and context specific details were removed, and digital and transcribed data was saved on a password protected network drive within the University. Photographs taken for purpose of research

(including of embroidered items) were saved as above with permission given by the participant as agreed in the consent form. Photographs did not include images of hands or face but were personal to each individual as they displayed living spaces. Participants gave consent to collection of all data and to further use including verbatim extracts that were anonymized. Photographs of original work remained the property of the participant. Where possible, all participants were provided with a copy of the findings.

Ethical considerations and process of ethical and research governance approval

Ethical approval was provided by the University Tier 2 Ethics and Governance Committee and included careful consideration of Autonomy (Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, coercion and the role of the researcher), Beneficence, Non-Maleficence and Justice (appendix 5).

I always aimed to respect participant privacy and dignity. I believe that I worked in a person-centred manner and that we worked out a research plan that was flexible and met the needs of both parties. Participants were kept informed of the research process and were provided with the findings where possible. Participants were informed to direct any complaints about my conduct to my research supervisors or divisional lead in occupational therapy, and contact details were provided in the participant information form.

Data collected was stored for the duration of the degree and participants were informed that all data would be retained for use in future studies by the researcher alone for a maximum of ten years as specified by University policy. Participants gave signed permission for all anonymised data used and publication of visual images, which remained their property.

Issues of rigor (credibility, trustworthiness, authenticity, audit trails, transparency, validity and reliability issues.

The research was not intended to generalise but to uncover the individual and shared meaning of the transitional experience of embroidering. The findings show a possible interpretation of how embroidering can promote change in the context of a person's everyday life. It is acknowledged that different participants with a different researcher would have revealed alternative findings. The stories as presented, however are intended to be authentic and credible although not necessarily a true representation of the experience of my participants (Bruner 1990). I did feel very strongly, however that in order to be dependable the participants should verify the transcribed data and amend these where they felt that they were not authentic to their remembrance. All personal stories used within my research have been shared with the participants and information contained verified as authentic and publishable by the informants for the purpose of research dissemination. A reflexive diary was written throughout the research process in order to trace conceptual development. A detailed audit trail at each stage of analysis has been undertaken and all of the stories used in the thesis can be traced back to the original transcript. To enhance authenticity, where possible, the participants own words have been used within the findings. Stories are abridged, but retain enough content to understand the meaning in relation to the research question; How can embroidering influence change in relation to a person in the context of their everyday life? Further consideration of the quality of my research is provided in the discussion.

Method of analysis.

Narrative Analysis

Brief history of narrative analysis

Narrative inquiry is an evolving research discipline within social science and ideas relating to analysis of data are similarly developing (Riessman 2008). As explained in the methodology, narrative data can be collected in a variety of textual forms including; oral, written and visual and narrative analysis refers to a variety of different methods for interpreting this data (Riessman 2008). The object of narrative analysis is to read or hear perceived or hidden awareness of experience and to interpret the meaning in order to produce knowledge that deepens and enlarges the understanding of human experience (Polkinghorne 1995). A good narrative analysis should prompt the reader to think beyond the text and move towards a broader explanation and as such has implications for changing future practice.

Riessman (2008) suggests that within narrative analysis it is generally acknowledged that the researcher creates narratives from storied data collected in the field. Particulars are brought to the forefront contextualised within human agency and thus the imagination of story tellers, listeners and readers, can be interrogated allowing research to include many voices and subjectivities (Riessman 2008). Riessman (2008) describes four types of narrative analysis of storied data; thematic, structural, dialogic/performance and visual.

Thematic analysis utilises prior knowledge and theory as a resource for interpretation of spoken or written narratives constructed from storied data within interviews or fieldnotes (Riessman 2008). The researcher is primarily concerned with 'what' is said, rather than 'how' or 'why' in order to uncover human experience. According to Riessman (2008) structural analysis shifts emphasis from what is said to 'how' a speaker attempts to persuade a listener that a sequence of events actually happened. Dialogic/performance analysis is referred to as a broad and varied interpretive method that questions how a

story is co-produced in a complex relationship between teller, listener, speaker, text, reader, history and culture.

Dialogic/performance analysis is interested in unpacking meanings within mundane taken for granted social conventions to show how social reality is constructed through interaction. Finally, visual analysis pertains how to deal with visual data in order to either interpret intended communication in artistic images or how images might be used in research to demonstrate intended meanings within the research.

Narrative analysis can be similar to other case-based approaches such as social history, auto-biography or oral history, but is more interested in the sequence of action, choice of language, narrative style and response of the audience (Riessman 2008). Narrative analysis relies on, preserves and sometimes excavates extended accounts that are treated analytically as units rather than fragmented into thematic categories as is customary in other forms of qualitative analysis such as grounded theory (Bruner 1990, Clandinin and Connelly 2000, Polkinghorne 1995, Riessman 2008). While useful for making general statements over many participants category centred approaches exclude the sequential and structural features that are hallmarks of narrative (Riessman 2008).

Based on narrative theory I wanted my research to show contingency; the consequential linking of the experiences of the participants into a meaningful pattern in order to show how their embroidering practice might promote meaningful change in the context of their lives. Put simply I wanted to instigate how embroidering made a difference in their lives. With acknowledgement to narrative situatedness of the individual and wider social context, I wanted to explore both the personal happenings, mental states, events and stories unique to each individual and identify possible shared narratives (Bruner 1990). Analysis would require careful and diffractive consideration of both unique and mutual patterns, configurations and arrangements within a narrative framework.

Narratives can have a life beyond the individual, so personal stories can show the meaning of embroidering within an individual's life, but the narrative can further position the individual's stories into wider social, cultural and physical world as proposed narratives of how embroidering could make a difference. Connecting biography and society becomes possible through diffractive analysis of stories (Bruner 1990).

Method of narrative analysis as implemented: a nuanced approach

The approach to analysis that I formulated was primarily based on the notion of narrative thematic analysis (Riessman 2008) which also recognises the central place of narrative when personal lives and social institutions intersect in the wider cultural environment. For Riessman narratives are not considered to speak for themselves or offer a window into an "essential self" but require close interpretation which can be undertaken in a number of ways depending on the objectives of the investigation. This meant that I could be somewhat creative with my analysis as long as it was congruent with my research question and narrative framework.

In everyday storying a person is said to connect events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants the listener to take away from the story (Alsaker and Josephsson 2015, Bruner 1990). Important events are selected, organised, connected and evaluated as meaningful for the audience (Polkinghorne 1995). In this case the participants in my study selected stories that they felt were important in order to specifically show how embroidering was meaningful in their lives. My data also consisted of memories, stories, conversation, laughter, sharing, empathising, and imitations of past events folded into 'messy talk' that I needed to transform into text suitable for analysis. In essence, I had a lot of data that did not fit the conventions of event based narrative analysis. Also, as researcher I was not in a neutral objective situation but implicated at every step.

The limitation with conventional types of narrative analysis is that they tend to deal with event based or storied accounts within data (Andrews et al. 2013). This may in part be because narrative research tends to concentrate on problems or issues as experienced in life rather than 'everydayness'. For the purposes of my research I needed a more nuanced approach to narrative sequencing that attended to the agency of embroidering in ordinary life. My analysis needed to recognise co-presence of past, present, future but not as a reconstruction of significant autobiographical events but through the introduction of myself as a 'new' presence within the story which endorsed a 'fresh' telling and related possible understanding. This recognised sequence and change, but in an alternate way which did not prioritise personally experienced time. For example, Labov (1972) defined a minimal narrative as a sequence of two clauses that are temporally ordered. Andrews et al. (2013) argue that this understanding relies on culturally and gendered specific categorisation. They further suggest that event based narrative inquiry primarily developed through investigation of men. They intimate that research has shown that there is a significant difference in the way women tell stories. Rather than use cause and effect clauses, women weave conversation and story together into a shared reality (Andrews et al. 2013). In this way the point of telling evolves through interaction. The point is to share an experience rather than impart information about a historic event or situation. This was very much the case with the data that I developed with my participants, who were all women. Likewise, Riessman (1993) identified themes and stanza's in her research data which included ongoing states of being, present, future or hypothetical experiences and sequences leading her to suggest that the whole response of an interview is narrative if it has thematic and structural coherence. In the case of human action, such as embroidering, experience is considered complex and intangible in that it is hidden, fragmented, and indefinable (Mattingly 1998, Ricoeur 1984). I needed to develop an

approach to analysis that enabled me to identify both narrative themes and structure in conversations that were possible extensions or exceptions to the classical narrative clause. This needed to include phrases that showed a state of affairs that persisted or changed over time in contrast to event clauses that represented one unique happening (Andrews et al. 2013). In essence I combined thematic analysis (Riessman 2008) which is the most common form associated with narrative inquiry (Bonsall 2012), with analysis of action (Andrews et al. 2013). Combination of these approaches allowed me to provide insight into the meaning of embroidering as practiced and situated within everyday life and how this structured past, present and future action (Bonsall 2012). The following figure one provides a flow chart of my two stage process of analysis.

Process of analysis (Figure one)



Figure 1: Process of analysis

First stage of analysis: creation of personal embroidering stories

The purpose of this first stage of analysis was to develop embroidering stories for each participant. Although the advantage of narrative thematic analysis is that it can reliably identify meaning within a narrative, it is criticised because it can break up the stories (Bonsall 2012). I felt that it was important to interpret the data in order to develop personal embroidering stories in order to counteract this problem. I also believed that these stories would be meaningful to the reader. I began by repeated listening and reading each person's interviews in chronological order. This was to gain a general familiarisation with the content of each interview. I then proceeded to undertake a general process of content analysis where I captured my initial thoughts and ideas as annotations within each transcript (Appendix 6). This enabled me to identify and reflect on any potential preconceptions and also begin to think deeply about developing ideas and theories. A research journal was used to explore these thoughts (example on page 245). This process was undertaken separately with each participant's data.

First stage of analysis: stage two

Following the above familiarisation process, I began to attend to the temporal and complex interactions within embroidering practice. The aim of analysis was to configure of 'messy' data from the interviews into a coherent whole (Polkinghorne 1995). I began with attention on the characters and events within interview transcripts in order to give a predictive explanation of the significance of the stories as told by each individual. Emphasis was on content and temporal structure with consideration of the sequencing and progression of the events as moments of transformation and resolution during a person's life (Andrews et al. 2013). The process was carried out in an iterative manner in line with an interpretative approach with recurrent attention to the original interview data and consideration of narrative theory (Josepphsson and Alasker 2015). The purpose of

this method of analysis was to draw together the range of disconnected data elements from field data into a coherent plot that showed the significance and complexity of practice in context within in a final and engaging story (Polkinghorne 1995). Through this process of narrative analysis, I was able to propose how embroidering was situated with each individual person's life and the possible and multiple meanings within everyday embroidering practice. In order to do this a process of 'informed' narrative smoothing (Bonsall 2012, Kim 2016, Riessman 2008) was incorporated which enabled me to fill in the gaps to produce an authentic but not necessarily accurate story for each participant (Bruner 1990). This stage concluded with development of personal stories of embroidering as practiced in everyday life. The results of this phase are presented as personal embroidering narratives in section one of the findings chapter. These are considered as essential in order to understand each person's unique and situated embroidering practice. In reading these stories, the reader gains a sense of empathy with each participant and they become 'real' people.

Second phase of analysis: stage one

In order to answer the research question and aims, I needed to develop a second phase of analysis which as previously stated I based on Riessman's (2008) concept of narrative thematic analysis combined with an approach outlined by Andrews et al. (2013). This followed an experience-centred and socially-orientated approach to analysis and involved a more nuanced reading of the interview transcripts in response to criticism of time and event focused analysis (Andrews et al. 2013). The purpose was to examine the act of embroidering and the possible influence of interactive elements such as characters, actors, setting, time, tools and materials. In order to do this my attention was drawn to the sequencing and progression of conversations and themes within interviews, their transformation and resolution (Andrews et al. 2013). I consequently focused my analysis on identifying narrative segments in the data that recognised a

change in physical, cognitive, social, historic, spatial or material state that seemed or might have or could occur as result of embroidering. Pertinent narrative segments for each participant were highlighted and separated as key narrative experiences. This second stage of analysis was undertaken with data from each individual separately and then connected with the other participants in order to identify possible shared meaning in the form of narrative themes.

Second stage of analysis: stage two

Individual key narrative segments were placed together in a table so that I could focus on both individual authority and joint correspondence between participants. The notion of correspondence (Ingold, 2010) was used as a concept as it is considered in keeping with the character of narrative analysis as it allows participants experiences and stories to work in harmony in order to identify thematic threads that resonate. In this way no segment was considered as distinct, essentially every finding was interconnected. Key segments were refined to reveal themes that showed how embroidering potentially influence meaningful change within the context of everyday life (Appendix 7).

Second stage of analysis: stage three

The purpose of this phase was to recognise the narrative structure of embroidering practice. I used mind mapping to compare and organise the key themes into clusters based on my interpretation of shared meanings. The aim of this final stage was to develop a united narrative arrangement that showed collectively how embroidering could promote change. This stage was the most challenging and I used supervision to try to develop a sense of coherence across the themes. This stage involved several failed attempts to write the findings section. Eventually, I made the conceptual links necessary in order to envisage the narrative structure of embroidering as presented in the findings chapter. Alsaker and Josephsson (2015) refer to this process as trying out

'possibility rooms' where the researcher works to establish the narrative structure that works with the data.

Summary of method chapter

This section began with presentation of the method of research taken which involved informal meetings with five women who embroidered as part of their everyday life. Data was gathered over an extended six-month period in order to gather detail of embroidering practice as it evolved over time. Data was transcribed verbatim and analysed using a hybrid form of narrative analysis developed for the purpose of my study. The outcome of narrative analysis developed as a diffractive interpretation of individual stories of embroidering practice and the findings show a united narrative structure of embroidering which present the transformative process of embroidering as experienced by the participants in my study. The following chapter presents these findings.

Chapter 5

Findings

Overview of Chapter

The purpose of the chapter is to show the significance of embroidering in the lives of my participants and specifically how embroidering influenced meaningful change within the context of their everyday life. The original aims of the study were to understand the meaning of embroidering as practiced and enacted throughout a person's life, to understand the therapeutic potential of embroidering and to contribute to the understanding of crafts as complex occupations within everyday life and how they can support and improve health and well-being. In order to meet the research question and aims I present both the participants' personal stories and joint narrative themes. The chapter begins with each person's personal story so that the reader can gain a strong sense of how embroidering practice is personally situated (aim one) and then continues to present the findings as four inter-related narrative themes (aims two and three). Combined, these findings answer the research question.

The findings indicate that embroidering can influence change within the context of a person's everyday life through meeting various personal needs, within an agential companionship which stimulated certain and various physical and emotional experiences. This is considered as the narrative structure. This is set within a wider personal, cultural and historic context. Embroidering practice appears to be influenced by perceived external narratives which impact on each component and has been found to include: the field of practice, the female stereotype, amateurism, and ambiguity in the meaning of the embroidery itself. Of central importance and considered the original contribution to knowledge is recognition of the significance of agency of body/mind and materials within an intimate and cooperative relationship.

Findings: Individual stories

These stories are interpreted and suitably abridged for the purpose of this thesis and used to illustrate the historic and contextual place that embroidering has taken in each personal life in line with narrative theory (Bruner 1990). The stories answer the first aim of my study; to understand the meaning of embroidering as situated, practised enacted and evolving within a person's life.

Through the process of analysis, a number of shared historic and cultural experiences that may have shaped embroidery practice began to appear. At this point, it is important to indicate that the age of participants has influence on these findings. Michaela and Becky were younger and working age whilst Olivia, Victoria and Millicent had retired. It was clear that Millicent, Olivia and Victoria had lived through the austerity of war time, when the availability of materials and threads was limited and so could be considered as special. Each person speaks of the emphasis in their early education of the relevance and appreciation of fabrics, materials, colours and textures. The importance of access to fabrics and materials, combined with the opportunity and encouragement to engage in some form of textiles also seems significant across all of the narratives. Embroidery appears to have been adopted by each person as an occupation that supported the salient cultural norm of the female engagement in the use of textiles. However, an element of personal choice was also demonstrated by the desire to take varying paths from elders. Whilst Michaela was encouraged to embroider, all the other participants made a personal and conscious decision to embroider amongst women who didn't. Embroidering can consequently be seen to eschew conformity. Early efforts to embroider were endorsed, as long as they related to the embellishment of practical items such as a tablecloth, chair back cover or a man's handkerchief. Initiation into the field allowed the participants to appreciate tools and materials and rehearse stitches, through a mentor in the form of kits, stitch-books, magazines and retail outlets.

Once practice had taken hold, each participant continued to embroider alongside and in response to their everyday activities. This typically appears to be likened to some form of habitual or compulsive act which is further illustrated in the narrative themes later in the chapter. At this point in the analysis it was apparent that the participants engaged in distinctive types of what they called stitching, and often for different reasons. Most began practice with simple stitching following some kind of pre-defined pattern, such as an iron on pattern or grid design. Binca work was a type of counted thread work often taught in schools and involves simple stitch formations on canvas in pre-defined holes with coloured threads. This type of stitching encourages neatness and conformity. Cross-stitch follows a set pattern and utilises one stitch with cotton or metal thread on canvas (with pre-defined holes), formed in a uniform way making it repetitive. Likewise, tapestry is undertaken usually with wool on thick canvas and uses one recurring stitch following a set design. Free-form or free-style embroidery follows an image and suggests stitches that should be used in the form of a pattern but involves some kind of decision as to where the stitches are placed. Stitches are named and learnt through repetition. Olivia and Michaela made up their own hand embroidery designs and creatively utilised an internal repertoire of known stitches. Millicent and Victoria hand stitched very little since their discovery of machine embroidery. In using a machine to embroider, the stitching becomes subordinate to the design and involves the manipulation and attachment of different textiles to a backing fabric.

Most participants found it very difficult to verbalise why they embroidered, because it was just something that they did and had done for many years without much thought or consideration. However, selection and sharing of pertinent personal stories revealed that embroidering was much more than a past-time. Significant life events could either fuel or sometimes inhibit engagement in embroidery. In addition, the phases of general life seemed to

influence and regulate, not only participation, but also the type of embroidery undertaken. Embroidering practice changed over each participant's life course in response to need, time availability and desire. All participants can remember their first embroidery piece, recount the story of its creation and where the piece was displayed, used or presented. Some are still in existence, maybe in a cupboard, on a wall, or have been passed on to another person. Clearly, these 'creations' were, and some still are, significant. Here follow the stories of each of my five participants.

Becky's story

The practice of stitching has been a part of Becky's life for a very long time. She began when she was about fifteen years old but can't remember what made her begin. Becky didn't like sewing at school; she remembered having to make a pair of dungarees 'which were awful'. She referred to her identity as an 'outside kind of teenager who liked horse-riding', so there was nothing to suggest that she was 'going to enjoy sitting and stitching'.

'I don't know what made me start because my mother can barely even thread a needle and my sister doesn't stitch, so I don't know, but I started with embroidery and then I moved on to cross stitch and now I do both. I suppose at the time it wasn't significant because I didn't know that I was starting something that would last for the rest of my life'.

Becky was quite fascinated by her inability to pinpoint exactly what made her start stitching. She kept returning to that question as we talked, and finally concluded that it was a 'love of colour and texture' that 'has always been there'. She said this affinity, together with her 'love of shapes', enabled her to have a clear memory of what she had embroidered in the past. She dwelt on the satisfaction she gained from materials that were 'pleasing to touch and look at'. Her memory of the embroideries is possibly aided by the fact that she gave the finished items to her parents, who still have some of them on display. She also recalled the pleasure she gained from achieving new effects from stitches that she created by herself.

'When I started I did a thrush in a rose bush, no rose hips, and I used French knots and Seed stitch on top of its breast to do the little marks and actually there was something that I really loved, doing that kind of layering thing when you are putting layers of stitches on top of each other, in 3D, but I don't know if I would have learnt how to do that if I had not had the kit'.

The sense of satisfaction gained in the process of the layering of stitches and a developing appreciation of building up colours into a 3D image in stitches is what appears to evoke meaning and enjoyment for Becky. However, it also alludes to the importance of an

embroidery kit that enables engagement, when progress had been halted by lack of 'know-how'. Each kit 'provides a little booklet that tells you how to do the different stitches'. Becky implied that being self-taught somehow related to proficiency, since she is always very critical of her own efforts 'I would like to learn techniques properly and not just be fudging it'.

The ensuing discussion about embroidery stitches revealed a strong value for neat, well ordered and well-formed stitching. Becky mentioned the significant variance between cross stitch where 'all the stitches are the same' and embroidery 'which uses many stitches.' She said that she enjoyed both of these approaches, but for different reasons. She named the following stitches as 'the main ones': Stem stitch, Satin stitch, Chain stitch, Running stitch, French knots 'the rest are just variations.' Becky said that she had a favourite and a least favourite stitch. She disliked long and short stitch 'because the needle makes lots of holes in the fabric where you go up and down again, although it does give a sense of movement as you can vary the direction of the stitch'. She liked satin stitch because 'it all lies in one direction and is nice to do because you can get it really smooth, although, it has less movement and is more difficult to work in a perfect way due to the way it is formed.'

As the tale progressed Becky recognised that she liked embroidering small images of birds and flowers, because she 'likes the detail'. These projects were 'small and manageable but also portable so that they can be carried in my bag, which remains with me at all times'. Becky's embroidering practice is incessant, secret and compulsive and appears to offer her a sense of peace within her everyday life.

Michaela's story

Michaela has been embroidering since she was a child. She describes her practice as both habitual and personal and unlike the other crafts in which she engages. Michaela studied textiles at University and specialised in weaving. She also sells knitted hats on "Instagram" and makes lace garters for weddings. Michaela has never really thought about why she embroiders, it's just something that she does. Her embroidery practice is secret, 'I never tell anyone about my embroidery, it's just for me'. However, there are occasions when she completes an embroidery as a personalized gift.

Michaela was introduced to cross stitch before any other textile craft.

'My first embroidery.....I remember the first time I ever did it, it was a cross stitch with my Nan when my mum and dad went on holiday. I was little. I stayed with my grandparents for four nights and during that time my Nan would teach me a little each night after dinner. It just said 'Mum and Dad' and it was red, yellow and green and they had it framed in their room. So that was probably the first time that I did anything, and it was not even on fabric, it was on plastic'.

Michaela's Nan also introduced her to knitting, embroidery and creative writing.

After her introduction to embroidery, Michaela began to sew 'secretly' at home, making things for her school friends. Embroidering seemed to provide a means of conveying a message or expressing her feelings towards her friends or family in a personal way. Friendships are invariably important to Michaela who describes herself as 'quite a social person' who 'likes having people around'. Michaela, however, rarely embroiders when other people are around. She will do it alone in the evenings, curled up on the sofa, sometimes whilst watching television and sometimes with a glass of wine. Michaela also spends quite a lot of time commuting to London and tends to utilize such idle hours by occupying herself with hand embroidering, because it can be done 'within herself' and she feels that this prevents people from looking at her.

The giving of gifts appears to be an important and substantial motivator that prompts Michaela to begin embroidering but sometimes her efforts are thwarted by lack of time, her perceived dissatisfaction with the quality of her work or deterioration in her mental health. She often embroiders for children because she feels that they are not so critical of workmanship. The apparent demand to express herself within friendships is, however, a recurring factor in Michaela's practice. She suggests that embroidering emulates her personality.

'I like the imperfections in embroidery, it's got a kind of accent to it like even I think it portrays the person that is doing it like mine are never finished'.

Michaela always has an embroidery and cross-stitch 'on the go' and takes her 'kit' with her at all times.

Millicent's story

Embroidery has always been part of Millicent's life, but her method of embroidery has been affected by certain life circumstances; 'so I have gone through all of the techniques from lazy daisy stitch to machining'. Millicent did not come from a sewing family, but at school she was taught 'practical' needlework with the other girls and liked sewing. Millicent remembers experiencing difficulties during these classes as she was left handed and the teachers tried to make her sew with her right hand. Interestingly, she said that she persisted using her left hand but made it look like right handed work. Today she sews with her left hand.

Later in life Millicent made all her children's clothes and knitted and embroidered using various techniques. After studying Environmental Studies, she became an expert in Bulgarian textiles embroidery.

'Through my degree, I got interested in Bulgarian folk law and I went to work in Bulgaria, made friends and learnt counted stitchwork. After University, I started taking groups of interested people travelling round various places in Bulgaria and acquired a lot of skills. I did a lot of Bulgarian embroidery and I used to lecture on the history and folk law to a number of groups and that meant showing my embroidering and giving examples of how to do the stitches. I did that for about fifteen years.'

Millicent's embroidering practice took a significant turn during a difficult time in her life, when she moved location to become a full time carer for her daughter who was diagnosed with and subsequently died from Multiple Sclerosis. Millicent said that, at that time, embroidering became a substantial and necessary past-time both before and after her daughter's death.

'I was in a terrible place. It was not a very pleasant time in my life. I had nothing. Jenny was dead and, you know, it wasn't her death that I was depressed about, it was the lack of people that I could associate with. I always had lots of friends and there was always something to do or someone to talk to. It was by pure accident that I came across the sewing

group. I needed something to do and I needed to try to make a few friends.'

Millicent discovered machine embroidering as a new occupation after Jenny died. The group enabled her to get out of the house, meet new friends and learn a new sewing technique which she could do at home. That was fifteen years ago and today, Millicent still goes to her embroidery group every week which stimulates and focuses her solo embroidering projects.

'I am a sort of permanent fixture in all of the workshops. I go week after week, and I have got better and better at it and I couldn't do without it now. It saved me then when I was miserable and now it's just wonderful'.

In recent times Millicent has deteriorated physically and is aware that she is 'getting slower'. She tries to keep her work simple 'because you know when you are 90 you just want to be doing it for fun'. She generally plans her week ahead and has to fit her embroidering in around the living space that she shares with her oldest daughter and her son-in-law. Despite her long history of embroidering, Millicent suggests that she has 'still got plenty to learn' and wishes that she had started when she was younger. 'I had always thought that I can't draw, but then I discovered that I can draw with thread. I couldn't give up embroidering. I couldn't face it because it means such a lot in my life'.

Olivia's story

Olivia's dad was a professional artist and her mum and grandmother both engaged in practical textiles like knitting, crochet and sewing. Olivia describes herself as,

'The sort of child who sat at my grandmother's knee whilst she taught me to knit. My mother was a perfectionist and famously knitted baby dresses for me that involved twenty-five differing rows of stitches and the use of very fine wool. My grandmother produced an ongoing supply of men's socks, knitted on four very fine needles. My dad was an artist and encouraged me to paint and draw. He got me painting on the back of fliers that were used to promote essential information during the war. He was convinced that my efforts suggested that I had a very high artistic potential; so that was a beginning'.

Olivia's earliest experience of embroidering was initiated by her friend's mum who gave her a transfer of a flower to stitch on a man's handkerchief.

'It wasn't nice at all, the threads were bright orange and green, very garish and the so-called satin stitch was all uneven. When I look back those handkerchiefs were revolting. Mine was always like a kind of bad penny. I'd stuff it in a drawer but it was always around and I never knew what to do with it'.

But it was a start.

At Grammar school, Olivia recalls that they had 'ghastly sewing lessons where we made an apron and a nippy cap, which we then wore in our second year for cookery classes. I found it terribly boring because we had to do it by hand, but I seemed to get a certain amount of satisfaction from doing very neat and tiny stitches'. Olivia also joined the Girl Guides and felt that she benefitted from being able to choose what she wanted to do from a range of given activities. She passed all the creative badges and, in so doing, discovered that she had a flare for embroidery. She particularly enjoyed making up her own stitches.

Olivia later qualified as a teacher and introduced this creative form of embroidering into her lessons. She clearly remembered her

early experiences of having to follow very prescriptive stitching. Although she said she found it relaxing, as a teacher, she considered it to be educationally restrictive. She liked the idea of making up her own designs because she preferred to be 'creative rather than accurate'. She also enjoyed the challenge of experimenting with different colours and materials and was always on the lookout for new ideas and resources.

Despite the recent setbacks caused by hand surgery, which have sometimes prevented Olivia from embroidering, she still engages on a regular basis, mainly working from kits where the 'visual feast' of colours and textures of threads excite her.

'I will always find time to embroider. I can pick it up and put it down without any necessary pre or post action and the worst that can happen is that my needle becomes unthreaded. My house walls are full, but I think I still can conjure up some appreciative recipients and I still enjoy looking at some of my past efforts. The total self-absorption that embroidery offers takes me to a special place where the outside world doesn't feature and where my body sheds the stress of external thoughts and commitments. I love it!'

Victoria's story

Since she was a young girl, Victoria explained that she had an appreciation of harmonious colours and intricate patterns, mainly on fabrics. Brought up in an extended family, the women engaged in productive textiles such as knitting, crochet and sewing, through which everyday household necessities were made. Victoria felt that, at this age, she was helped to appreciate colour, texture, and fine cloth such as Liberty Tana Lawn, Silk and Cashmere. Her love of natural and rather than synthetic yarns and fabrics remains. Instead of following her elders' choices, Victoria followed her own journey and eventually discovered embroidery. She was first introduced to sewing with needle and thread through lace cards by her mother at a young age. She suggested that part of the appeal, from the adults' points of view, was that it kept her quiet. She later progressed to the use of embroidery kits where she clearly remembered making an embroidered table cloth 'a Mexican design, with cactus and a sombrero'. She learned to make her own clothes at school and was further encouraged by an aunt who took an interest in her work. Later on, she made clothes for her husband's children. Embroidering appeared to be a somewhat ghostly occupation during Victoria's working life as an academic: always there, but essentially in the background. This perhaps relates to being alternatively engaged in an important and busy work/life balance, which did not allow space or a need for stitching. When Victoria retired, she re-discovered embroidery through a visit to a machine embroidery exhibition. Machine embroidery was a revelation for Victoria. It was love at first sight and in Victoria's words 'the rest is history'.

Before machine embroidery, Victoria described her embroidery as static, boring and repetitive but, on entering the domain of machine embroidery, she was eager to learn more. This was a key turning point, not just in Victoria's embroidering practice, but, it seems, in her whole life. She had discovered a path to a whole new world with enlightening possibilities, apparently offering a distinctive, innovative and experimental venture. Victoria said that, whilst she

was confident in the use of colour, she still struggled with design. She hadn't yet found a good source to unlock what she called 'the design puzzle' but suggested that it was something she might eventually conquer.

Victoria seemed to have a habitual approach to her embroidery. She described how 'on being ignited by an idea', she would play around with it for a while and then 'leave it for some thinking time, and then return with parallel pieces influencing each other.' There are some constancies in her practice such as the love of certain colours, patterns, compositions and textures, where the embroideries themselves become by-products of a deeply appealing, mutable and complex practice.

Victoria lives with and cares for her husband Karl, who has dementia. Karl and Victoria are both professional people who have lived abroad and travelled extensively during their life together. Today, as a couple, they spend most of their time at home.

I work in the lounge so that I can be together with Kelvin.

'Karl, you quite like it when I sit in here and work don't you'?

'Yes, it doesn't bother me'

'And you like my company I think'?

'I do'

Karl is quite happy to sit with me, and he doesn't bother me when I am sewing. I try to do my planning when Karl is sleeping because he sleeps longer than me in the morning so I will get up and sort of have a quiet think about things.

Both Karl and Victoria have experienced periods of ill health and had recently decided that they needed to move from their large Victorian house to a modern level access flat that would be more suitable for their needs. I first met Victoria when she was packing for her move and then again, just three weeks after she had settled into her new home. This contextual background framed and focused our discussions in a transitional and stressful period of Victoria's life. Nevertheless, embroidering was clearly central to Victoria's existence

and her practice, although hindered, persisted as an integrated and integral part of her day-to-day life.

Findings: Narrative Structure and related themes

This section presents the findings from the second stage of analysis undertaken after interpretation of the personal stories above. The consequent findings resonate strongly with the personal stories and suggest that the narrative structure of embroidering involves three inter-related themes: personal need, companionship and experiences. This is set within a wider personal, cultural and historic setting where 'grand' narratives have been found to influence each component at any stage; embroidering as a feminine construct; as amateur, as an ambiguous artefact and in a field of practice. (Figure 2).

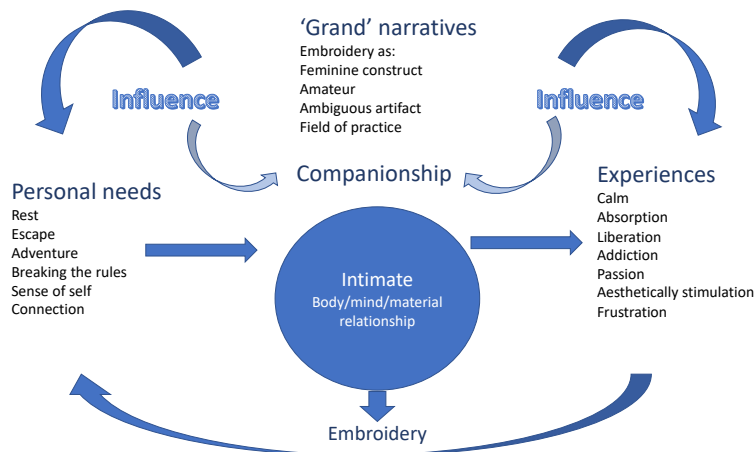


Figure 2: Narrative structure of embroidering

The narrative analysis as undertaken has identified that the participants personal needs influence the type of embroidering employed within the agential companionship of the embroidering process which can stimulate a variety of physical and emotional experiences. The wider environmental context can influence the need, companionship and experiences in embroidering at any time through perceived 'grand' narratives. These perceived narratives can stimulate and inhibit embroidering practice. The purpose of embroidering has been found to be driven through emotional or physical need and includes rest, escape,

adventure, breaking the rules, sense of self and connection. The findings have indicated that there are different types of embroidering which are diverse in relation to process, tools and materials. The style chosen will depend on physical, emotional or social need and embroiderers will select accordingly based on their previous experience. For this reason, embroiderers will inevitably have access to more than one type of project at any one time. Once an embroidery project is initiated, the embroiderer enters an intimate and personal agential companionship which combines their minds and bodies together with the tools and materials necessary for practice. This significance of agency within the partnership is key to therapeutic change. The companionship with tools and materials tends to exclude other people but is always connected to the wider social and physical environment. Once the embroidering relations have been established, the embroiderer will begin to respond in a number of different ways which become interpreted as meaningful experiences. The participants in this study typically experienced feelings of becoming; absorbed, liberated, addicted, passionate, aesthetically stimulated, calm, or frustrated depending on the interactions within the embroidering companionship. Cessation depends on the initial need, the intimacy of the agential relations within the companionship, and the resultant experiences.

The themes will be presented individually, however these are not considered as separate but intra-related components of the narrative structure of embroidering.

'Grand' embroidering narratives (Figure three)

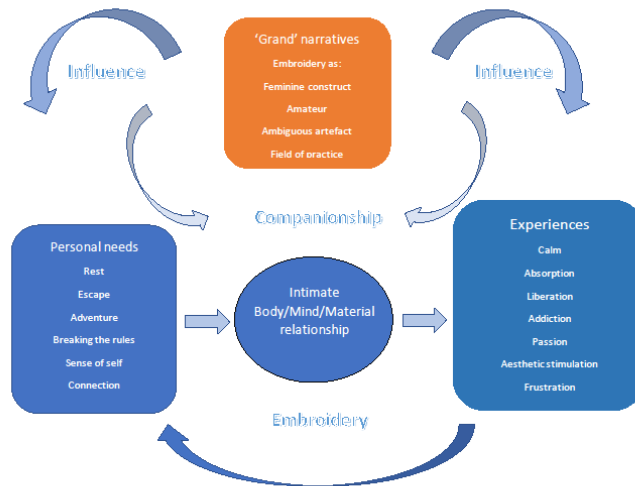


Figure 3: Findings - Grand narratives

Embroidery as a feminine construct

The findings suggest that embroidering was encouraged and supported as an acceptable 'female' occupation and as such caused some internal conflict. All participants appeared to be influenced either by their family situation or general socialisation through school that girls and women engaged in textiles related to homemaking. For example, to make something practical like a tablecloth and then embellish it. This seemed apparent across the age range of the participants which suggests that this could still be an issue today. Michaela disclosed that whilst her Nan taught her to embroider, her grandpa tried and failed to teach her brother woodwork. The encounter with, but difficulty in, recruiting men for this study who embroidered within their everyday lives, is a further indication that male embroiderers seem to far more reserved than females, unless their practice is undertaken professionally. This is possibly framed within espoused belief that occupations fundamentally have a gendered core and that embroidery is 'naturally' feminine. Defined

as such, embroidering becomes subsidiary to occupations considered as more obviously masculine. That embroidering tends to be seen as a feminine pastime posits the further notion that, as a practice, it is lacking importance and kudos in western culture. Becky disclosed that she is extremely self-conscious when she is embroidering in front of other people. She will happily sit on a train and embroider with strangers, but experiences anxiety when faced with embroidering in front of people she knows, especially family, as she explains: -

Becky: There are some circumstances and some people, where I feel really self-conscious stitching, because I feel really embarrassed about doing it. When we went to visit my sister-in-law last week, all evening, I was thinking that I would really love to just be doing it, but I didn't, even though my sister-in-law was knitting. You don't think twice if people pick up knitting.... at work, in my lunch hour, I would love to get it out, but it's finding a space actually where I don't feel other people are. ...I am tapping into some kind of stereotype that I don't want to be. I don't want to be perpetuating 'a little woman stitching' because...that's not why I am doing it... the people I feel most self-conscious with are family, even though they know. It's like my guilty secret.

The interesting counter-narrative for Becky is that she stated that embroidering offers her a sense of identity and/or freedom outside of an imposed social conformity and as such can be liberating. This gives a different aspect to this narrative and suggests that this image of embroidering does not correlate to the purpose, process or effect. Likewise, Michaela discussed a stereotypical image that embroidering seems to possess and suggests that it is reinforced through popular television programmes that also present an amateur notion of craft. During one interview she emphasised that she was introduced to certain embroidery techniques by her male friend whom she met at college.

Michaela: A lot of the techniques I learnt off a guy at University. He was the only guy and he hurt his back in the second year of the course playing rugby, because he was a man man you know. He wasn't gay or anything because everyone thinks that in textiles they must be gay. He did not

drop out until the end of the year, but in the second or third month he was still coming in even though he could not weave and he was sitting and embroidering just as in like he needed to be there still and he actually taught me a lot of these stiches. He did a lot of embroidery like darning and he was really fascinated with Bororo textiles, the Japanese stuff and denims and patching up the denims so he taught me a lot.

Olivia shared a story about a young boy (which has been used to illustrate a purpose of embroidering later in the chapter), with some degree of surprise, because this was the last type of activity that she thought would be of interest him. These findings need to be considered within the historical and social context of the participants within the study, however, they seem to suggest that the perception that embroidering is a feminine occupation remains a strong cultural influence on current practice. Embroidering can thus be described as a gendered practice.

Embroidering as amateur

All of the participants perceived that their practice was amateur and as such was less valid than that of a professional. These conditions meant that Victoria was 'never completely satisfied' with her embroideries, that 'embroidery always came last' for Michaela that Millicent's 'never even considered selling' her embroideries because they were 'not good enough' and that Becky remained 'not entirely happy' as she unpicked and re-stitched her work several times.

Millicent: (Picture 1) I have never attempted to sell anything, not like professional embroiderers because they charge an awful lot, but it's the skill that you are paying for. But, there was this exhibition and I did a little one that I called 'spring comes to [place name removed]' and on the first day, this bloke offered £75. I was gob-smacked because if I put a price on it, it would have been 20 quid or something like that. When I saw the rest of the exhibition, I thought blimey you know (laughing) he has got a peculiar eye.



Picture 1: Millicent - Walled garden

Michaela: I am quickest at weaving because that is something that I am so passionate about. I sell quite a lot of my knit stuff on my Instagram, but with embroidery it doesn't matter how long it takes or how good it is or if it's not perfect because it is just for me. The only time that I would give it away is as a gift because if it is a friend it doesn't matter. Whereas that (pointing to loom) is my passion, it has to be perfect and my hats I am selling.

Victoria: One of the things that I struggle with is this sense of I can't be great because I did not go to art school. Even in this exhibition that I am going to exhibit in, the woman said if you would like to leave your CV and I think that the only people that want to leave their CV are the ones that are going to mention all the prestigious art schools that they went to. For me its not that important other than when it makes me feel less secure about what I am going to do.

Ambiguity in the meaning of the embroidery itself.

The meaning of embroideries as products appears to be rather uncertain. For example, the material outcome of embroidering could be considered as art rather than craft as in themselves they appear to have limited purpose or meaning beyond the maker. Millicent described her embroidering as 'painting with a needle'.

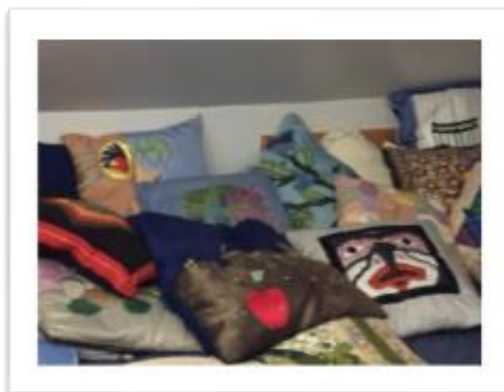
Embroideries as products seem to have agency as things in themselves. The findings suggest that embroideries have a physical

and tangible form that can express or even contain the individuality, identity and character of the person who made them. They become personalised artefacts, and this might mean that they are difficult to discard or give away, unless the intention was there in the first place.

Becky: It's [an embroidery] so personal to the person that did the stitching and it's something that is tangible, a physical connection maybe with a previous generation where they used their hands and their eyes and their minds. Because it's very personal, I don't give them [embroideries] away to people very much because I think I've loved doing this, and it's really important to me, I don't think it is of value to anyone else. Who wants an embroidered kingfisher on their wall? So I don't inflict it on other people.



Picture 2: Millicent - Rousseau



Picture 3: Millicent - Cushions

Embroideries such as Millicent's Rousseau waistcoat (Picture 2) seemed to become important personalised articles that consequently required space, storage, display, or disposal. Millicent liked to make symbolic embroideries into items that had a functional purpose (picture 3). All of these cushions are of a place that she has visited. She also had 'hundreds' of plastic bags in her 'sewing room' all full of past embroideries with no 'home'. She had so many that the room had become a storage area.

Millicent: Oh – it's all in carrier bags. That is what I am trying to do at the moment because I just think that I will have one last look. Then I think, 'I don't remember doing that' or more often than not I do remember doing it but if you ask me to name all the work that I have done. When I am dead, they will take them all to the tip.

It appeared that storage of embroideries was the preferred option in most cases. However, this seemed partly depend on the purpose of the embroidering act, or judgement on the quality of the outcome, and partly because they are very hard to give away. All participants were to some degree highly critical of their 'work', and internal judgement would permit or prevent embroideries from being shared, displayed or gifted. Embroideries as artefacts appeared to be an extension, not reflection, of the self.

Becky: If you've put it in a frame and give it to a friend, they've got to find somewhere to hang it and then remember to bring it out when you go and visit, 'where did we put that bloody sampler, we didn't give it to the charity shop did we, it's got our names on and everything!' So, then I think, what else is there to do with them? So, I put them in a work box and just look at them sometimes.

Michaela: Even though it is going to be a gift, I don't tell anyone about my embroidery. I don't really tell anyone until it is done. Often, I will just do it and then if I don't finish it, I will just keep it. I am a massive hoarder so that is why I like storing things away.

The storage of past embroideries, either successful, unsuccessful or unfinished, often end up as part of a personal hoard which also

includes the collection of threads, fabrics, beads, buttons, tassels, special paper and books. Over the years, these collections can become quite massive and perhaps burdensome. Clearly, Millicent is worried that her daughter will put her entire 'life work' in the tip when she is gone. Fundamentally, the embroideries themselves are significant and important to the maker, but as objects, they can lack purpose or status outside the originator. This partly relates to the purpose of embroidering being more than the production of an artefact. All of the embroideries that were shared with me held a 'making' story and this could be easily reminisced when a participant was reconnected to the artefact.

The field of practice

The personal stories similarly show how embroidering was initiated and supported from an early age within a field of practice. Stitches were named, rehearsed and replicated. Although for all participants the act of embroidering tended to be private and solitary, for Millicent and Victoria there is a very important social element to practice that could also fuel or hinder engagement. Becky was interested but reticent to join this social element.

Becky: I do think there is a little bit of me that hankers for that kind of community to be part of, but for me, there's just something very private about it and I am not sure that I would be good enough, I'm quite critical about my work.

At the end of our time together, Becky confided that she had since joined two embroidering classes and thoroughly enjoyed them. Although joining a group was initially daunting, Millicent's personal story about caring for and then losing her daughter suggested that her skills and confidence began to prosper from her social venture. After the first separate meetings with Millicent and Victoria, it became apparent that they did in fact know each other. This was never revealed or discussed during subsequent (separate) meetings. However, they were involved in the same social arenas and engaged in the same socially initiated projects. Both women found the social

aspect of their practice important, because it kept up the momentum and kept them active at a time in their lives when they might perhaps have tended to be a little less productive. Embroidering projects for both Millicent and Victoria are regarded as work and appear to have replaced their professional work role after they retired. This suggests that there was a very industrious and adventurous element to their practice. Belonging to two different groups meant that they were given at least six projects a year: some individual projects and some for groups. All projects lasted about three to four months and culminated in an exhibition. In order to manage such an arduous output, they both tended to combine assignments so, for example, Millicent combined making a box with the Embroiders Guild along with the other group project of seeds and seed heads (Picture 4).



Picture 4: Millicent - Seed heads and pods

Millicent: Both groups are really important to me and that's why at the beginning of the year when I get my new calendar, I block out all my sewing days. It's not so much the sewing, but that you are learning from the workshops and you are learning from other people and also enjoying the friendship of women who have all got an interest in common. We might not all agree on all sorts things, but we never discuss them, and it doesn't affect our friendship. We are all different, but we all have that one thing in common.

Victoria: I like being part of the long-term group because it is the same bunch of us that go year after year. In fact, probably out of the sixteen people that attend there are twelve of us who have been going for ten years or more. It's supposed to be an advanced course in machine embroidery but there is very little else that she can teach us, it's more about responding to the challenges of your own work. I think one of the reasons that I keep going back to the group is for the encouragement and support and the inspiration that you get from the other people and that really helps. But it's also for the camaraderie and because it would be easy to kind of not be as active as I am. For me, going to the group keeps up the momentum.

Although Becky has issues with the feminine connotations associated with embroidering which have a profound effect on when and with whom she embroiders, she finds access to the culture, tradition and heritage of embroidering 'fascinating', 'extraordinary' and very 'inspirational'. She relates this to the 'personal' nature of embroideries, the survival of their vibrant beauty and the 'tangible' link with the embroidering skills of past and future generations which feel 'so personal to the person that was doing the stitching'. She considers that her own embroideries 'may not last that long', but that somehow, they 'add to the body of work that could be passed down for future generations'. This thought is extremely important and influential in her practice.

These embroidering 'grand' narratives, set the scene as foundations for participation in embroidering practice and, although particular to the participants of this study, may be considered as transferable to other people within a similar culture.

Theme one: The personal need to embroider (Figure four)

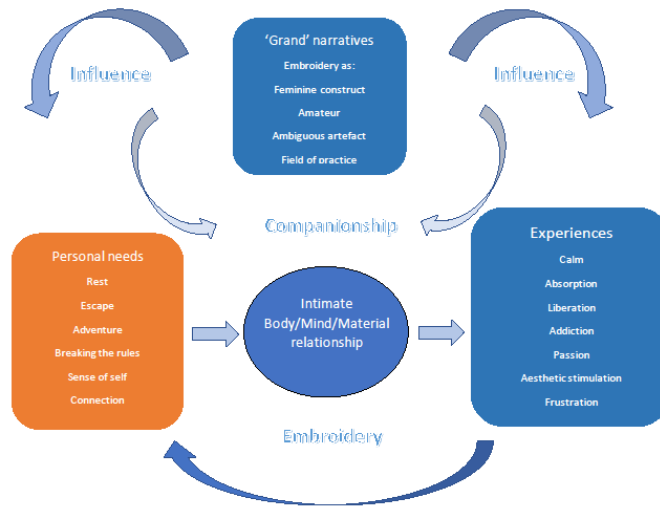


Figure 4: Findings - Personal needs

The findings suggest that supported within the appropriate environmental conditions, embroiderers can exploit and employ potentials of embroidering in relation to personal requirement. Participants as experienced embroiderers appeared to regulate their embroidering practice and chose distinctive methods of stitching for different purposes relative to their life situation. Embroidering and other related forms of stitching appears to be flexible in its capacity to meet personal needs in relation to a variation of diverse personal situations. This can range from respite, relaxation and recuperation from stressful events, or stimulation and excitement in reaction to mundanity. The findings suggest that embroidering is one of a variety of stitching processes which people may intuitively use to alter their physical and emotional state at specific times in situated life. Specifically, participants modulated stitching in response to their current life situation when they needed rest, adventure, and escape,

to break the rules, become themselves and feel connected to others. Each of these will be presented in turn.

Rest

Certain types of embroidering seem to appeal because of the challenge, intellectual effort and investment and others because this is lacking, as when Becky cross stitches when she is tired.

Becky: I tend to cross stitch when I am tired because I do think that I need to concentrate harder when I embroider because there is that freedom in the stitch whereas with cross stitch it is very prescriptive... you have the holes to go into and out of...um and a chart to follow but both of them give me the satisfaction of building a picture but they are quite different... and actually, cross stitch is easier to pick up and put down because you can count exactly where you are so you don't lose where you are in the same way as you do with embroidery. I like that there is a rhythm and it.. yes ...kind of unlocking that bit of my ...yes I think I do feel the same...it's just I tend to do them at different times and I think I find....generally when I am tired and need to rest I do more cross stitch

Michaela tends to embroider her motifs when she is at home, alone in the evenings.

Michaela : With some embroidery, I can literally relax but when I was learning how to do the butterflies, new things that I am trying out I will look at it and really make an effort with and you can't do that if you are watching something on the telly.

Victoria will engage in routine stitching when she needs to feel calm, including doing satin stitching along the top of work to finish it off or sewing the backs onto canvases. This form of stitching was particularly evident during her house move when she needed respite rather than the more usual excitement in her embroidering practice.

Victoria: There are two more that I am working on, I haven't finished the backs yet. When I am doing something very straight forward like that, I know that it would calm me down (Picture 5).



Picture 5: Victoria - Sewing on the back for display in an exhibition

Escape

The following story featured during all four of my sessions with Millicent and is a poignant example of how she discovered embroidering in order to escape a real-life tragedy. Her need to escape led to a new purpose in embroidering where she was introduced to machine embroidery. This offered a novel and exciting path and a chance for salvation. In this story machine embroidery is remembered and recounted as the main influence in her emotional recovery. The story also shows how the purpose of Millicent's embroidering practice changed with her needs, from escape, to self-discovery and adventure.

Millicent: I have thought about it... my life history, but we haven't really sort of said why I have done it and how it has affected me and helped me through all the troubled times. I mean my God it really did save me from real depression. My daughter Jenny was diagnosed with MS when she was in her late 20's and she gradually got worse and worse and she became dependent on me. I had to give up work and had to stop lace making because I was always popping up and down and you can't do that with lace making but I was still able to embroider. I had to do something while I sat with her for so long during the day time because she got really, really bad. It gave me a chance to do something different, and to get away for a while, not that I objected to looking after Jenny because she appreciated everything I did for her. When Jenny died, I was desperately unhappy.... I was so lost.... my life was empty.... I needed something to do. I

saw an advertisement ... for a machine sewing class, so I signed up and the first time I went I found myself whizzing a way on a machine. I began to do much more adventurous embroidering because I was being taught. I discarded the iron-on printed patterns, kits and cross stitch and started making up my own designs. It saved me then when I was miserable and it was just wonderful. I embroidered a cushion which Jenny designed and I made it up out of old pieces of material from her dresses...



Picture 6: Millicent - Sewing machine setup

Olivia shared a story about her wedding, where everything was outside of her control, she needed refuge and she found it in her embroidery.

Olivia: in the lead up to our wedding, we had suffered the loss of my mother to cancer and to cope with his grief and block out all the things that triggered overwhelming memories of mum, my dad had relocated to a small village. I was still living and teaching in the north and my fiancé finished before I did and he came down south and house hunted with our best man's wife and bought a house. I didn't even see it. Our problem was that our new home wasn't going to be available until six weeks after our wedding and then my dad then moved back to his old town which coincided with our arrival from the Midlands. So having planned the wedding in a village where I no longer lived and been to the vicar and all the rest of it my fiancé and I were of no fixed abode. This vicar was quite scary and I was terrified that when we went to see him he was going to refuse to marry us. I was right, he was having none of it and insisted that one of us [separate from

the other] lived in the parish for three weeks before the wedding; that was the law. Fortunately, the lady who had been cleaning for my father, came to the rescue and so I lived there for 3 weeks with nothing to do just before the wedding. Three weeks is a long time when you have nothing to do but there was this embroidery that I did with two cats and it was very orange, I think because that the bedroom was sort of brown and orange in the new house, and I just sewed and sewed and sewed.



Picture 7: Olivia - Love Cats

Adventure

Stitching for adventure was preferred at times when life became monotonous and lacked purpose. This was very typical for Victoria, where the interest that embroidering evokes a sense of adventure and discovery within her embroidery world. For all participants, words such as interesting, experimenting and playing were common features of this type of embroidering.

Victoria: (Picture 8) I really enjoy the experimenting. I was playing around using paper along with fabric and doing strange things to paper so this is some old manuscript that I found on the internet and I ran it off and then oiled it to give it that kind of texture and then this is handmade paper that a friend of mine makes and there is a photo transfer of an art deco hinge that I have then put onto tissue paper and then tore the tissue paper and this was a crumpled up gold paper bag and these leaves are all made individually just of thread and wire. It came together quite quickly actually. I want to have an essence of anything that I do is that it is instantly appealing and draws the eye and then when people look at it

more closely they realize that there is more to it than what first appeals to them.



Picture 8: Victoria - An experiment

As Olivia suggests, this type of embroidering is not without potential dangers, but that is part of the attraction because it offers challenge.

Olivia: Because to a certain extent you are creating and trying to build up something beautiful, there is a degree of flow and sometimes it goes wrong and you have to correct it, but the whole idea of being creative and experimenting and sometimes reflecting, means that you persevere with it until you are satisfied. I am the sort of person who prefers to be creative rather than prescriptive and I enjoy the challenge of experimenting with different colours and materials. The idea of butterfly was taken from a magazine, but I made up the rest (picture 9).



Picture 9: Olivia - Butterfly own design

Sense of self

Millicent's story above shows how embroidering enabled her to transition through her embroidering practice as a form of self-discovery or perhaps re-invention. Olivia tells a story about how embroidering can help to free individuals from other people's preconceived ideas about them or scripted life circumstances. Her story is not about herself but a pupil of hers. She shared this as an analogy of what embroidering means to her, primarily because she was struggling to explain it to herself.

Olivia: I worked as a supply teacher in our local village where I invented 'drawing with a needle' and I could see that was far more valuable than doing Binca cross stitch. The children had responded well to the set class project 'animals' and so we transferred some of their pictures of animals on to fabric, gave out embroidery needles and threads and simply invited them to 'draw with a needle'. It was really, really successful. I remember this little boy Paul; a funny little boy he was, one of those kids who looked like a little old man. He never looked very well, and his skin was flaky. He really wasn't very bright and was always in trouble. Anyway, he drew a frog and it was minute and I said, 'Can we find a way of getting your lovely frog onto some material because it will be easier for you to sew if it's a little bigger.' But he insisted, so we ended up with this squashed up little frog and he took it away, sat in a corner by the window and we forgot about him. Ages later I

wondered what he was doing because normally he was one of those children who, five minutes after you had set something, would say that he had finished. Normally he had done it very badly and you could never get him occupied any longer. Well, he was absolutely absorbed, so I left him in over play time, (which was very much against the rules!) When we came back, he was still sewing. Eventually he came up to me and his material was full of these exquisite little running stitches, all the same size but random and all over the place. I said to him, 'this is lovely' and he said, 'do you like my plop up stitch' and I said, 'well you tell me about your plop up stitch' and he said, 'listen' and he went up and then he went down with the needle. It did make a noise. He said, 'the frog plops up and it plops down but the pond is really stinky and I can't catch him'. He was absolutely living the scene of that frog and when I checked it out, his grandad said, 'yes he loves the frogs in our pond'. That is for me bringing together all of the potential that embroidery can offer. You know it was so out of character for him to be absorbed by anything, but this led him to an experience that he found enjoyable and where he was happy and felt loved. He was doing something that he had created; the picture was his and not just a copy that had been stamped on a piece of material. It was something that he had put himself into and it was his from the beginning. You see in fact his frog wasn't a zoo animal at all, but that didn't matter because he chose to think 'outside of the box' and pick something meaningful to him.

Olivia suggested that embroidery opened a door for him, took him somewhere where he was happy, relaxed and loved; the pond was a meaningful cog in his story, and he was enabled to tell his story and express his identity using threads. The fact that Paul was given the opportunity to choose something meaningful to him, not to follow protocol and to do a creative activity with a degree of success, enabled him to enjoy positive reactions from his teacher and his classmates and to express himself. It meant that he became a little boy again. Embroidery allowed him to escape his dominant narrative and become himself. Embroidery does the same for Olivia.

Breaking the rules

After sharing the story above, Olivia revealed that she often found life monotonous; being a wife and a mother, meant that she was conforming to a script, when inside she wanted to break free.

Olivia linked this to her spirituality and 'being the best that you were meant to be' and 'unique'. Colour has always been very important to Olivia. She discovered that she loved being able to experiment creatively, using different threads, materials and colour options. Whilst embroidering, Olivia was able to combine her father's artistic influence and her mother's love of textiles and regard for precision, into something that enabled her to express her own talents and explore her own identity. She could both make and break the rules, giving her much needed choices, freedom and the ability to 'break free from the tedium of life'. Critically, the risk, trial and error, experimentation and playfulness offered in this type of creative embroidery can offer an antidote to depression that is relatively, but not absolutely safe. This may or may not result in success, but it adds excitement which can make the journey worthwhile Olivia concluded by saying:

Olivia: Sometimes there is a place in life for being outrageous and embroidering gives me that permission. I don't think yellow and pink go together but in embroidery they can work. I find it's unexpected and exciting. I just enjoy being totally absorbed in creating something... I don't think it's safe, I mean in lots of things in life you jolly well need to be accurate. Taking medicine, you would be in big trouble, wouldn't you? if you break the rules sometimes you come a cropper. But to produce something that for you gives particular pleasure..... It's a freedom to freak out and break the rules if you like and sometimes prove that it may not work, but that's ok. That's what I like about embroidery.

Connection

Olivia: Is what I do, embroidery, a lone occupation or is it like throwing a pebble in a pool?

Olivia shared that she usually embroiders gifts for someone that she loves. Michaela embroiders small items for family and friends, and in doing so is able to develop her identity within her social network and gain social acceptance. She will embroider at times when she needs to make a statement. This is the main drive in her current embroidering practice.

Michaela: I have always been into sewing and maybe the embroidery came off the back of that. My school bag was always embroidered. I always kind of like embroidered on to some fabric and then made book covers for people or for mates at school or embroidered brooches like I embroidered a little tower of pizza for someone who was going to do an internship and I embroidered an apple for someone who was going to New York and things like that. So, I have always done that for people, given them inspirational statements. I like doing type because it's an easy way of getting a message on fabric (Picture 10).



Picture 10: Michaela - Message for a Friend

The embroidery in picture 10, was undertaken in secret and then placed in an embroidery ring and given to one of her best friends as a surprise. Most of Michaela's embroidery is undertaken in this way and she keeps very little for herself, unless it is a test piece where she is working out a new method of stitching. This act of using embroidery in type form to give a message to others was initiated by Michaela's Nan in the production of her first embroidery simply saying, 'Mum and Dad'. One can imagine the accolade gained when she returned from her visit with such a gift, which is still displayed in a frame over her parent's bed. Messaging gifts has become the main principle and drive in her continuing embroidering practice, combined

with associated physical and psychological effects. Some messages are just better written in threads, especially ones that contain strong emotions that are difficult to verbalize. This is connection with others, but at a distance; a kind of distal connection. The following story illustrates this finding.

Michaela: When my brother was travelling in Australia, I went out with my friend to see him. Afterwards, I was going to Paris after on an internship. So, we got there and he and his mates told us that they wanted to go to a festival. We were like, we have just travelled all the way to Australia to see you and now you want to go on road trip. We were like, ok it will be fun for them to go and then we can get some girly time together because my friend was dating one of my brothers' mates. We just spent the days on the beach. So, I took one of his T-shirts and I embroidered 'retrolavise' which is a word a French word that describes a feeling when you have not seen someone for a long time. I had not seen him for about 6 months until we went out and then I was going to go away to Paris for six months, so I thought it had a double meaning. Then I folded it up and put it in his bag and we went away, and it wasn't until we picked him up at the airport the next time and he was wearing it. He had come back after a year and I had been away 6 months and he said, 'I found it' and I was like 'Oh my God' and burst into tears at the airport and he went 'its bloody itchy', because I had not interfaced. I always take a bit of embroidery with me so I just used what I had, to do it and he has still got it.

Olivia shared a John Dunn quotation of, "No man is an island". She stated that although embroidering could, on the surface, seem like being on an island since it's isolated, calm and quiet, you are not an island because; 'You are going to make it for someone or show someone else how to do it, so it doesn't have to be like being put in prison with the door locked; you can share it, show it, and learn to persevere and not give up'.

Furthering the notion that embroidering can be used to communicate an internal state to an audience is suggested by Michaela who, at times, experiences episodes of depression. She explains that her embroidering, and more often cessation of embroidering, communicates this to her family and friends.

Michaela: I think that in an indirect way it does show how I am feeling, because I don't do it to adorn myself, but I might sometimes on a t-shirt or a brooch. But really, when I am doing that, I know that I am well and so hopefully I project that I am well. But, when I am not well, and my embroidery box does not even get opened, I know that I probably look like 'Lizzie drippings' that is what my mum calls me, she says 'oh God - it's "Lizzie Dripping"'. So, in the same way, if my brother stops going to the gym, my mum is like 'are you alright' because that is his outlet and he does start to look really grey and really not well. So, I guess in a way, they are very similar

Within Michaela's context, embroidering practice is an outlet, and a tangible way to communicate her feelings towards others and also a reflection of her internal state. The notion that embroideries contain a physical connection with the person who made them, is further illustrated by Becky.

Becky: I have done a rose in a ring for my close friend's wedding. It isn't something I would normally do, but I wanted to do something that nobody else would give them. There was something about putting my love into the design and execution of it and then having it framed.

Theme two: Companionship (Figure five)

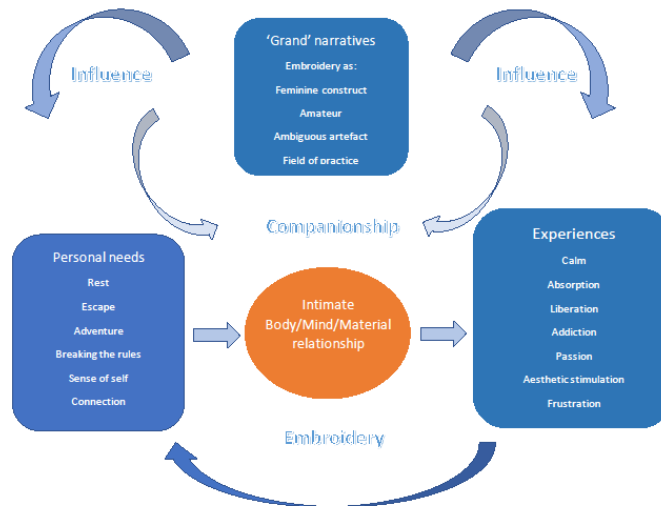


Figure 5: Findings - Companionship

The findings suggest that embroidering becomes an agential companionship that takes the participants away from the immediate social world, even if they were with other people. However, they do not feel lonely because they are not alone, as they are in an intimate relationship with their embroidery.

Becky: My children are used to my physical presence and then having to say two or three times 'mum I'm talking to you'. There's a woman in the office who does a knit and natter thing at lunchtime and I have tried to do it there but I'm conscious that everybody else is chatting and I'm not and I think maybe they think I'm being really antisocial because I don't join in. I'm not very good at talking and stitching because I think that I get absorbed in it so.

Michaela: I like embroidering on the train. People don't look at you when you embroider and you can be very within yourself and people don't notice; no one bats an eyelid and they let you get on with it. I find that people huff a lot more when you knit on the train. People are like, 'oh god she is going to knit'. People will watch you knit because it's methodical. Hand embroidery is like texting, its personal and

it's difficult to see, so people feel rude looking, whereas people will openly watch you knit, so I find embroidery nicer to do on public transport.

All five of the participants describe the 'doing' of embroidering as generally and importantly solitary, but not isolated often termed 'me time' or 'time out'. In this way doing and being can be seen to be inseparable. This is in contrast to group attendance which does not usually involve embroidering but related activities such as planning group projects, listening to speakers, and sharing techniques.

Victoria: (picture 11) So unfortunately, I was poorly the day they started planning this Clarence Cliff project and the other three made decisions that I had to fall in with. They wanted to find a pattern that they could work from, but I mean if I had been there I would have argued against being so literal. So, we will see, I mean it is an interesting exercise and so I'll do it and that's the reason that I still go to the Guild meetings is that it can kick start me back into doing things that I wouldn't otherwise do.



Picture 11: Victoria - Group Project

The 'doing' of embroidering is usually undertaken intimately in the home and focuses on actual stitching, but also includes activities such as designing, planning, dyeing, cutting, fraying, unpicking, washing and ironing. 'Time out' means just that. Embroidering necessitates exclusive time and this requirement may be a significant and not always available condition for practice. Michaela found that the pressures of work and related demands on her time and energy

had a significant negative affect on her embroidering practice. When she was rundown and tired, she could not engage with her embroidery, despite knowing that it had healing effects for her. Becky, Olivia, Millicent and Victoria, on the other hand, used embroidery as 'me time' in a positive and productive way. Either way, embroidering as a 'textile' that might not embrace the social nature of others. The findings generally suggest that embroidering is an agential, intimate and embodied practice that tends to and can be used to exclude other people. Embroidering, however, is not being alone, it is being intimately engaged with something that you love, and through it, connecting with both yourself and others. In this way lone embroiderers might not feel socially isolated because they are linked to the social, cultural and physical world in a number of important ways through their embroidery.

Mind, body, material companionship

Becky: What I really love about embroidery is adding in the colours and seeing them work together and building a picture. All these little parts that you put together. It's very personal and that's why, even when I am frustrated or cross I just have to... I can't... not to pick it up again. It's really important for me and I take it everywhere and every spare minute, I am thinking about doing it. But actually my embroidery isn't important to anybody else. But it's my favourite thing... If I was cast off to a desert island that's what I would have would be a radio and just an unlimited supply of threads

This finding illustrates the central importance of the agential interaction of a person with tools and materials as the essential relations within embroidering. The resulting companionship seems to be the foundation for embroidering practice enabling it to flourish within a person's life. Materials and tools are essentially everything inanimate that is utilised within embroidering. These include natural and synthetic substances such as fabric, and threads, but also involves associated phenomena such as colour, texture, weight, tension and so on. The range of materials used in embroidering are extensive and significant as is the way they combine to form a

picture. Tools exist in a physical form and can be as simple as a needle or complex as a sewing machine, but specifically designed and necessary for accomplishment of a task. The tools are vehicles that can enable practice.

The participants together with tools and materials had the capacity to influence the other within the embroidering process. Embroidering is thus considered an agential partnership connecting person, tools and material. This finding continues to explore how the body acts and reacts to materials within the embroidering process. Essentially, the use of different tools, materials and techniques can promote diverse experiences within this body/mind relation.

Agency of tools and materials

Materials really matter and intimate engagement with fabric, threads, beads, colours, texture, shape, and dimension appear to promote a bodily reaction in the embroiderers that can be either immensely pleasurable or repellent. The response, particularly to colour and texture, was evident in all the participants but unique to their personal story. As such it could be based on experience or memories from formative years. The fact that Victoria was taught that natural fabrics were 'nicer' than synthetic is still evident in her practice today.

Victoria: Working on cotton organdie and silk is very different, well each one is different. I think that with natural materials the colour is always gentler whether I have coloured it or whether I buy it that way and so there is something about the feel of it is nicer.

In each case fabrics, threads, designs, and colours were usually selected or rejected based on their aesthetic appeal to the person. Some, attracted and accordingly seemed to promote a deeply satisfying physical visceral reaction.

Olivia: I started looking at the components that I was enjoying while I was embroidering and my interest in colour is obvious: different contrasts in colour, dark and light and bright and the whole idea of design and shape, and the tactile feeling

of different types of thread. I mean I have got a new kit and it's going to be beautiful (picture 12) and it is colour heaven, absolute colour heaven. That is a feast of colour and it excites me. I think that is something unique about embroidering – it's not 2D like a picture – you just want to touch it.



Picture 12: Olivia - Colour Heaven

The findings also suggest that the interactions with tools and threads can incite implicit strong physical, and/or emotional changes. The specific qualities of tools and materials seem to be highly influential, but it is important to remember that they can stimulate a positive and also a negative reaction.

Victoria: (Picture 13) My machine is a lovely old thing, it's over fifty years old but it is a lovely "Bernina" and it is a very consistently good one. What I like about my machine is that it is responsive, it has a speed control and the modern ones don't and I find that when I am doing something fairly precise and small scale I like to be able to slow it down and that is really important with the delicate work that I do. When I slow down, I get really into it and it's a delight.



Picture 13: Victoria - Machine Setup

Olivia: My granddaughter ad this kit it was a spotty felt spotty dog all in pieces and there were holes all-round the edge – it was sort of in and out with a pink plastic needle and I tried to start her off so that she could do it when we went home. Well – I don't think that she was impressed by it and I wanted to sit and do something so I sat there doing it but and it wasn't my idea and it wasn't creative, the colours were horrible and the threads were cheapo– there was nothing nice about them so the outcome was eventually I gave up and threw it away.

Becky: I was given this [freestyle embroidery kit] by my mother. It's quite simple stitches just short and long stitch and then the satin stitch but when I got it out, I was surprised to find that the design was so tiny. I started up here and then I had to unpick it because I really didn't like it. The needle that came with it was too big and I was making huge holes in the fabric and I couldn't get the stitches to sit right so I thought I'd start with some big patches. They suggest that you use one strand of thread at a time which is what I have done but actually it's quite tiny so it's been quite difficult to actually achieve the density so it's been a bit of a challenge. The back it's a mess which makes me unhappy but I have decided just to keep going with it because I did unpick it about three times and then thought maybe I have to see how it goes and actually having done some of it when you hold it away from you It's slightly better than I was expecting it to be. But when you are looking at it closely, I am not entirely happy.

In this excerpt from a larger story about the production of a kingfisher embroidery, Becky suggests that, although the recommended stitch was simple, the materials caused a problem in that the design was too small, the thread too fine and the needle too

big. Notice that it was she (not the needle) who was making huge holes in the fabric, which in turn affected the way that the stitches connected to the fabric base and so caused her to unpick them several times. After changing the needle, the story continues in much the same way with a forward and back stitching and unpicking process with the eventual completion and ultimate fate of a small kingfisher embroidery (Picture 14);

Becky: Would you like to see the Kingfisher, he is finished?

Me: So where are you going to do with this little chap?

Becky: He will go in my box with the other ones (laughing)...

Me: But he's so sweet.... Aren't you pleased with it?

Becky: If I hold it away from me ... I am ... actually the colours are okay aren't they? His eye is just so huge... are kingfishers eyes that big?

Me: Have you got a big stash of somewhere of all the embroideries that you have done?

Becky: Yes, but they are not altogether I just put them somewhere and yes, I have got a fair number.

Me: How many have you got?

Becky: A fair few, hundreds, it's silly isn't it (quietly) It's my horde.



Picture 14: Becky - The Kingfisher

Principally, the specific qualities or property held within materiality could promote action or a reaction within the body which then facilitated, obstructed, or sometimes prevented engagement with them. Appreciation of the materials and tools as agents within the embroidering process appears fundamental to both engagement and continuation of practice.

Influence of the body

Consideration of the interactions in the body as agent also appears to be important. Embroidering is done within a body and links mind and body. Essentially, the 'doing' of embroidering seems to affect the body, and in turn, the body can affect performance and thus the experience of embroidering. This reciprocal act constitutes part of the embroidering process. Participants stories imply that physical restlessness, worry, need for stimulation, fatigue, physical limitations, mental health, mood and deterioration of capacities and faculties may either stimulate, inhibit or prevent them from embroidering. For example, now that her eyes are not so good, Becky finds threading the needle to be a real irritation.

Becky: I never used to have a problem but now I really notice that my eyes aren't as good and even with glasses on it does take me much longer to thread a needle.

Millicent recently experienced a fall, after which she spent some weeks in hospital. She made a good recovery, but she fell on her dominant hand and currently has no feeling in the fingertips of that hand. Handedness is of course significant here, as Millicent was unable to swap hands and still has to try to cut, and stitch, with her left hand. Millicent can't sit unoccupied and will push herself to engage in embroidering projects, but the effect of her physical incapacity is both frustrating in the actual doing, but also in relation to the outcome of her now extensive exertion. Importantly, however, she is still able to accomplish stitching using a sewing machine, as long as she gets someone else (typically her cleaner) to cut out patterns from fabric and can thread the needle herself. Findings from

interviews and observations suggest that machine embroidering as a process requires very little hand dexterity or sensory feedback which means that Millicent can continue to practice within her limited capacity. She clearly struggles, however, with hand-stitching.

Millicent: When I have made something, I am proud of my achievement, but now there are problems. At the moment, my hand makes it twice as difficult and what I would normally whiz through takes me absolutely ages. It (Picture 15) took me days and days working on it and I thought I would never get it finished. I have just got to finish the top, but I have done this with my gammy hand and the results are disappointing. The [hand] stitching isn't very good because I have a small semi-circular needle and I couldn't hold it because it was too small and I couldn't feel it so I used a bigger needle and that was really too big to get very small stitches with a big thick needle. The other day I got so frustrated that I packed the whole dam thing up.



Picture 15: Millicent - Elephant Box

The participants will adjust embroidering practice in response to body needs. The type of embroidery method employed, with the associated use of different tools and materials, also appears to promote a different response in the embroiderer but can relate to how the body is feeling.

Embroidering connects hands, eyes and brain. The distinctive characteristics of the brain are implicated within the relationships involved in embroidering. Mental energy is a clear requirement within the process and can either facilitate or depress performance. For example, mental frustration can stop Millicent from embroidering and this, along with the documented reactions of other participants, suggests that mood is very influential, particularly at the beginning of the activity. There seemed to be a strong consensus of opinion that, in order for the stated benefits that engagement in embroidering can achieve, there was a need for the participants to be in a more positive mind set. Only then could the activity foster feelings of relaxation, happiness or freedom from worrying thoughts. Feelings of depression or stress can offset any moves to embroider. This appears to present a bit of an oxymoron as illustrated by Michaela.

Michaela: When I am creating, I am happy, and you can see it because I will dedicate time to doing it. When I find little bits, I can tell that I was not at a good stage when I was doing it because its half done, or it is done really badly. I have obviously tried to do it and then stopped because it was not happening. Recently when I was not enjoying my job and stuff and I got a bit run down with it. I was really struggling and I knew that I was not doing something that I wanted to do, but I had signed up to do it and wasn't enjoying it. I did try to start embroidering, because I thought that it would make me feel better and being creative is one thing that makes me feel like me, so I tried to do it. But I can't when I am bad, I can't do it. It made me even more angry and upset, so I had to just stop. If I could take the time out, I know it would fix me, but I can't.

Victoria: Sometimes if something is disturbing or concerning me, I find that I can't do it. The interesting thing with the stuff that I did while Kelvin was in the hospital was that I had the idea of the pattern before he was poorly and so it became quite a routine exercise. So, what I can't do if I am in any way distressed or agitated is come up with a design, but I can do the routine of the stitching. But I have also got to be in the mood, it's about being calm enough to unravel the problem, to tackle it. I think that I need to know that it can be a calm place, but it might not be calm at the moment.

Even when a person's mood is affable, embroidering seems to promote an internal tension simply because it requires dedicated time. This is because when engaged in the physical act of embroidering, it seems very difficult to be doing anything else. Thus, the perceived needs and expectations of other significant characters within a person's life can hinder the act of embroidering or lead to feelings of guilt, when engaged, which could offset potential benefits. Put simply, because it requires devotion, embroidering can and is often perceived as self-indulgent and selfish.

Michaela: If I do sit and do it [embroidery] of an evening I feel guilty because I feel like I should be cleaning the bathroom or doing some actual work; or if I have cancelled seeing someone because I did not feel particularly good then I can't sit there and do some embroidery because you should be in bed because you said that you did not feel very well.

Olivia: it takes me somewhere where I know that I am indulging in a way because there are things on the periphery that are saying you really ought to be doing the ironing or Bob [husband] will be here in a minute and you know wouldn't it be nice if his tea was ready – so you know there is a little bit of conflict there so I say, 'I'll do this for another twenty minutes and then I will go and do all these things that I have got to do.

In summary, this finding suggests that embroidering as a process can be considered as a captivating sedentary embodied act that unites mind, eyes, arms and hands together with tools and materials in the formation of an embroidery. Once a project is in full flow, on the surface, the focal point might appear to be the fabrication of an embroidery. Participants, however, explain that creating an embroidery is much more, and that with some types of embroidering the process can continue beyond completion simply for the feelings that designing, and stitching evokes. The embroidering relationship is difficult to break and thus embroidering constitutes embellishment. Stopping can be a problem.

Michaela: How would you even quantify putting a price on embroidery? When I am pricing up my weaving or knitting its

very easy, its materials used and time but with embroidery it can go over; it's never ending to me. Like I gift a lot of banners with inspirational things on them but if they gave them back to me then I could carry on with them or like broaches you could just carry on.

Olivia: I really enjoyed doing the blue one in fact I enjoyed that so much that I didn't want to finish so there are hundreds of French knots simply because it was lovely and I didn't want to finish it; I was just enjoying being totally absorbed (picture 16).

Theme three: Experiences (Figure six)

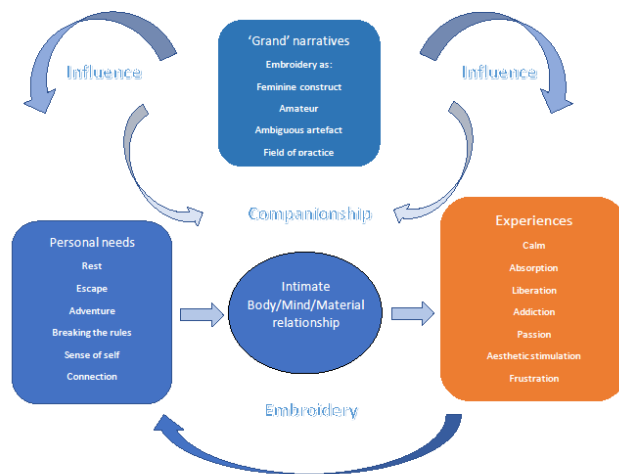


Figure 6: Findings - Experiences

What the participants disclose is that the process or 'doing' of embroidering stimulates different experiences. Stitching techniques that involve repetitive action appear to appease a physical and/or emotional requirement to sit and relax. The cyclical action combined with conformity in technique encourages feelings of a calm body and mind. In this state, the body can rest while the mind engages with unobtrusive thoughts. This is in contrast to more simulative styles of stitching that, at least for the participants within my study, seem to additionally offer more emotive experiences. It seems that

embroidering offers a type of stitching that goes against conformity and encourages innovation and creativity. When fully engaged, the agential mind/body/material companionship becomes so intense that the embroiderer becomes increasingly, passionate, absorbed, liberated, addicted, aesthetically stimulated, or frustrated. These experiences seem to relate directly to their personal needs and embroiderers appear to know (either intrinsically or overtly) which type of embroidery will deliver the required state. For this reason, the participants in this study tended to have more than one project on the go at any one time. One project that allows them to rest, recuperate and relax and one that offered excitement, concentration and intensity.

Becoming calm

Embroidering can calm both the body and mind seemingly to the extent that even the most hyperactive person could sit and stitch for hours. The women in my study appeared to experience difficulty in sitting and doing nothing. They described a sensation that they named 'itchy fingers'. Stitching of any form appeared to promote a feeling of calmness in both the body and mind. It is suggested that the repetitive action of pulling thread through fabric can be calming. The participants in my study chose 'simple' stitching tasks when they needed to switch off.

Calm body

Becky: You see, that's interesting because I am a bit hyperactive and this is the only thing I do where I sit down. I just sit and I get lost in it. I find sitting down really, really difficult. Sitting still in meetings is virtually impossible. At work, I get up and walk around all the time and I am really conscious that other people in my office just sit and I just can't. But, for me a favourite thing is sitting and embroidering.

Olivia: This might sound weird, but there are times when my fingers tell me that I need to use them, to physically do something and I satisfy them doing things like embroidery, knitting, and playing the piano. I mostly prefer embroidering.

Michaela: I think with embroidery it's just the need to be doing something habitually with your hands, it's like, I get itchy hands and I need to be doing something with my hands and it's the quickest thing I can do with my hands and have an outcome that makes me feel nice.

Calm mind

Michaela: It's probably the only creative thing that I do where I can drift off while I am doing it; it's like a semi consciousness. I am not really thinking about what I am doing, my mind is elsewhere; I'm just using my hands and my eyes. For me, embroidering is more of a practice, rather like when my brother goes to the gym and I would do embroidery, it's similar. I guess he goes to look good and to release serotonin and this does the same for me, it makes me feel better and it releases happy hormones when I am doing it. I don't say that I do it to look good, but I guess in a way, in an indirect way, it does.

Victoria: For me it was a way to get my mind off other things and to get lost in something. One of the pieces that I called asymmetry I was doing that one while Kelvin was in hospital and I couldn't go and visit him until three in the afternoon and so it was just a very nice way of spending a couple of hours while I was waiting to go and see him and not letting me stew and agitate about what was happening and what I might find when I got up there.

Becky: There was nothing to suggest that I would enjoy sitting at home, stitching. But it has seen me through. I am fifty-one now and all those years, I have always done it. I had a period in my late teens and early twenties when I was mentally unhinged, but I still did stitching. I think it was the only thing that switched off all the torturous thinking. So, it was quite important then, though I did not realize it at the time. It was just a habit.

Becoming absorbed

All participants experienced embroidering as being absorbing, however, this related to creative types of embroidering. Techniques such as cross-stitch, binca and tapestry which involved skilled but repetitive stitching were possible to do when attending to another task such as watching television. More original stitching such as working to an own design or using new techniques involved deeper

concentration and therefore the participants appeared more absorbed because they were fully focused or engaged in the task at hand.

Michaela: I do get engrossed in it. Last night I was doing it and I did not realise that I had been sitting like on the edge of the chair while I did it, and it wasn't until I stopped that I thought 'oh my back', I was in so much pain. So, you don't even feel your body while you are doing it.

Victoria: I get so captivated that I have to remind myself to stand back every once in a while, and to look at it from afar not only in the tiny detail. I get lost in it I think, getting drawn in to sort of concentrating, lost in the exploration of what I am working with and the creation.

Becoming liberated

A feeling of psychological liberation was associated with all types of stitching including the more repetitive types. This related to freedom in thinking unleashed from outside life pressures. This particularly relates to internal thoughts which for some reason become more uninhibited, positive and emancipated.

Becky: For me it's tapping into some kind of creativity that other things don't. I find it really liberating actually. My head feels big inside when I'm stitching. It's like unlocking a door and I can feel myself relaxing and I'm letting things just kind of move around in my head whereas other times I keep them very safely boxed in.

Further liberation seemed to be experienced in the free will associated with choice; of design, colour and texture. Embroidering of this type did not involve conformity associated with pattern, technique or tradition.

Olivia: embroidering allows me to feel free, like when I was 17 I was in isolation hospital for weeks and I don't know why they let me loose one day I walked the length of the hospital in bare feet on the grass and that's what embroidering does, I can just be totally free.

Compulsion to stitch

All participants described some form of compulsion associated with their stitching practice described as a habit or addiction. This

relates strongly to the intimacy within the companionship. This experience also tends to be associated with absorption where total attention to the task is necessary.

*Michaela: I think that is to do with the repetitiveness of it maybe; I find it addictive. You can get lost in embroidery because you can just keep adding to it and it becomes something more striking, it's never ending to me, it **is** [emphasized] like an addiction.*



Picture 16: Olivia - Sunflowers

Olivia: (Picture 16) I did the orange one first and then in fact enjoyed it so much that I did another one in blue.

Becky: It's a habit, like a cigarette or drug habit. I am very conscious that there is a big part of my brain that is completely absorbed in what I am doing and I feel a sense of

separation and loss when I have to put it away and do something else. I think it frees my mind and from that point of view, once I get into it, I lose track of time and then I have that sense of missing it when I stop.

Passion

All participants expressed that they experienced some form of desire, love or passion towards their embroidering and embroideries. This feeling appears to relate to the intimate interaction with materials themselves and engagement with the materialising embroidery.

*Millicent: Why do I do it? Because I just **love** [emphasised] it. Because I am so taken with it all the time. Sometimes, I get it out and actually look at it. Just the pleasure in seeing it.*

Becky: I do love the texture of them I do love them. I remember when I started I did a thrush in rose hips and it used French knots and seed stitch on top of its breast to do the little marks and actually there was something that I really loved...and kind of doing that layering thing when you are putting layers of stitches on top of each other ... and the 3D thing... and to see the effect and to see the effect... to create the effect myself was really, really lovely.

Aesthetic stimulation

The feeling of passion seems associated with aesthetic stimulation. The colours, textures, and 3-dimensional qualities of embroideries themselves both stimulate and satisfy an apparent need to experience seeing, touching and creating beautiful things. The piecemeal process of stitching allows this sensation to deepen as the image evolves.

Becky: It's an expression of you that other people can see. Something good that it is coming out of your mind, accessing something so beautiful, that's beautiful to me. I love these (embroidery) designs, the flowers, trees and birds. These are just wonderful, so amazing, fantastic... I just like looking.

Victoria: When I did the forest one that I have hung up it was delightful to see if I added where the leaves are on the tall trees there are quite a few layers of machine embroidery on chiffon in different colours and the leaves were in different

colours and it was fascinating for me, to lay down a tiny piece and see how that changed that particular area.

Frustration

Most of the feelings experienced when embroidering were positive, however tension in the process or external interruptions lead to frustration. At times, the participants stitched through these feelings as they were seen part of the course and a problem to work through. At other times trouble within the mind/body/material relation stopped the process. This relates to the agency of the body and materials within the stitching process.

Becky: I have used gold and silver thread which are quite difficult to work with because they don't lie in the same way as cottons and you have got to use much shorter lengths otherwise they get really tangled and frayed. I struggled with that and the wool because it was always getting knotted and it would unravel and then ravel up tight. It's very intrusive getting knots or pulling too hard and it [the needle] slipping off the end of the thread, that's extremely annoying.

Millicent: I like the effect of variegated thread because I do so much foliage and you don't want a flat colour, you want something that makes it stand out a bit. The problem is that it breaks if you move your machine too fast, and that is very irritating.

Olivia: At the moment I am doing a silk embroidery and the problem when working with certain threads is that you really need to be a very, very competent embroiderer because you have to separate the threads and when you are working with silk it's very difficult to do without getting everything tangled. So, it's a nightmare and I am not doing it very well.

Victoria: I much prefer working with natural threads and fabrics because they are just more responsive because the polyesters and the synthetics can be pretty stiff to begin with and don't want to do what you want them to do. It can get very frustrating.



Picture 17: Victoria Light and shadow



Picture 18: Victoria - Light and Shadow 2

Victoria: (Picture 17) I really enjoy the experimenting and what I am working with at the moment is a technique called shadow work which is where you stitch a pattern on two layers of fabric and you cut one of the fabrics so that there is a kind of shadow that is produced as a result. I am trying to get done for an upcoming exhibition.

Victoria (Picture 18). I'm not 100% satisfied with it but it is ok. It's sort of an interesting experiment but what I did wrong was that I didn't spend enough time in the planning of the design – yes – so that I will do differently next time but I think it's ok – it's like an experiment in progress.

Summary: Findings

The findings suggest that embroidering is practised within the boundaries of 'grand' narratives associated with embroidering which influence the practice for each person all be it in a different way. Each embroidery begins in response to life circumstance and thus fulfils a specific personal need. This can be related to both routine and extraordinary life events. Experienced embroiderers seem to listen to their bodies and moderate their embroidering practice in accordance with their emotional and physical needs, balanced with their energy reserves. These needs are met within an agential companionship with an embroidery which is typically and importantly intimate and private away from other people. Body, material, tools and techniques become reciprocal and active relations that need to be synchronised in order for the process of embroidering to occur. With the appropriate conditions and relations, the agential companionship involved in embroidering can promote physical and psychological responses within the body which are interpreted as meaningful experiences. Within this assimilated arena of body, materials and context, participants seem to be utilising embroidering as a therapeutic occupation within their everyday lives. As such, the experiences associated with embroidering are considered to range from restorative to simulative depending on the body, tools, material relations and methods employed within the process.

Chapter 6

Discussion

Overview of Chapter

The purpose of my research was to explore how embroidering could influence meaningful change within the context of a person's everyday life. The aims were to understand the meaning of embroidering as situated, practiced, enacted and evolving within a person's life; to understand the therapeutic potential of embroidering and to contribute to the understanding of crafts as complex occupations within everyday life and how they can support and improve health and well-being. This was contextualised in the current health agenda and justified through previous research that identified a variety of important but unconnected outcomes of engagement in crafts and specifically textiles that might influence health and wellbeing. Lack of understanding of the mechanism or means of therapeutic potential was the motivation for my research assignment, combined with the evident sparsity of research on embroidering in occupational therapy. The research was framed within a narrative methodology in order to study meaning in and through action.

This penultimate chapter provides begins with my original contribution to knowledge. Explanations for my findings follows, with connection to current research and theory to consider why and how embroidering can potentially be an effective means to maintain health and well-being. The significance of the agential companionship in embroidering legitimises its presence at the opening of the chapter as this encapsulates my main contribution to knowledge. The discussion develops through further consideration of the diversity of stitching techniques in which I link the need to stitch with the response to engagement. These are considered as narratively connected;

response follows need and creates storied experience. Discussion of the influence of possible 'grand' narratives grounds the study in its epistemological foundation of social constructionism. These narratives are fundamental to engagement. The discussion of findings concludes with consideration of the application to occupational therapy practice and the wider health context. Finally, I provide a critical review of my study in which I analyse and synthesise my learning during this doctoral work.

Main contribution to knowledge

To me the most important finding was that embroidering has the potential to promote meaningful change for people because of an intimate and personal relationship that develops with the person, and their materials. This agential relationship has the potential to meet various personal needs and also illicit a variety of potential reactions. My thesis as a whole provides detail of this and also possible explanations.

My original contribution to knowledge resides in the notion of the importance of an intimate and reciprocal mind/body/material companionship. In the development of such a close affiliation the person and product become inseparable. Entanglement occurs through deep and sustained engagement with tools and materials. I suggest that this entanglement is at the centre of therapeutic potential.

Embroidering can promote meaningful and purposeful change in a person's everyday life through an agential companionship involving body, mind and materials. This solitary and reciprocal relationship is intimate, situated, and develops over time and this is proposed as the means for therapeutic potential. Once established this companionship can provide resources that can be used to cope with everyday life. Embroidering offers sufficient diversity in techniques in order to meet a variety of personal needs which seem to range from relaxation and escape to excitement and risk. Correlated responses

range from sedative to simulative. The combination of responses become meaningful experiences associated with embroidering. The power of the agential companionship may explain the recent enthusiasm for crafting in everyday society and supports research that shows how the arts can promote health and well-being.

Agential Companionship Embroidering as a transformative occupation

The notion that the needle arts are associated with the decorative, domestic, and feminine is the focus of 'stitching the self' (Amos and Binkley 2020) a publication that aims to expand this narrow view, demonstrating how needlework has emerged as a transformative art form through which both objects and social, political and often non-conformist identities are crafted.

Likewise the findings of my research have shown how embroidering as a transformative occupation can promote meaningful and intended changes in both physical and emotional state based on the personal needs of the embroiderer. The personal embroidering narratives show that embroidering was deeply embedded in the lives of my participants from an early age. Their embroidering practice was historically and culturally situated and developed over time, consequently influenced by their life circumstance. This is important to acknowledge, because a newcomer to embroidering might not benefit from engagement in the same way because they may lack situated experience. My participants were experts in their craft; embroidering was meaningful, embedded and familiar and this might have promoted the possibility of therapeutic potential.

In relation to the therapeutic potential of embroidering, my findings support and extend previous research which identified that the repetitive motion typical in many forms of textiles, is relaxing. It seems that imitative stitching is associated with limited mental engagement and a feeling of being in control which allows for a state of relaxation and calmness. The findings of my research additionally

suggest that embroidering can be therapeutic because it is non-conformist and as such promote a sense of excitement, liberty and freedom. In embroidering one can be out of 'expected' character, outrageous or extreme with no adverse social consequences. Embroidering can meet diverse needs and I suggest that this relates to my aim to understand how crafts as complex occupations can support health and well-being.

Embroidering has been found to influence physical and emotional states through an agential relationship with body/mind and materials. The embroiderers in my study seemed to be aware of how embroidering could alter their state of being and they consequently modulated their practice according to personal need. This is a significant finding, which gives more detailed support to Wilcock's theory of an occupational perspective of health, where humans have an intuitive potential to perceive their needs and support their health through an occupation (Wilcock 2006). My findings found that embroidering can be a dynamic process that supports a person to self-manage both mental and physical health, indicated as significant within the purpose of the in NHS long term plan (Fancourt and Finn 2019). This finding also adds detail to other previous research, in which textiles were also used to fulfil a desired mood (Dickie 2011, Pöllänen 2015) or deal with trauma (Dickie 2013). Understanding this potential reflects the purpose of occupational therapy in which the therapist identifies a person's needs and selects appropriate interventions in order to promote a change in bodily or mental state. Ultimately, the therapist needs to know which form of stitching to prescribe in order to enable the intended outcome of intervention. My findings reveal that even within one craft, there are multiple therapeutic potentials.

The therapeutic possibilities offered in embroidering appear to be supported and responsive towards relations in what I interpreted as an intimate companionship with the person (body and mind) and materials both of which appear essential and agential in practice.

This provides further explanation for findings from previous research that identified the sensory and aesthetic appeal of materials and tools (Riley et al. 2013, Dickie 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018), which was seen to motivate continued engagement, but criticises the perceived need for mastery and control over material objects (Pöllänen 2015). Previous researchers have proposed mastery as significant. Importantly, the relations between person and material seem to be more reciprocal. My findings further question the dominant idea that social engagement is a major factor in the health potential of arts, crafts and textiles. Contrariwise, I argue that although embroidering can meet the need to be connected to wider society, this is not through direct social engagement, but undertaken through an intimate, habitual and compelling craft-making companionship usually within the home. This suggests an unrealised value in home-based activity. Social detachment with exclusion of other people is explored as a necessary and important aspect of the therapeutic potential. Finally, wider social narratives appeared to hold considerable power over my participants. The notion that embroidering is feminine and amateur appears to be a strong and negative influence on engagement.

Therapeutic potential in companionship: Body, mind, material relations

The strong emotion of passion or love that was conveyed through my participants' embroidering experience appears to relate to a deep and intimate personal relationship with the materials and essentially how they intermingle through the embroidery process in action with the body. The embroiderers voiced a passion that appeared to be a feature of their embroidering. Previous research has revealed the experience of joy in craft making (Gauntlett 2011) but not necessarily love. This is not to say that other textiles or crafts might not promote a similar experience, but it was distinct in the nuances of embroidering which has not been so noticeably exposed previously. The therapeutic possibilities offered in

embordering has been indicated as internal to the process which incorporates a passionate and intimate body, mind and material companionship. Primarily, this is the means or potential for change in embroidering. The implication is that the interactions in this association need to be congenial, but not necessarily without trouble, in order to form the essential relations necessary for embroidering to establish and flourish within a person's life. The notion of 'companionship' assumes Frank's (2010) extension of Donna Haraway's non-human companion which he associates with the purpose of stories as companions. Here, my suggestion is that embroidering becomes a companion, and this relates to the relationship between person and object in the form of the materials and tools involved when embroidering. This might be why they can become symbolic of the person who made them (Dickie 2011, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018) and appear so hard to give away. Each embroidery 'holds' the person in the story of its construction, and this can be considered as an entanglement (Barad 2007). In the development of such a close affiliation the person and product become inseparable. Entanglement occurs through deep and sustained engagement with tools and materials. This is a concept which I return to later on in the discussion.

Beginning of the companionship

All relationships begin through an initial meeting. In the case of my participants, the companionship began at an early stage in their lives. For some reason they cannot remember, they were attracted to embroidering. Perhaps this was to eschew conforming to expectations of elders whilst retaining connection to an acceptable 'female' occupation. Embroidering might not reflect the orthodoxy associated with other textiles (Myzelev 2009, Dickie 2011, Riley 2011, Brookes et al. 2019, Clarke 2019, Harrison and Ogden 2019). My participants also spoke of the allure of colour, texture and pattern offered in fabrics and threads. Materials were found to promote an

aesthetic and tactile response for each participant. The relevance of aesthetic stimulation has been identified in other studies on textiles (Reynolds 2008, Reynolds 2009, Reynolds et al. 2009, Futterman Collier 2011, Riley et al. 2013, Adey 2018). This research strongly suggests that the sensory and aesthetic appeal of materials encourages further engagement (Sennett 2009, Dickie 2011, Riley 2013, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018, Brooke et al. 2019, Clarke 2019). Pöllänen's (2015) participants described a feeling of delight when stroking or viewing fabrics with strongly coloured cloths providing a sense of strength during times of illness. Pöllänen and Voutilainen (2018) found that stay-at-home mothers found viewing and touching materials inspirational in craft making and selected those of good quality as a reflection of themselves in the legacy that they would like to leave behind. Colours were found to be particularly simulative for older residents engaged with tapestry weaving (Demecs and Miller 2019). It seems that the embodied response to touching and seeing colours and textures can be therapeutic. Colour 'therapy', where proponents believe various colours hold various energies, has many followers in society (Wills 2013).

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) suggests that the body offers unlimited potential for enjoyment that is rarely exploited to the full by most people. Embroidery is not an activity that requires full capacity of the whole body and this offers many people the opportunity to engage in it who may be unable to do other activities that require athletic ability. The joy of seeing, in flow theory is not just about sight for functional purposes but for the aesthetic pleasure. Participants showed an aesthetic response not just towards materials and in their evolving embroideries but towards nature and everyday sights available to them during the course of their day. Embroiderers seem to cultivate the potential of their vision both in the design and action of creating an embroidery. Visual themes from the environment seemed to offer expedient incentive for an embroidery. Birds,

flowers, gardens, places, paintings, buildings and even light and shadow were incorporated into fabric and threads. Embroidering could thus be said to inspire and develop an appreciation of the world and perhaps ones' place in it. Csikszentmihalyi (1998) calls this dimension an aesthetic flow experience. The world through an embroiderers eye can be stunning and what's more, they can share it within their embroideries for others to perceive. Rather than being an innate human skill, appreciation of aesthetics might need to be encouraged. This appears to have been nurtured from quite a young age for my participants. Consideration of embroidering as a therapeutic activity may need to incorporate assessment and cultivation of sensory aesthetics in order for a person to invest their energy and truly enjoy the experience.

The appeal of gradual construction of a 3D image using individual stitches appears to be specifically related to embroidering. Occupations such as painting, mosaic and enameling might be similar in this respect, but not the same. The embroidering process is in the moment piecemeal and disjointed with one stitch at a time, or the selection of one piece of fabric to incorporate and attach. This is a slow, laborious and animated process of building up an image through deliberate, thoughtful and purposeful individual intra-actions (Barad 2007). The evolving picture may possess significant 'charm'. Importantly, the evolving embroidery is 3-dimensional. This process seems enchanting to participants who describe themselves as being fascinated, captured, engrossed, becoming excited and liberated as a result. The collaborative action requires and fosters energy, seemingly in response to specific physical, emotional or social needs. The resultant embroidery is judged as not only beautiful to look at, but to touch and seems to acquire and contain the energy of the 'self' expended in its making.

The physicality of an embroidery remains constantly relevant within the findings. It seems that embroideries maintain a physical connection with the person who made them, because the person puts

something of 'themselves' into the stitching. In addition, the visual stimulation offered in looking at past embroideries continues to be pleasurable. Like a painting, but in this case stitches in colours that you can touch, both optically and haptically. This challenges the conventional boundaries of perception because one can go into and become part of the phenomena beheld (Ingold 2013). Thus, the actual act of embroidering, which appears coexistent to the need to embroider, can be said to be instigated through a desire that captures the persons in such a way that they feel compelled to start and then continue to stitch. This, I have explained as a 'spark' that seems essential to initial engagement.

Fox (2012) provides a theoretical explanation of the potential link between embroidering, psychological desire and the body. He proposes that the body both mediates the world around us and regulates our internal world of thoughts, feelings and sensations. Fundamental to human existence, he theorises that we experience everything as a consequence of being embodied. Fox (2012) indicates that desire is not only a biological reaction as we can control and repress our craving by conscious effort. Based on the writings of Deleuze and Guattari, he reasons that humans have a prerequisite to act in the world, and this is the primary motivating force of desire. Desire is considered the principal productive, motivating and creative force that enables people to realise what they can do. In this case, the desire for action combined with the charm offered by the materials could be what inspires a person to begin to participate in embroidering or stitching. Desire can drive human action in choice making and interaction with others, but also in the day to day organization of body; meaning that through activities such as embroidering we can orchestrate and fulfil our psychological, physical and social needs. Thus my findings might be interpreted such that participants satisfied some of their embodied needs through embroidering.

For the participants in my study, unassuming beginnings appeared to develop into an essential habit or addiction. The findings suggest that embroiderers can feel 'compelled' to stitch; they likened it to a drug addiction. Not only did they modulate their emotional and physical needs through stitching, they also 'needed' to stitch. This appears contrary; can an occupation associated with a kind of compulsive behavior also promote well-being? Previous research has focused very little on an addictive element in crafts or any creative activity. One exception was the discovery that jewelry making was experienced as life changing where participants became 'hopelessly' and 'happily' addicted (Adams-Price and Steinmann 2007). Academic debate on this aspect of making, especially in occupational therapy appears to be lacking. However, all expert practice does demand time and repetition to develop the skill, and humans seem to have an urge towards mastery, which explains the compelling drive to participate.

Addiction in embroidering may be linked to stimulation of the human being's endogenous reward system. Recent neuroscience suggests that rather than being the source of pleasure, the neurotransmitter Dopamine is one hormone which is involved in the connection between a cause of pleasure and the acquisition of habits dedicated to obtaining the same reward in the future (Dingman 2017). This reward may begin at the first point at which a person gains pleasure from an action and could explain why my participants clearly remember their first experience of embroidering. The theory suggests that Dopamine is released once a pleasurable action is initiated. Further Dopamine is discharged when the pleasure exceeds expected value. Dopamine activity may be accordingly decreased if the reward is less valuable than anticipated (Dingman 2017). Dopamine is not the only hormone thought to be involved in pleasure seeking behavior and research continues (Ulrich et al. 2014). The theory is primarily based on research dedicated to understanding destructive actions such as alcohol and drug addiction but perhaps

could also explain a compulsion to stitch, or to participate in other crafts. There is some evidence to suggest that perception of music (Zatorre and Salimpour 2013) and exercise (Lynch et al. 2013) is also related to Dopamine and these have been suggested to be possible new ways to treat addiction. Embroidery could also be considered as an alternative possible intervention for treating addictive occupations. Engagement might be particularly helpful as a haptic but sedentary activity beneficial for addictions related to eating, drinking and smoking. Habitual stitching is thus proposed as a possible health promoting occupation to replace other destructive addictions.

Once the need or desire to stitch is initiated an embroidery project begins to emerge through the body's interaction with fabric, threads, tools and context/situation. The relations are both optic and haptic (Ingold 2013) which emphasises the importance of the physicality of materials and tools but also the correlated pleasure from action of the body organs (Fox 2012, Wilcock 2007). Engagement of the hands appears particularly important (Riley et al. 2013, Brookes et al. 2019). Each component appears to be integral to the composition of an embroidery, where person, and materials are conjoined in beneficial mutual construction. Embroidering is considered to combine levels of mental and physical energy with the properties of material entities in the creation of an embroidery. Fundamental to this conception is awareness that embroidery techniques involve varied and distinctive processes, require a level of skill and energy, incorporate different tools and materials which can encourage different responses and experiences. This is a characteristic of embroidering that is essential to the possibility of therapeutic potential.

Materials matter

Pöllänen (2015) found that craft-makers developed a sense of agency through ownership of a craft project with associated feelings of mastery over materials. Significance of the influence of the effect of personal agency seems to be apparent in previous research (Riley 2011, Clarke 2019) but limited in relation to understanding mutual action with materials. For example, Reynolds (2003) found that art-making enabled people to exceed and surpass their expectations; participants did something that they never thought that they could do. This relates to a feeling of empowerment in what a body can do rather than how it is defined by other bodies, ideas, things or institutions (Fox 2012). This seems to implicate control of materials through the development of a corporal proficiency despite the limitations of the physical body (Symons 2011, Cohen 2006, Reynolds et al. 2009) or due to deterioration through illness (Spandler 2007, Reynolds 2007, Cohen 2006) or age (Pöllänen 2013). Emphasis in making is on what a person (body and mind) *can* achieve which can take them somewhere rather than going nowhere (Stickley et al. 2007, Kelly et al. 2012). What has been described within previous research, however, is relatively one way, the body's action over or despite materials.

The importance of materials in embroidering became increasingly significant through the method of narrative analysis undertaken in my study. Viewed via a narrative lens, objects can be seen to have agency as actors within a personal story (Frank 2010). In order to begin to understand the suggestion that mutual companionship with materials is integral to therapeutic potential in embroidering, it is important to distinguish the perceived difference between character and actor within narrative research. Frank (2010) states that from a narrative perspective a material object such as fabric can act, and thus can have agency in relation to human engagement. Through narrative analysis I began to realise that materials and tools were significant actors in the process of embroidering. Essentially, both

actors and characters can have agency in that one can affect the other. This means that a person can distress, move, touch, manipulate, disturb, imitate, engage or mark materials, tools and visa versa. A character is a person who has agency through a body, which includes the physical and emotional mind. A person is thus embodied and exists as both object and subject (Kielhofner 2008). Yerxa (2009) explains the embodied self consists of the 'I' and the 'it'. 'Self', in this respect is taken to constitute an internal being invisible to others which incorporates the conscious 'I' who intends, feels and perceives and who has a history, emotions, goals, views and interpretation all of which are part of one's experience of living. The 'I' also has an external 'it', the body, which is interpreted by others through observable behavior. Specifically, this illustrates the crucial prominence of the interaction of participant's 'self' with their bodies, tools and materials as the essential relations within embroidering. These relations are considered as the foundation for embroidering to flourish within a person's life. Principally, this suggests that the participants became active characters, together with their bodies, tools and materials as equally dynamic agents as each has the capacity to influence the other within the embroidering process. The process of embroidering is thus considered as entwined, dynamic, and progressive involving an embodied person, tools and materials. The collaborative relations offered in embroidering means that the action and reaction of character to agent and agent to character promote different outcomes. The narrative themes identified in the findings specifically show how the body experiences physical and affective phenomena as a result of engaging in different types of embroidering.

I have previously stressed that the use of different techniques, tools and materials can promote diverse reactions within the body/mind relation which become meaningful experiences. Materials such as fabric, threads, beads, colours, texture, shape, and dimension appear to promote a bodily response that can

be either immensely pleasurable or equally frustrating or even repellent. The bodily reaction, particularly to colour and texture, was evident for all the participants but unique to their personal story. This phenomenon is well known and currently being developed in relation to technology, for example in handheld devices that are made to appeal to both visual and tactile senses (Shurkin 2014). It seems that occupational engagement is partly dependent of the aesthetic and haptic appeal of materials. Consideration of materials as agents in the occupational therapy process may be fundamental in order to harness therapeutic potential. Occupational therapists need deeper appreciation and knowledge of the properties of certain materials as an important consideration in considering the therapeutic potential of a craft, including how they tend to 'behave'. A feature of crafts, perhaps more than 'art' is the focus on mastery of, or deep relationship with, materials.

Published research appears overwhelmingly positive about the effects of engaging in crafts and textiles, suggesting that engagement is stress-reducing (Pöllänen 2015) and enhances well-being (Pöllänen & Voutilainen 2018). These positive emotions seem to relate to personal agency and self-efficacy. Likewise, my findings seem to be principally 'positive', but this was because the participants were genuinely very confident that their embroidering enhanced their well-being. They also knew that I was particularly interested in this idea and so they may have over-emphasised the connection. But at times my participants shared that they got frustrated during their embroidering practice. This was related to the agency of both body and materials as actors in the stitching collaboration. My findings encourage the idea that, for successful performance and perhaps in order to be therapeutic, tools and materials need to be appropriate, engaging, available, accessible and fit for purpose. Threads could become temperamental, embroidery backs (reverse side) were 'messy', the needle 'too big' and the resulting holes in the fabric unappealing which promoted unpicking and re-stitching. Other

reasons included low mood, overwhelming worry, the piece not coming together, ambiguous instructions, or being too self-critical. Clearly, embroidering is not always a pleasurable experience. Frustration is considered to relate to problems which inhibit the more congenial interaction of body, materials and tools when embroidering. It seems that if one element of the mind, brain and body cooperation is problematic then trouble occurs. Experience of materials and the body as agents within the embroidering process appears fundamental to both engagement and continuation of practice.

In summary, I am arguing that embroidering can be interpreted as an important and meaningful liaison where the boundaries between person, body, materials and tools become blurred. Csikszentmihalyi (1998) implies that optimal experience can be accompanied by loss of the sense of self as separate from the world through union with the (natural) environment. This is combined with a sense of seemingly effortless bodily movement and the reaction of wanting the action to go on forever. In this way, the needle and thread, for example, becomes an extension of the body within the act of stitching. One is not complete within the moment of action without the other. They are inseparable which further indicates the possibility of an entanglement.

Csikszentmihalyi (1998) indicates the significance of the close (but not inseparable) kinship between an individual and the natural world. He suggests that loss of thinking about the self (often termed as 'self-forgetting') is not within the imagination, or a poetic representation but is based on real experience with real phenomena moving together towards a common goal. When a person invests their psychic energy into an interaction, they become part of that greater system of action (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). Through this interaction, the self expands its boundaries and becomes more complex.

Fundamentally the cooperation of person, with their environment is considered as extremely enjoyable, if it requires continued

opportunities for skill development. Flow theory was developed through research into activities within the natural environment such as gardening and rock climbing based on the understanding that they require few man-made material resources (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). In this respect the theory offers some explanation but still undervalues fabricated material items. My findings suggest that embroidering materials as agents are important and that our collaboration with them might be a significant condition for optimal engagement. Rather than being separate from the wider systems within which we exist we are part of them, and we need to recognise the limitations of human will and accept a cooperative rather than ruling role in the universe (Barad 2007, Braidotti 2016). In embroidering, the embroiderer can feel that they exist in something greater (Gauntlett 2013, Parker 2010) such as the wider world. This perhaps additionally shows a spiritual dimension to embroidering as indicated within a study of the human systems that support our occupational nature, an aspect of occupational science, where the sense of self expands to the outside world and is such promotes a feeling of transcendence (Sadlo 2016). This seems to be possible in embroidering, and this can enhance rather than limit the therapeutic potential. Occupational therapy theory to date does not seem to adequately consider the importance of material relations within occupational engagement. In this case occupational engagement is partly about our physical and intimate connection with people *and* things. This leads onto my next significant finding; embroidering tends to be undertaken in social isolation.

Doing, being and becoming in solitude

The notion of 'solitude' derived from interpretation of an unexpected finding – the apparent privacy of embroidering for the participants in my study. The term solitude was carefully designated because it did not mean loneliness or isolation, but inferred intimacy, secrecy and retreat. The term felt as if it encapsulated what my participants were inferring within their personal stories. They spoke of refuge and sanctuary within a secret world which also provided the circumstance or context for the process of embroidering to happen. Pöllänen (2013, 2015) also highlighted that participants described how craft provided an escape from the present moment, described as solitude. Whilst lone making has been reported in other studies (Dickie 2011, Riley et al. 2013, Clarke 2019) its significance may have been misjudged. As the literature review has shown, the social benefits of textiles and other crafts is a dominant theme in prior research (Dickie 2011, Riley et al. 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019) which might have influenced, or been influenced by the recent trend for social prescription within the NHS (Morton et al. 2015). Some types of embroidering, however, seem to require a higher level of cognitive focus during the process which not just impedes social engagement but demands disengagement. In my study, solitude was typical in most embroidering situations but was perhaps more obvious during free style or simulative embroidering. This might be due to differing levels of engagement and the required focus associated with diverse stitching techniques.

The opportunity to engage in art and craft within a field of practice including, associated guilds, groups and the internet (Humphreys, 2008), almost certainly offers relief from social isolation (Davies 2014, Stickley et al 2007). The social setting is considered important because it incorporates learning from others, mentoring, exchange of ideas, interaction, value of meeting people who shared a common interest, kinship and a place where you can share experiences and ideas (Cohen 2006, Coulter et al. 2004, Hunt et al.

2014, Reynolds 2003, Riley 2008, Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell 2001, Tzanidaki and Reynolds 2011, Van Lith et al. 2013). My findings support notion of the importance of social engagement in the finding 'connection', but also indicates an alternate view which suggests that the lone nature of participation is also extremely important and often overlooked in published research. This may relate to all crafts, and all skill development as suggested by Sennett (2009) in the 10,000 hours practice required in order to develop skill.

The participants my study mainly embroidered alone, or more specifically; embroidering excluded other people even if they were present. The two people that attended groups tended to partake in activities other than stitching during social time such as planning group projects or listening to speakers, which concurs with Riley's (2011) findings from Guild attendance. For the other three, social isolation was typical and at specific times, self-imposed. One used embroidering rather than knitting on public transport to purposely disconnect from others. Further, it appeared that some of them found it difficult to embroider when they were with other people, one even describing her practice as a 'guilty secret'. Knitting has been argued to be a social activity with many people knitting in groups highlighting the value of a sense of belonging in knitting (Adey 2018, Riley et al 2013). This was despite also finding that most people knitted on their own, but this was not really analysed by previous researchers (Riley et al 2013). Opposing this tendency, Harrison and Ogden (2019) suggest that people who knit typically do so alone in their own home. They propose that research in the field of leisure studies privileges 'woke' or radical knitting at the expense of the everyday. Their findings also indicate that older women are embarrassed to knit in public and choose rather to knit alone. Similarly, the older participants in my study did not embroider in public due to the perceived 'feminine' image of their activity. This is an alternative form of engagement to the 'indie' crafter intent on spreading the message about the power of making objects by hand

(Jefferies 2016). This indicates that like embroidering, social knitting may not be so typical. It also seems that potentially crafts undertaken in isolation are shunned as indicated in an article by Jefferies (2016) which advocates that online craft communities, 'remove the practice from its former sense of isolation' (Jefferies 2016: p28).

Adey (2018) focused on the experience of flow when knitting, engagement in which was associated with 'being in the Zone' (Adey 2018 pp89). The possibility of experiencing flow when correspondingly socialising with other people is questionable. My findings indicate that an embroiderer tends to be engaged with themselves (their bodies), materials and the evolving embroidery rather than other people, and this aspect of embroidering might not be so dissimilar from other crafts and textiles. My research suggests that because the relationship between the self and materials might have been previously overlooked, the relevance of social isolation may have been underestimated. Essentially embroidering can be said to connect bodies, things, people, ideas and institutions through a complex interaction (Fox 2012) that might omit actual social engagement.

Solitary embroidering seems to be the condition required for connection of body, mind and materials in the creation of an embroidery. This is thought to be possible because of the apparent significance of the privacy involved in the embroidering process. Through stitching, a person can not only explore their creative minds but also show the beauty of this to themselves and to others, from inside the mind and body to the outside world. This relates to the previous research which emphasises the relevance of connection to others through making (Riley et al. 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Riley 2011, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019). Both Kelly et al. (2012) and Pöllänen (2015) found the making of beautiful things to give others was very important, including how the recipient treated or wore the object; almost as if it were an extension of themselves (Coulter et al.

2004, a Cour et al. 2005, Reynolds 2007, Clarke 2019). My research adds that accolade from other people was evident, but not overtly significant, or always the purpose. The embroiderers in my study appeared to embroider for themselves before others. For them, satisfaction and joy were experienced in seeing what materialised from their hands and minds. The process appeared cathartic in itself. Hoarding past embroideries and periodically looking at them might be indication of the relevance of how embroideries become very personal items that are not always for public viewing. Also significant is the finding that unlike textiles such as knitting, sewing, weaving, spinning and dying, embroidery can lack a functional purpose. Embroidering seems to be very personal.

Paradoxically the personal aspect of embroidering appeared to enable my participants to connect to others in a special way. The possibility to 'showing one's mind' suggests that in embroidering, the embroiderer could communicate an internal state to others. Parker (2010) has argued that in holding a coherent object in her hands, the embroiderer exists both in the mind and the outside world. She describes the experience of embroidering combined with the embroidery itself affirms the self as being with agency, acceptability and potency. The embroiderer thus sees a positive reflection of themselves within the embroidery. Alternatively, a negative reflection of the self was also possible, indicating the complexity of understanding the possible therapeutic effects of embroidering. This was seen to convey that the mind might not be so well. As previously intimated, the participants in my study posited that they could not engage in embroidering when they were feeling un-well or were very worried about something. This was despite them knowing that they would feel better if they could stitch. One suggestion about the possible cause could be that because the process of embroidering is experienced as an intimate liaison with the self, the embroiderer needs to be in a suitable mental space to 'be' with themselves. In the case that the person wants to avoid themselves,

then embroidering might not meet this need. This was also indicated by Dickie (2011) in relation to quilting.

The significance of social isolation may be important in relation to our busy and socially engaged lives. One's 'occupational life' can be said to exist as both a social and a personal/private world. This related back to Yerxa's (2009) notion of self as both 'I' and 'it'. Dewey called this an associated life (Cutchin and Dickie 2013). Our social life incorporates other people; routine, roles, stereotypes, obligations, control, demands, purpose, stress, tension, support, praise, accolade, encouragement and so on. Embroidering exists inside these two worlds. We can spend a lot of time in our associated life being and doing with other people and as a result need some form of respite. For the participants in my study, embroidering seemed to offer this solace. At other times, we may find ourselves in a position where our social lives become restricted; embroidering can offer needed company.

Default Mode Network theory (DMNt) can be used explain why solitary embroidering might offer such therapeutic potential. Through recent brain imaging discoveries, DMNt proposes that humans are socially wired and that the human brain has a predisposition for social cognition as the default mode of thought (Mars et al. 2012) This means that when we are not engaged in a task and seemingly doing nothing, our brains are active in thinking about, constructing and re-constructing social encounters. Of course, this is not as simple as it sounds and scientific explanation of this phenomena is outside of the scope of my research. What is significant to say here, however, is that brain imaging reveals that when we are engaged in a cognitive task, our DMN is dampened and that this intensifies with the complexity of the task (Ulrich 2014). This is especially relevant to the embroidering process which involves non-repetitive, and mentally complex activity rather than those that involve automatic semi-unconscious behaviours (Saleh 2019). The participants of my study suggested that free-style or machine embroidering was mentally

taxing and thus the DMN might be less active when stimulated in this way.

When the idea of the inhibition of the DMN is applied to solitary practice in embroidering, it can help to explain the appeal. As already implied, social participation can be relentless and respite from the 'maddening crowd' can become an intentional and essential therapeutic act. We need time out of everyday social life and from our related and seemingly constant social thoughts. The DMN is also involved in recognizing, generating and reflecting on social stereotypes (Mars et al. 2012) and may also account for intrusive thoughts that might stop a person from embroidering during a social situation. Certainly, further consideration of the DMN during occupation may shed light into its therapeutic potential.

Earlier flow theory seems to endorse lone activities as undesirable which could partly account for the lack of consideration about the significance of solitary participation in crafts. In a seminal text, Csikszentmihalyi (1998) proposed that humans are biologically programmed towards other people as the most important beings in the world. Although he recognised that people often like or wish to be alone, he strongly related solitude and loneliness to increased depression. This is unless we learn to tolerate or enjoy being alone through the development of attentional habits that lead to mind order and greater complexity of consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). This idea is interesting, and it could be said that through the habitual act of embroidering a person is able to reach this optimal state. Csikszentmihalyi (1998) continued that when in isolation and without this order, the mind would wander towards personal worries or problems which could cause entropy or 'ontological anxiety' (Csikszentmihalyi 1998: p169). He suggested that in order to avoid the 'perils' of solitude, people either engaged in passive distractive activities such as watching the TV, to protect their mind from personal worries, or use alcohol and recreational drugs to provide a false sense of optimal experience. Csikszentmihalyi (1998)

condemned both. He advised that what we need to do is to fill our remote free time with activities that are not just enjoyable but order the mind and make the self-grow through focused attention. These observations pre-date DMN and flow can now be explained through DMN findings. Some forms of embroidering promote focused attention more than others as explained in the next section.

In summary, the embroiderers in my study used the companionship offered during embroidering, to meet their needs to do, be and become (Wilcock 2006). Their experiences as a result of embroidering included becoming calm, absorbed, liberated, addicted, passionate, aesthetically stimulated and frustrated. Guilt, and for some, embarrassment was also experienced, but this related to the social and cultural narratives that were found to inhibit the embroidering process. The non-social aspect of embroidering is proposed as key to any potential change in bodily state. Under the right circumstances embroidering will promote a physiological and/or emotional response usually, but not always experienced as pleasurable. Embroiderers will actively seek these experiences and as such seem to use embroidering as a therapeutic occupation in the context of their everyday life.

Diverse stitching techniques; distinct experiences

Another interesting finding of my research is that the practice of embroidering incorporates the need, want or desire to engage in a specific stitching process in order to experience a distinct physical and/or emotional response. Different stitching approaches appear to stimulate alternative responses and experiences with corresponding levels of engagement, including calmness, absorption, liberation, addiction, passion, and frustration. In this section, I will refer to the framework for occupational engagement (Morris and Cox 2017) in order explain levels of engagement. As a brief introduction, Morris and Cox (2017) proposed that the term 'occupational engagement'

was overused and under-defined in both occupational science and occupational therapy (Morris and Cox 2017). This promoted research which culminated in the development of a new descriptive framework for occupational engagement which provides a helpful tool for explaining levels of engagement in the process of crafts such as embroidering. The framework includes negative, neutral and positive values associated with engagement (figure 7).

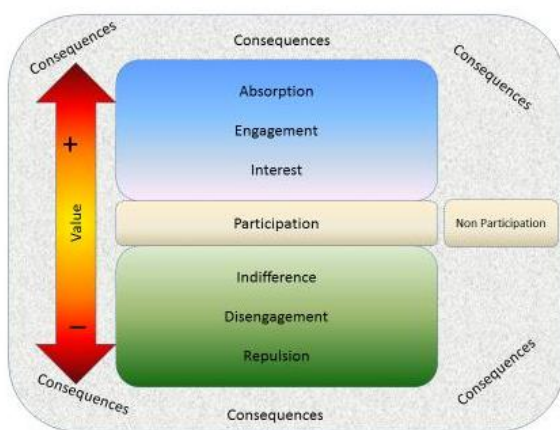


Figure 7: Framework for Occupational Engagement

Morris, Karen and Cox, Diane (2017) Developing a descriptive framework for "occupational engagement". Journal of Occupational Science, 24 (2), pp. 152-164. http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/2926/1/_unicumbriaac-my.sharepoint.com%40ssl_DavWWWRoot_personal_karen_morris_cumbria_ac.uk_Documents_mvsvncdocs_research_writing_JOS%20Occupational%20Engagement%20Description%20ACCEPTED.pdf

This framework highlights how different types of stitching might promote variance in engagement and thus response. For example, stitching for rest could be considered to promote a lower level of engagement, compared to stitching for excitement. In addition, it helps comprehend how tools and materials can both promote engagement or disengagement to the extent of being repellent. Research to date tends to focus on the positive aspects of engagement (Hitch et al. 2014) however, this framework provides necessary description of negative features. Occupational therapy activity analysis has always required therapist to consider the 'contra-indications', revealing that there has been historical

awareness of these phenomena. The findings in my study suggest that, mind, body and material relations influence the level of occupational engagement experienced during embroidering.

The following section will compare the need to embroider with a potential response and level of engagement based on the findings of my research. This is founded on the understanding that my participants seemed to skillfully apply or use diverse stitching techniques in order to purposely experience different responses. Importantly, because embroidering is collaborative, the action of the body and materials may promote alternative and unintended responses such as frustration, with corresponding lower levels of occupational engagement.

Stitching for rest: becoming calm

The form of stitching used to promote rest tended to involve following a fixed pattern using one repeated stitch with clear placement in the cloth i.e. in a predefined hole and included Counted-Thread work (Binca), Cross-stitch and Tapestry. What some people seem to find helpful in these 'restful' methods is the predictable, predefined, repetitive motion that requires reduced mental engagement (Clarke 2019). Previous research indicates that the experience of engaging in repetitive forms of textiles can promote a sedative response (Riley 2011, Riley et al. 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Brooks et al. 2019). Riley et al. (2013) and Brooks et al. (2019) found that knitting was perceived as particularly helpful as a means of being productive during otherwise unproductive time such as travelling or waiting for an appointment. In keeping the hands busy and requiring just enough concentration to keep occupied but not enough to tax, knitting enabled people to pay attention to other things such as watching television, socialising, listening to lectures or thinking (Adey 2018, Clarke 2019). Pöllänen (2015) found that engaging in craft allowed her participants to have a quiet think about things which set them up for the day. The findings in my study supports the idea that

if one is in an affable mood when engaged in repetitive stitching, the mind will begin to wander and that this is usually a pleasant and enjoyable experience. This type of thinking appears not to be destructive or torturous which may be explained by DMN theory. As such, thinking whilst stitching appears to be potentially free from worrying thoughts (Brooks et al. 2019, Riley et al. 2013).

Although stitching for rest required limited mental engagement, the body was active, and it is this action that is thought to be restful and calming. The participants in my study found the feeling of pulling thread through fabric very relaxing if it did not catch, twist, kink, knot or break. In this case, stitching is usually undertaken alongside another activity or occupation. This implies that repetitive stitching may help facilitate a physical state that allows the person to rest so that they can become absorbed in another activity. This phenomenon could be endorsed through the theory of sensory integration which infers that the under stimulated body might actively seek sensory feedback such as rocking or tapping. Links to repetitive stitching and mindfulness have also been articulated and described as being more accessible than traditional mindfulness practice (Corkhill 2015).

The need to use stitching in order to rest or recuperate might relate to a difficulty that some women have in sitting without purpose. All the women in my study revealed a need to be doing something with their hands whilst sitting. This is a common finding in textile-making research focused on women (Riley et al. 2013, Brooks et al. 2019, Clarke 2019). Humphrey's (2008) questions the notion of idle hands and asks why women feel the need to knit and watch the television. It might be that some people have a need to be active during sitting and that cyclical stitching can fulfil this need by making sitting more active or purposeful. Dickie (2011) recognised a need to 'do' in her research where reaction to 7-11 in New York stimulated many women to stitch quilts because of a perceived need to use their hands. Further research into textiles suggested that participants provided other reasons for practice which included

calming mental processes, combined with a need for busy hands (Futterman Collier 2011). The phenomenon of 'itchy hands' is worthy of further research. In conclusion, this form of stitching lacks the cognitive and stimulative features of some other methods as practised by the participants.

Stitching to escape: becoming absorbed

The findings imply that people might stitch to escape a traumatic or stressful life event through its purposeful engagement. Stitching of this nature seems to provide both physical and mental removal from a difficult situation which somehow enables a person to enter an alternate and more positive 'mental space' which Schofield-Tomschin and Littrell (2001) described as a 'sanctuary'. Participants in Reynold's (2004) study argued strongly that engagement in a creative process provided a positive interruption from a significant health condition. Art making was a powerful antidote to the experience of illness which was felt to be therapeutic, supplementing conventional treatments (Kelly et al. 2012, Horghagen et al. 2014). Timmons and MacDonald (2008) suggested that creative activities were superior to therapies such as counselling, an idea later endorsed by psychologist Futterman Collier (2011). This has been linked to a form of self-forgetting (Timmons and MacDonald 2008) which within has been related to flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1998) in previous research.

Importantly, for my participants 'escape' seemed to imply a need to really focus attention onto the embroidery. This made it sufficiently different from stitching for rest where embroidering was used to enable attention towards another activity. Focus and attention appear important features of this type of embroidering which can promote the experience of becoming absorbed. The participants in my study used embroidering to protect themselves, by becoming absorbed in stitching. What seems important in embroidery is that the act of stitching for escape is sufficiently

simulative but also relatively safe, predictable and achievable. This involves attentive stitching that is within the person's capacity, for example in copying a pattern or using an embroidering kit. This can be related to explanations by Horghagen et al (2014), who found that the routine nature of some craft activities offered stability and order when everyday life was considered chaotic and unpredictable. Stitching for escape can be viewed as a protective habit. The notion of embroidering being a protective habit holds some parallel with quilting as mundane therapy (Dickie 2011). Dickie (2011) argued that the everyday and ordinariness of routine participation in crafts had a restorative effect which she connected with relief from worry, and reduction of mental and physical tension or stress associated with personal difficulties. Pöllänen (2013) correspondingly found that craft was considered a constant friend that enabled a mental space in order to resist being overwhelmed by difficulties and to achieve a sense of control and management over life.

Earlier research predominantly suggests that engaging in art or another creative type activity can provide a positive distraction (Brooks et al. 2019) specifically from significant health conditions such as cancer (Reynolds 2004), chronic illness (Kelly et al. 2012), and mental illness (Horghagen 2014). It was argued that focus on creative tasks turned attention from illness or worry towards a creative problem even if not directly working on the project at the time (Timmons and MacDonnald 2008, Spandler 2007, Reynolds 2007, Kelly et al. 2012, Pollanen 2015a). Futterman Collier (2011) advocated the use of textile art as a distraction in recognition that it appeared more beneficial than the more typical therapeutic practice of focusing on the problem. She suggested that distraction created short-term mood repair and increased resilience especially with clients faced with turbulent life events (Maidment and Macfarlane 2011).

Terms such as escape, distraction and diversion can be trivialised through association with a hobby or pastime that offers momentary

amusement or pleasure. I find these terms unhelpful in understanding the therapeutic potential of occupations that enable a person to escape from trauma through purposeful engagement. My research seems to suggest not only that these expressions of language might be misunderstood but also possibly misjudged. Rather than providing simple distraction through transient entertainment, my findings indicate that embroidering is a form of doing that enables a person to find, be with and become themselves through an intimate and ongoing companionship. Through embroidering, my participants could become totally absorbed.

Absorption means giving complete attention to something and the process by which an object takes something in and makes it part of itself (Cambridge Dictionary 2019). Within the framework for occupational engagement absorption is considered to derive from the Latin word 'sorbere' which meant to suck and was defined as being engrossed or deeply interested (Morris and Cox 2017). In the case of my research the notion of becoming absorbed was related to the pleasurable experience of construction of a visual image in the form of an embroidery rather than the repetitive motion of pulling thread through fabric. This distinction is important because it is possible to engage in building a picture in the imagination without physically stitching. In order to be absorbed an embroiderer needs to be sufficiently engaged or 'entangled' with their embroidery. The intimate body, mind and material relations involved in 'building a picture' relate to the possibility of becoming absorbed.

The findings from my research allows the proposition that the feeling of being absorbed occurs because the embroiderer gives their complete attention to their embroidery so that they become 'united'. This adopts the full sense of the definition of absorption. This questions whether occupational absorption can occur during activities where a deep bond with the body (or other bodies), materials and tools has not occurred or where a person is participating in more than one activity at a time. This seems to explain why engaging in

embroidering was difficult when the body or mind was troubled or occupied elsewhere. In this situation a person could be prevented from being engaged in one activity, because they were absorbed by another. Conversely, my findings revealed that a person can be mentally absorbed in embroidering even whilst participating in another task, such as ironing or cleaning. The concept of absorption is present but more subliminal in previous research; others seem to just relate engagement in crafts to producing flow experiences linking this to challenge, attention and focus (Adey 2018, Clarke 2019). Such research also lacks clarity about the definition of occupational engagement, and the level of attention or the circumstances under which the flow experiences apparently occurred. Absorption in occupation seems to be insufficiently described or explained and is as such under-theorised (Morris and Cox 2017).

Wilcock (2007) provides potential theoretical understanding of how absorption in occupation can be seen to affect health. Occupation is linked to health through a process of doing, combined with being, becoming and belonging. From this perspective health is influenced through, 'doing', which involves pleasure from the action of using the body combined with 'being' in the embroidering companionship which can be seen to promote the experience of becoming absorbed. My research shows that doing and being form the embroidery process and the mind, body and material relations involved can further lead to a sense of becoming and belonging; not just existing. Doing in this study seems to be initiated through previous experience of the effects of embroidering combined with life related purpose and desire to engage with materials. My findings imply that in becoming absorbed, the embroiderer becomes closer to themselves than they can perhaps be during other everyday activities (see stitching to be myself). Wilcock (2007) suggests that humans are inclined towards the novel, through adaptation and self-development. Embroidering seems to offer varied and unlimited potential for a person to do, be, become and belong and therefore

positively influence health. In this respect it is suggested that one of the therapeutic potentials of embroidering is enabling a person to be *with* themselves, absorbed in a co-operational relationship that allows them to feel a sense of, development, progression and transcendence (Yerxa 2009, Sadlo 2016). This supports the finding from Riley's (2011) study on weaving, dying and spinning which suggested that convention was a necessary platform for successful performance, but once mastered these could be transcended with unlimited possibilities that provided a gateway to freedom. My study implicates that embroidering can be convention free from the beginning, which means that this sense of transcendence can be accessed with relatively low skill. This is important in the case that it is introduced as a new activity for therapeutic purposes. Meaning in occupation is thus considered as action in the form of engaging in a potentially satisfying occupation and not necessarily having prior experience (Yerxa 2009).

Embroidering is thus more than a distraction from a life situation, it offers absorption and emancipation. It can be argued that embroidering can support, strengthen and develop personal identity. In this way, rather than a momentary sidestep into a safe place, escape can be interpreted to mean an opening of possibilities or a 'line of flight' which departs from relations imposed by other bodies, things, ideas, or institutions (Fox 2012). A line of flight is said to encourage a new state of embodiment. From this perspective escapism in embroidering could be a form of release from the limits imposed by the body and other relations beyond the control of the individual. Resistance of external influence or control reflects the capacity of a person to find themselves and transform their self-image (Fox 2012). This suggests that embroidering to escape might resonate with a need to develop beyond an identity imposed by a life situation and experience a new sense of self.

Stitching to be myself: becoming liberated

Freestyle embroidering involves stitching which incorporates some decision making other than following a pattern or repeating a stitch. The purpose is to fulfil a requisite to “feel like myself”. This possibly relates to a need to self-centre as a result of dominant or imposed narratives or roles performed in social life (Dickie 2011). Embroidering of this type shores up confidence, belief and delight in one’s capacity, so that the embroiderer feels grounded. This relates to embroidering for escape, not from the self but life events that can distract one from themselves. Embroidering can bring someone ‘home’; it can be liberating. Craft in general has similarly been found to provide a space which protected and promoted identity (Reynolds et al. 2011) where interests and values could be developed and expressed (Pöllänen 2013, Reynolds and Prior 2003, Reynolds et al. 2008). Stickley et al. (2007) proposed an inter-relationship between art, identity and the expression of ‘I’ which was considered essential to being.

I have already introduced several theories about the ‘self’ (Yerxa 2009, Fox 2012). Flow theory further offers the idea that ‘self’ resides within our consciousness, and is represented not as the body, but as a hierarchy of goals that we have built up over the course of our lives (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). Attention or psychic energy is argued to be directed by the self, towards specific goals at any one time in our life, so one goal dominates others. Once again, distraction may not be needed but focus on a new and important goal that the person has chosen to pursue. In this state we might feel more in control of our psychic energy and everything that we do in connection to this goal adds to a feeling of order to consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi 1998) and thus liberation. In the case of my research, embroidering can involve a struggle or difficulty that incorporates deep and satisfying concentration. This could be perceived as a battle *for* the self, a struggle for establishing personal control over attention and this can enable a person to acquire strength in order to deal with external disorder over which they have

limited control. This contrasts with the view that in craft, a maker experiences mastery via control over materials (Pöllänen 2015). Csikszentmihalyi (1998) calls this the paradox of control. He suggests that activities can be enjoyable because the person lacks the sense of worry about losing control which is distinct from the experience of everyday life. The findings of my study indicate that embroidering is not considered as safe, and that failure may occur, however liberty is encapsulated within a battle that can be won outside of the rules and regulations of reality where non-conformity might have serious consequences. The possible agency of tools and materials involved in the embroidering relations means that one is not completely in control, however embroidery can provide possibility of an achievable struggle, and as such can become a self-realising experience. Enjoyment comes from exercising relative power in creating something aesthetically appealing in a demanding situation. Such activities can offer a personal sanctuary in which to build residual energy that can help to deal with the complexities of everyday life. The feeling of personal growth associated with embroidering is considered as liberating and could transfer into other aspects of life.

Previous studies have indicated that crafting can provoke a sense of choice and autonomy, through feelings of escape from duties, external stresses, constraints and worries (Pöllänen 2015, Pöllänen and Voutilainen 2018, Clarke 2019). Art-making was found to generate personal development through ownership of a particular skill (Stickley et al. 2007, Kelly et al. 2012) which affirmed feelings of confidence, and mastery that steered projects to completion (Reynolds 2009, Pöllänen 2015). Like other art based activities, engagement in embroidering can challenge thinking and test skills which can enrich inner worlds and provided motivation to push self and enter new and more complex challenges (Reynolds 2009, Riley et al. 2013).

My findings indicate that embroidering allowed a sense of liberation from the body, from worrying thoughts, and external pressures when the embroiderer became absorbed and sufficiently entangled within the stitching process and were not interrupted by other people, time pressures, directives, or glitches with materials or tools. The participants in my study also experienced problems in engaging with their embroidery if their mood was low or their body was incapacitated. The knitting survey also observed that knitting did not help those with very low mood (Riley et al. 2013); there it was thought that the contemplative space offered through lone participating in knitting allows time for introspection which some people might find challenging. In order to feel liberated, I found that associated thoughts needed to be affiliated with the creative process which stimulated affable rather than destructive or worrying thoughts. I also discovered that one prevailing issue that could affect engagement and enjoyment was guilt. This appeared to be an unintended and unwelcome experience which I felt was associated with wider cultural narratives. Clarke (2019) found that women felt guilty or selfish when they participated in sewing, despite them knowing that this activity had a significant effect on their well-being. Sewing was considered an indulgent luxury. Her participants described the need to 'fit in' sewing around their obligations to feel guilt free (Clarke 2019). Guilt and liberty appear contradictory and perhaps at opposite ends of a continuum. I found that that both can be activated in embroidering.

Stitching for excitement, adventure and to break the rules

The need to embroider for excitement, adventure and to break the rules was surprising and one of the unique contributions of my research. The techniques involved in stitching for adventure differ slightly in that it appears to involve selection of a variety of stitches, materials and methods in order to satiate the need for challenge and experimentation. This is a more creative process where the

embroidery is individually designed and executed. Configuration of a unique and appealing visual image requires ultimate attention and effort. This process appears to implicate more cognitive and creative inspiration and thus looks to be more engaging necessitating even less outside interference, and indeed requires social withdrawal. I have understood this type of stitching to be developmental and daring, pushing personal boundaries and conventions. This is described as demanding and totally absorbing which resonates with ideas of an optimal kind of experience (Csikszentmihalyi 2002). This occupation is unpredictable and risky which can increase possibility of experiencing frustration and introduce the prospect of failure. However, this tension appears important.

Flow theory appears to offer further explanation for this adventurous stitching especially in relation to embodiment, attention and desire. Optimal experience is based on the concept that an ideal state of inner experience is possible when a person can focus their psychic energy or attention towards a realistic goal where skills match the opportunities for action (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). Order in consciousness becomes possible in the pursuit of goals because a person must concentrate attention on the activity and in so doing forget everything else. This was described in a seminal text (Csikszentmihalyi 1998), where his team of researchers described their finding that people were at their happiest when faced with a challenge. In addition, his research suggested that a person who achieved control over their attention, by reaching for higher challenges and goals, grew into a more complex and thus content human being. This resonates with my understanding that embroiderers develop within the embroidery companionship. Beginning with situated understanding of the state of consciousness, Csikszentmihalyi (1998) developed the notion that particular conditions are necessary for the flow experience, and suggests activities that consistently produce flow include sports, games, arts

and hobbies. The limitations of the original flow theory reside in their focus on extreme activities, rather than mundane.

The conditions of a flow experience are dependent on the challenge offered by the activity which should comprise direct control of experience just beyond the skills of the person. This potentially means that involvement needs to provide a sense of discovery, encouraging a person to achieve higher levels of performance into states of consciousness or happiness not previously experienced, due to increased complexity of the activity. Embroidery materials used are self-selected and diverse in form, colour, texture and substance. My findings add that agency in materiality adds to the excitement. The potential offered in more adventurous stitching indicates that challenge in skill and partnership with materials might prevent both anxiety and boredom and stimulate desire and excitement. This can help to explain how embroidering aroused a sense of discovery, excitement and liberation in the participants of my research. This response seemed to relate to the aspiration to push oneself, to stretch skills and realise new opportunities for using them. The materials and tools available to the embroiderer offered characteristics that the participants found very appealing, meaning that they wanted to engage with them. In addition, the inherent features of fabrics and threads offered immensely diverse ways of working with them. The opportunities for optimal experience in adventurous embroidering might be boundless, but one must not forget that the participants also experience enjoyment from repetition, especially when their body or mind was in a low state. In short, stitching appears to offer the potential for self-growth that possibly also incorporates the conditions of flow to be experienced and perhaps surpassed in the notion of entanglement (Barad 2007).

Stitching to break the rules

This form of stitching is very much related to stitching for adventure but was sufficiently different because it appeared rather more extreme. The purpose of embroidering to break the rules resides in the creative arrangement of stitches which comprises use of a combination of different stitches or even making them up, daring usage of colours and techniques and extremely personal design that goes against personal norms or social narratives. Embroidering of this type seems to be employed when life gets monotonous and excitement is required. This relates to the need to embroider for self-affirmation but appears to be a little more extreme, daring and non-conformist. The idea of 'extreme' embroidering is presented which can be done by hand, machine or both and can also incorporate materials other than threads. In this way, the embroidery can become more of a multi-media textile art. The audacious and experimental nature of extreme stitching appears not to be present in some of the stitching techniques previously discussed or in previous research. Here, there is the necessity to be more creative and to make up and break personal rules. This is indicative in the finding that embroidering generally offers an alternative to conformity. There is a need for thrill, boldness, newness and innovation that can feel unsafe and open to the likelihood of failure. This contrasts with the affable kind of crafting activity described in preceding research that allowed participants to achieve a sense of control (Pöllänen 2013). Related to the findings of various studies, clear goals were not present on the outset of a project and the sense of discovery experienced in designing encouraged continued engagement to completion (Pöllänen 2013, Clarke 2019). Perceived lack of control or predictability has been suggested to encapsulate a source of constant stimulation that can enhance a sense of joy (Gauntlett 2013, Stickley et al. 2007, Timmons and MacDonnald 2008). Pöllänen (2015) described a sense of play, testing and experimentation which was expressed as inherent within craft-making. Unexpectedness in

making was also associated with joy, pleasure and deep satisfaction (Reynolds 2009, la Cour et al. 2005). Embroidering to break the rules may also promote a feeling of freedom and release from the conformity of everyday life (Horghagen et al. 2014, la Cour et al. 2005, Symons 2011, Riley 2011). In some respect, this proposed extreme type of embroidering might provide a similar experience to other types of behaviour associated with danger or thrill-seeking. It is interesting and unexpected to consider embroidering in this way.

Stitching to connect to other people

If making is connecting (Gauntlett 2013), my finding supports the plethora of research that has indicated this phenomenon. For this reason, I will limit my discussion of this finding. As I have previously indicated though the process of embroidering is typically undertaken in private, this does not mean that practice is lonely, retiring or unsociable. This seems to be because making involves connection to others (Gauntlett 2013) though gifting (Riley et al. 2013, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018, Brooks et al 2019, Clarke 2019) symbolism (Dickie 2011, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018), socialising in groups and Guilds (Dickie 2011, Riley 2011, Riley et al, 2013, Pöllänen 2015, Brooks 2019, Clarke), tradition (Riley 2013, Riley et al. 2013), online communities (Jefferies 2016) and passing on skills (Riley 2013, Gregory and von Kurthy 2018). I have found that embroidery appears to offer additional clandestine ways to connect to others. Embroidery might be exclusive in the possibility to stitch personal and meaningful textual messages into the fabric of an embroidery. The importance of making and giving gifts reflects past research, and this relates to the sense of self that can be contained within an object. An embroidery can do this too, but it can also communicate a message verbatim. This might also be possible in quilting (Dickie 2011), but perhaps not quite so definitely. Historically, embroidery has been used to deliver secret messages, with those produced by Mary Queen of Scots as a brilliant exemplar (Hunter 2019).

Belonging is evident in crafts including textiles and embroidery and this is considered as a necessary component of health (Wilcock 2007). My research adds that although embroidering can offer full on social commitment or connection to others at a distance, the level of social engagement is influenced by embroidering 'grand' narratives.

Embroidering 'grand' narratives

Through the lengthy process of narrative analysis, it became more obvious how particular wider narratives might affect embroidering practice. Throughout the study, it became clearer as to how these are integral or part of the conditions of practice rather than outside or peripheral and thus delineate why, where, when and how embroidering occurs. Social relations, historic and cultural narratives can either support or hinder embroidering practice and need to be understood in order to consider the potential impact on therapeutic potential of occupations such as embroidering.

Considered as an embodied act (Fox 2012) the findings support the idea that embroidering is carried by people (Shove et al. 2012), entangled within their personal historical and cultural context but also within the setting of a wider narrative perspective. Although embroidering as a practice utilises the same stitches, culture defines technique, materials, patterns and procedures within the practise. My investigation has revealed a number of influential narratives which seemed particularly significant for the participants in this study.

Most occupational therapy models focus on the relationship between a person, the occupation and the wider context of the environment. This thesis somewhat challenges this tripartite conception, especially in relation to the notion of 'between' which suggests division rather than inseparability. The concept of the environment is also quite rudimentary as it is under defined or studied. Whilst I have presented the private and associated life as

mutually transactional, the practice of embroidering arguably exists as a practice with an associated physical, historical and cultural context. These contexts are, of course, integrated and reciprocally influential. In this case embroidering can become 'guilty' as a result of the influences of the historical and cultural setting. The field of embroidering practice also offers narrative that provide opportunities but also constraints.

The Field: being part of a field of practice

Crafts such as embroidering have a field of practice (Csikszentmihaly 2002). My study has revealed that embroidering can involve different types of stitching; different stitches, styles and techniques which are based on practical know-how. These are considered as distinct practices which link to specific tools and materials essential to practice. The embroidery 'field' potentially offers access to a 'world' to be discovered and explored. There appears to be no end to the potential for new learning. This world can offer purpose (exhibitions), link to the wider world (seeing the world differently), provide a sense of belonging, connection to past and future generations, and inspiration for membership of organisations such as the Embroiderers Guild. This field of practice has been shown to be influential with regard to prospective therapeutic potential.

The concepts associated with practice theory offer the potential of understanding practices such as embroidering through systematic exploration of processes of transformation and stability within and between social practices (Shove et al. 2012) The dynamics of social practice describes practices such as embroidering as complex systems and contemplates the interactions of materials, competences and meanings in practices. Practice theory covers the elements that occupational therapists think are important including bodily activities, mental activities, things, knowledge, know-how, emotions, motivation, objects, infrastructures, tools, understanding, skills,

consciousness, standards, purposes, beliefs and rules. Consideration of occupation under a practice theory lens may be extremely insightful.

Practice theory might begin to allow more detailed exploration of the elements of embroidering and show how these change over time. This would illuminate the influence of wider narratives within the economy, media, popular culture on levels of competence, skill progression, agency of materials and tools, and the close coupling between elements of a practice and how change in one element inevitably affects others. It is evident that the meaning of a practice is partly determined by its juxtaposition with other related practices. For example, the meaning of embroidery is partly shaped by the evolution of other textiles. Practice is held and carried by people. In this way a therapist would be the person that initiates engagement and needs to be aware of the field in order to grade and adapt this appropriately. In the future, it would be interesting to re-analyse the data in the current study through a practice theory lens in order to identify the interactions of materials, competences and meaning in embroidering (Shove et al. 2012).

Embroidering as a feminine construct

This narrative was evident within my participants personal stories and suggest that embroidering was encouraged and supported as an acceptable 'female' occupation and as such caused some internal conflict. All participants appeared to be influenced either by their family situation or general socialisation through school that girls and women engaged in textiles related to homemaking. For example, to make something practical like a tablecloth and then embellish it. This norm was experienced by all five participants whose ages spanned a time period of at least three if not four generations. This is partly supported by research into the role of sewing as a leisure activity for those aged under 40 years (Clarke 2019). Clarke (2019) found that the benefits of sewing were not

dependent on age as the experiences were similar to those that involved older participants. The encounter with, but difficulty in, recruiting men who embroidered for my study, is seen as further indication that male embroiderers might be far more taciturn than females, unless their practice is undertaken professionally. This is possibly framed within espoused belief that occupations have a biological core and that embroidery is 'naturally' feminine. Defined as such, embroidering can become subsidiary to occupations considered as more 'obviously' masculine. The idea that embroidering tends to be seen as a feminine pastime in our society posits the further notion that, as a practice, it is lacking importance and kudos in a western culture. This idea is supported by Parker (2010) and Jefferies (2016) who suggest that decorative tasks undertaken in the domestic setting are considered the work of women and as such amateurish. This is reinforced by hierarchical binary narratives that oppose art over craft and professional over amateur (Jefferies 2016).

The older participants in my study seemed to be introduced to needlework at school as a possible method of control. This required them, along with the other girls, to follow patterns and neat stitching which was rewarded by maternal relations and teachers. Such a practice affirms the notion of the feminine as epitome of patience and persistence (Parker 2010). This experience might have initiated association with the act of stitching, but all of my participants adopted embroidery as a way to, all be it quietly, shun convention. It is interesting that this was supported by elders with clear indication that embroidering was acceptable as long as it was done on functional items. The result of this stereotype is that it ultimately prevents engagement in a health promoting occupation for a large proportion of the population. For women and possibly men who embroider, it appears to be viewed as a "guilty secret". In this respect, guilt is not considered a response to the embroidering process, but an external narrative that can influence engagement.

The meaning of the experience of embroidering appears to be contrary to its imposed narrative.

Ambiguity in an embroidery as a product

Embroidering is considered to differ from textiles that produce a functional item such as a jumper or quilt. This means that embroideries as products seem to be ambiguous. This notion obviously effects the meaning of embroidering and how the products are considered to be perceived by other people. In my research, the embroideries that were produced for exhibitions held purpose for the length of the display. After this time had passed, they became part of the hoard. Interestingly, these items were less personal than embroideries that were done to meet individual needs. The participants in my study tended to store or 'hoard' their embroideries away from view; in boxes, cupboards and carrier bags. These were seen to be destined for the rubbish bin because they were considered to have no purpose beyond the maker, unless they were given as gifts or made into a practical item. This might also relate to the feminine and amateur narrative associated with embroidering. This suggests that their purpose resides in their production which supports the importance of the embroidering companionship. Clearly, however, my findings indicate that the embroideries that are produced become valuable personal items that are coveted over time. The meaning of an embroidery is therefore hidden within the condition of the making companionship.

The idea that embroidering was a purposeless activity was historically expended as a way to show that men were able to provide for their wives as members of the leisure class (Parker 2010). This might be the basis of the notion that engaging in embroidering is selfish, self-indulgent, guilty and shameful. Living room crafts and the hobbyist are considered surplus to economy and reflection of a culture of prosperous excess (Adamson 2010). Embroidery is proposed to have been used as way to control women, but it actually

gave women quite a lot of power because it was disregarded as meaningless by those who did not do it (Parker 2010). Parker (2010) states that embroidering has been a marker of femininity and weapon of resistance enabling women to express their thoughts and emotions through transforming materials into meaningful objects. I am not sure that this is fully reflected in the findings or my research, however embroidering has been shown to be liberating. This may not be the case in other cultures. Minahan and Wolf-Cox (2007) highlight a cultural divide where in some communities women are required to knit and sew for very poor rates of pay and in difficult conditions. Textile craft is presented as a lowly activity with minimal contribution to cultural development. The handmade nature of craft and the combination of utilitarian function and traditional practices reflect the devaluing of physical labour. Craft is said to be a negatively gendered activity defined by its past and consequently the normative dualism which privileges the mental over the physical; valuing paintings over pots (Minahan and Wolf-Cox 2007).

Just as the art and craft movement and craft activism challenged this view; stitch and bitch is considered a modern social action where remedial, progressive, resistance, nostalgia and irony are potential research themes expressed in knitted objects (Minahan and Wolf-Cox 2007). Social media appears to be a platform where embroidered messages are displayed and shared. Embroideries have been shown to be relatively unique in the potential to contain verbatim messages. Embroideries are personal items that can be used to transmit emotive messages that are difficult to say (Gregory and von Kurthy 2018). Their meaning can thus be symbolic rather than functional. This offers a potential resource for therapeutic purpose.

The findings suggest that although embroidering requires absolute dedication to accomplish, the intimate relationship that evolves offers emancipation from mechanisms that are designed to control. The purpose of embroidering has been suggested to be far more important than the production of a practical product. The

proposal is that it is time to challenge the view that stitching is a purposeless and lowly feminine pastime (Myzelev 2009).

Embroidering as amateur

The word amateur means 'lover' from Latin 'amare' (to love) and one of the criticisms of amateur crafts is the lack of critical distance from the object of desire which in this case is the embroidery (Adamson 2010). From this perspective activities of self-awareness and self-gratification are by definition amateur. Adamson (2010) continues in his suggestion that hobbyists are detested by the art novae, but that one exists because of the other. For example Tracy Emet as an artist has embraced and exploited amateur craft in the form of stitching in her identity as an artist (Adamson 2010). The participants in my study were emphatically affected by the notion of amateurism. They were extremely critical of their work and would regularly view their evolving embroidery and look for faults which they would often unpick and re-stitch, sometimes several times and perhaps still not be entirely happy with the result. This analytical element to embroidering practice could be considered as unhelpful for someone who had very low self-esteem or identity issues fuelled by self-criticism. Kenning (2015) advocated that domestic crafts have been less socially valued due partly to the gendered nature of such activities but also due to the extent to which they were associated with the practices of copying and reproducing. Embroidering, can encompass innovation and design, however it is nevertheless appears to be socially undervalued.

In conflict with this outlook, combined with previous research my study promotes the idea that embroidering is transformative and can and does lift mood, stop negative thoughts and enable people to cope with life's mundanity and challenges. Embroidering can offer hope and projection into the future. This understanding combined with a historical perspective of how and why embroidering has such a gendered image can be used to challenge the dominant narrative.

This would enable more people to benefit from the therapeutic potential that embroidering has to offer. If doing something is good for you, why should its historic status be a barrier to its use.

Relevance to occupational therapy and wider health promotion

Occupational therapy places occupation at the core of the profession with recognition that people are fundamentally occupational beings (Pentland et al. 2018). Occupation is more than an observable doing, it involves being, becoming and belonging which is considered to directly influence health (Wilcock 2006). The aim of occupational therapy intervention is the construction of a healthy occupational life through engagement in meaningful and purposeful occupation. Occupation is used as the means to promote health and wellbeing. In order to promote health through occupation the therapist will identify the needs of a person in their context and select specific occupations presumed to lead to positive changes. In this case embroidering was selected as an occupation which potentially caused change to occur in and between different components of a person in context. This section provides a personal reflection regarding how embroidering could potentially be utilised in occupational therapy practice as a means to recovery and health.

Embroidering seems to offer satisfaction, pleasure and meaning that can transcend imposed challenges and restrictions related to the body or environment (Yerxa 2009). The embroiderers in my study used their embroidering as part of their everyday life in order to influence and maintain their health and well-being. Embroidering was found to potentially meet various personal needs based on life circumstance. These included rest, escape, self-affirmation, connection and more extreme desires such as adventure and to break the rules. Rather than mirror or reflect the contests of daily life (Tubbs and Drake 2007), the components of embroidering offered the potential to directly meet needs associated with life events so that

engagement became integral to self-maintenance. These findings challenge current understanding of crafts as diversional towards crafts as transformative occupations. Therapists are encouraged to reconsider the concept of crafts as distraction towards the value of absorption through occupational engagement (Morris and Cox 2017). Committed engagement might exceed absorption and involve entanglement where embroiderer and embroidery become inseparable. This complex understanding of occupation enables attention towards the person who is becoming and belonging through being in and with an occupation in their context (Pentland et al. 2018).

The influence of occupational engagement in relation to life satisfaction, happiness, health and well-being is often overlooked in current practice (Yerxa 2009). Occupational engagement can counteract stress inducing risk-factors including those associated with occupational deprivation and alienation (Wilcock 2006). These concepts from occupational science relate to common situations where broader contextual factors outside of the individuals control create barriers to engagement in meaningful occupation (Hitch et al. 2014). Occupational therapists regularly work with clients in settings or in situations where people's normal occupations are restricted or even prevented. Embroidering might be particularly suitable for promoting health and recovery in such situations. A key point is that different forms of embroidering meet specific needs and promote distinctive physical and emotional reactions found to include calm, absorption, liberation, addiction, passion, aesthetic stimulation and frustration. The therapist must select appropriately and failure to do so could promote negative response to the intervention.

Occupation has traditionally been considered in terms of the individual supported by discourse that values individual agency (Pentland et al. 2018). Whilst more recent emphasis has concentrated on group participation (Pentland et al. 2018), and co-occupation (Pierce 2003) this may have disregarded the role that

materials play in the transitional potential of occupation. My research has recognised that occupation also happens in and is framed by an intimate relationship with body, mind, tools and materials. This emphasises the relevance of understanding how interactions between humans and materials can become essential elements of health. Embroidering can be considered a co-occupation without the presence of another person. Consideration of the influence of body, mind and materials is central in order to promotion of optimal occupational engagement. A feeling of connection to the world was found to be a contributing factor of the experience of transcendence in embrodering. If we are part of the universal flow of the universe, embroidering can offer a way to feel part of the world, evolving with it and because of it. This perception includes reflection about the value of solitary occupation. Solitary stitching is necessary for increased levels of engagement. This is important and needs attention in a therapeutic setting.

Through the power of the intimacy offered in the aforementioned companionship, embroidering was found to promote change at a number of levels which I have associated with occupational engagement (Morris and Cox 2017). Engagement was found to range from repulsion to absorption which related directly to the mind, body and material relations as experienced in the embroidering companionship. In order to harness therapeutic potential, a therapist will be required to effectively grade and adapt tools and materials in relation to a person in context. The accuracy of this is based on the therapist's design skill, collaborative goal generation and precision fit of intervention to goal (Pierce 2003). Occupational therapists are experts in grading a client's skill with challenge and potential in order to facilitate optimal experience (Pierce 2003). Understanding of the agential properties of materials is important and the therapist should be mindful of their influence on engagement. I suggest that plastic needles are suitably discarded, and attention given towards a visual and tactile 'feast' that can stimulate a receptive rather than revolted

physical and emotional response. Natural fabrics and cotton or silk threads seem to be more sensorially engaging and cordial to work with. Use of metallic threads and wool should be discouraged by those less experienced as these can be more challenging. The potential to become frustrated is a constant issue that will need attention. Feelings associated with guilt, incompetence and gender stereotypes will also hinder engagement and should be considered.

Motivation is an essential component to engagement and any client will need to commit towards taking action based on their perceived need or interest in the occupation (Pierce 2003). Meaning relates to satisfaction in action rather than previous experience in an occupation (Yerxa 2009). Introduction of embroidering as a new occupation can be meaningful as long as it is effectively introduced. In this case the therapist is required to create a suitable situation in order to initiate a 'spark' that instigates action. Due to the private narrative of embroidering it is suggested that this might be within an intimate client/therapist relationship rather than in a group. In addition, it would be important to understand the potential effect that each stitching technique might provoke from relaxation to high stimulation. Selection of occupations that are motivating and engaging are essential for recovery (Pierce 2003) and appeal of tools and materials is paramount.

Further consideration of the appeal of embroidering is suggested with assessment of the client's orientation towards pleasure, productivity and restoration (Pierce 2003). The findings of my research support theory that implies that people engage in occupations based on their personal and situated needs. Embroidering has been found to meet various and diverse needs that combine pleasure, productivity and restoration through different stitching techniques which can promote altered states of being.

Productivity is seen as a goal orientated pursuit in which crafts are understood to provide dignity and meaning through aesthetic production of an object (Kielhofner 2008). Value is perceived in

industrious action towards an end result that goes beyond prescribed requirements and thus establishes personal satisfaction, pride in craftsmanship and helps to create a unique identity (Pierce 2003). Accolade from others is seen as vital and encouraged in the therapeutic relationship (Tubbs and Drake 2007). In the case of embroidering, although all women described their occupation as 'work', the meaning of participation was not always goal orientated. Creating an embroidery seemed to be experienced as productive when undertaken as a gift or for display in an exhibition. For some this gave the product meaning which was important to them. In the case that a client is motivated towards productive tasks, it is suggested that the end point is made distinct and for a particular purpose. Cross-stitch, and tapestry are particularly suitable, with gifting and exhibiting as an end-point.

The appeal and challenge in embroidering for some was partly found to relate to the lack of a defined goal and excitement in creativity and innovation. Embroidery of this type was more personal and found to hold limited meaning outside of the embroiderer. Embroidering allowed participants to be liberated and become themselves against socially imposed mundane narratives. Practice purposely aimed to push boundaries, break rules and push convention to the extreme. The evolving embroidery could not be estranged from its production because of the intense nature of the embroidering companionship. In this respect the productive element of embroidering appeared to be superseded by pleasure. Pleasurable activity is said to be process-focused, more engaging and arousing and therefore more therapeutic (Tubbs and Drake 2007). Embroidering seems to involve moment to moment experience which is considered extremely enjoyable (Pierce 2003). When pleasure is stimulated one is said to be completely absorbed which is measured by the degree to which an activity is motivating, allows disengagement and increases the persons sense of increased control (Tubbs and Drake 2007). This understanding of absorption was not

quite so evident in embroidering. All types of stitching were experienced as deeply pleasurable within a passionate affair of embroiderer, materials and an embroidery. The degree of absorption, however, depended on the type of stitching employed. Increased control was related to predictable stitching tasks which were found to be less absorbing than those with perceived limited control. In the case that the level of absorption defined therapeutic value, then non-repetitive embroidering with unfixed boundaries and undefined goals will be of greater significance. This, however, depends on the aim of intervention and should not be considered as predetermined. Repetitive stitching is of equal therapeutic value if it is chosen to stimulate enjoyment through a pleasurable cyclic action. When the body needs to rest, then the recurring action of stitching is of therapeutic value. Disengagement seems to infer a situation where the body is occupied and the mind attends to other occupations such as thinking, or watching TV. Absorption is related to an alternate occupation. Associated thoughts are pleasant rather than worrying or distressing.

Restorative activities are opposed to productive and are said to include quite crafts such as needlework and ceramics (Tubbs and Drake 2007). From this perspective restorative appears to mean 'rest' rather than healing or curative. My findings show that embroidering can be restorative and allow the body and mind to rest, take time out and recuperate. In the case that relaxation is required then the stitching task should be non-challenging, structured, repetitive and require limited mental commitment. In keeping her hands busy, this form of stitching seemed to allow the most hyperactive of my participants to sit down. This made the act of sitting purposeful, whilst embroidering became both restorative and pleasurable. Embroidering seems to provide the enjoyment we desire and also take care of differing physical and emotional needs. This might be quite rare in an activity or perhaps simply under researched. Although pleasure, productivity and restoration, are

seen to be present in all occupations, they are rarely considered to co-exist in one (Pierce 2003).

The notion that embroidering is a quiet occupation can and should be challenged. It can certainly be discrete, but these ideas appear to be based on cultural and social narratives that influence participation. The findings of my study highlighted how the context and wider narratives strongly influenced embroidering practice. Evidence of the value of crafts such as embroidering and knitting in relation to improved health and well-being is particularly undermined by gendered narratives. Embroidering is perceived as a 'female' occupation in Western society whilst in Eastern countries such as India and Pakistan, men are skilled embroiderers (McBrinn 2017). In order to value crafts as legitimate interventions, occupational therapists need to challenge these outdated social stereotypes. The field of practice and specifically resources on YouTube, Etsy, Pinterest and Google offers access to the many opportunities offered in embroidering.

Finally, in recognition of the scope of the potential that embroidering offers to promote recovery and health, occupational therapists need to recognise and value their professional skill. We are experts in grading and adapting occupations as therapeutic means to transform health and well-being. We need to assert our experience in the current world debate and advocate that crafts can offer unique potential to influence and maintain health.

Summary: Discussion

Embroidering can be considered as an important and unrealised resource for health promotion. The health priorities of the NHS and WHO emphasise prevention rather than treatment. Occupational therapists need to reconsider their role and embrace the potential of crafts for health promotion so that people are encouraged to manage their own health through occupations such as embroidering. Arts will become a major contributor to meeting the NHS long term priorities.

This is an occupational issue and occupational therapist's need to re-enter the debate regarding the connection between crafts and health. My research supports the call for understanding the feasibility, acceptability, and sustainability of arts and crafts as interventions and the potential impact on mental and physical health. In order to be feasible and sustainable, domestic crafts need to be re-considered as acceptable occupations for all people. Arts, considered as complex, combine manifold components that are known to be health promoting. By focusing in on embroidering my research has emphasised the possibility in unpacking these mechanisms in order to understand how change occurs as a result of engagement. Arts activities are seen as ideal to address the complexity of the challenges of being healthy because they can operate simultaneously on an individual's physical and mental health needs as well as impact on broader health issues. Embroidering has been found to offer a variety of distinct stitching techniques that can meet a range of mainly emotional needs through physical relaxation of the body in an active form of sitting. The needs range from requiring a sedative state to one that is stimulated and deeply absorbed. This is supported and responsive through mind, body and material relations in the form of an intimate companionship that offers therapeutic potential in social solace. Social disengagement when embroidering can thus promote resilience. The non-conformist possibilities offered in embroidering can enhance self-actualisation where a person is able to enhance their well-being by being and becoming themselves.

Critical reflection: Research methodology

The starting point for a researcher embarking on a study is consideration of the epistemological position as this will directly influence the methods and methodology (Carter and Little 2007). Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical foundation and relates to and connects with the theoretical perspective, methodology and methods (Crotty 2012). Method, methodology and

epistemology are intimately and intricately connected, and each will act on the other in research planning and implementation (Carter and Little 2007). Each element of a research design combines to produce a variety of potential and alternate approaches. Crotty (2012; p12) suggests that 'the sky is the limit' and that any theoretical perspectives can make use of any methodologies and any methodologies can make use of any method. In this case I selected those that I considered appropriate to study the meaningful changes that occurred when a person embroidered as part of everyday life.

In selecting constructionism and specifically social constructionism as my epistemological base I rejected objectivism and subjectivism (Crotty 2012). Selection of either of the alternates would have significantly altered the research process and findings. In this case I feel confident that social constructionism was a suitable choice which allowed me to explore embroidering as a culturally and socially situated practice. It enabled me to acknowledge the world and objects in it as important partners in the generation of meaning (Silverman 2015). The theoretical perspectives that I adopted were interpretivism combined with a narrative understanding of experience. Occupational therapy is interested in a person-in-context (Pentland et al. 2018) within a larger social and cultural environment. Narrative understanding seems implicit in occupational therapy theory and this was the reason for my selection of this methodological approach to the research problem. One of the issues associated with interpretive theory and resultant research is that it can be uncritical (Crotty 2012). Whilst I feel that I did approach the task with critical intent, I could have enhanced my research through use of alternative theoretical lenses including feminism, phenomenology, pragmatism, critical inquiry, agential realism and practice theory. However I actively considered and purposely rejected each as they felt discordant with the purpose of narrative theory (Clandinin and Connelly 2000). My aim was to fully utilise the complexities of narrative as a methodology for inquiry. Despite my

single-mindedness, the findings do touch on each one of these alternative theories. I look forward to working with these philosophical perspectives in the future. I am particularly interested in new materialism as this permits a critical approach to humanism and encourages creative methodologies and methods.

With epistemology and theory in place, attention turns towards other methodologies. I could have understood the therapeutic potential of embroidering using one of several methodologies. Ethnography would have enabled attention towards the culture of embroidering. An ethnography focuses on a group (Creswell and Poth 2018) and would have further shifted my approach to embroidering within a culture. Riley's (2011) ethnographic study of textiles was designed to explore the occupational form of textiles. It would have been possible to have undertaken a similar study within The Embroiderers Guild. This would have provided details about social settings thus giving additional insight into how embroiderers perceive embroidering (Crotty 2012). This might have been taken from an interactionist perspective in order to gain the 'insiders' perspective' (Crotty 2012). On reflection, I feel that my rather delayed engagement with some important texts documenting narrative research, limited my data collection as it excluded consideration of a wider range of information, including my own experience. (Lindsay 2006, Clandinin and Connelly 2000). This would have enhanced my study and I regret that I did not realise this earlier.

During the initial stages of my research I did consider using a phenomenological approach. I excluded this, because at the time, I felt that embroidering was a social construction and could not be considered outside of culture. However I now appreciate, that a phenomenological approach may have enabled me to develop a more critical approach to embroidering. My findings suggest that, perhaps, my research did lean towards phenomenology in some respects since culture and society did appear to influence embroidering particularly

as my participants felt that their practice exceeded these imposed restrictions. The division between phenomenology and narrative is described as subtle, but distinct in the sense of temporality in subject matter, agency of the individual and the relevance of the cultural, social and physical context (Lindsay 2006). Of course, like any methodology, there are many different types of phenomenological research and each would have provided an equally informative picture of the experience of embroidering. Crotty (2012) suggests that phenomenology provides a valuable starting point for any qualitative research project and researchers who deviate from the philosophy inevitably return to it as a 'touch stone'. Perhaps this relates to phenomenology as ontology rather than methodology (Lindsay 2006, Crotty 2012) and many narrative inquirers position themselves within a phenomenological ontology (Kim 2015).

Like narrative theory, grounded theory incorporates an iterative process where the research question is undefined at the inception of the study (Willis 2007). Grounded theory deviates in its aim to develop theory or a unified theoretical explanation for a process or an action (Creswell and Poth 2018). Analysis involves researchers in developing inductive theoretical concepts and then collecting additional data in order to check the validity (Silverman 2015). From this perspective, I could have developed a substantive theory of how embroidering influences health. Although this approach would have been suitable, its structured method did not suit my initial aim of undertaking an in depth exploration of embroidering within everyday life. Grounded theory, undertaken within a constructionist mode, sounds more appealing, however published examples tend to focus on people's perceptions of reality (Silverman 2015).

New approaches are being developed and may offer future support in understanding how occupations such as crafts can promote therapeutic change. These methodologies provide ways of thinking that will strongly influence the possible objectives, questions and design of a study. In the case of my research, narrative theory

seemed to offer a suitable foundation on which to develop my inquiry. In retrospect, the ambiguity associated with narrative analysis could have created a barrier for the practical application of the methodology. Despite this, I believe that my findings offer helpful insight into the advancement of understanding in relation to how embroidering might influence and promote health and well-being.

In retrospect I feel that my use of a narrative approach prompted me to ask about the place of embroidering in the lives of my participants including the cultural, social, contextual and material influences, as they occurred over time. The epistemological interest was the practical nature of experience through storied life compositions in a personal and social context (Lindsay 2006). Experience is lived, told, reconstructed and re-lived through the phenomenon of a story (Frank 2010). The purpose of research is for the researcher and participants to jointly reconstruct experiences to learn about both personal and social meanings. The person in context is the prime interest as it offers a sense of how a phenomenon changes over time in the boundaries of the inquiry setting (Lindsay 2006). Researchers are complicit in the phenomenon of study and their manner and attitude will affect the quality of the research. Rather than being passive, the participants have agency in the research process and are co-creators of the study findings (Carter and Little 2007). As such my findings are presented as a possible interpretation of the changes that may occur as a result of embroidering. Stories are conveyed as creative interpretations of personal meaning in relation to life events and not factual evidence of occurrences (Polkinghorne 2007). In this respect, I cannot presume to have the power to represent the 'voices' of my participants (Holliday 2002), but I have attempted to document their stories, as I perceived them. This research documents my vision; I acknowledge a technical detachment rather than an emotional joining with my participants (Holliday 2002). Creating a 'textual room', in the act of writing, enabled me to become aware of and account for the

implications of my involvement in the research process (Holliday 2002; page 178). Using my positionality in the construct of a textual room, the latter part of this reflection will critically discuss the issues of validation and reliability in relation to my research methodology together with an analysis of its strengths and limitations.

From an interpretive perspective, validation of the usefulness of research is based on negotiation and dialogue with participants and the potential audience (Creswell and Poth 2018). Validation is not dependent on identifying the 'truth' and interpretations are considered as temporal, located and open to re-interpretation (Silverman 2015). The value of interpretive research rests on an ongoing and open dialogue on the topic (Creswell and Poth 2018). Narrative researchers, however, are still required to clarify the validity of a factual claim by demonstrating the force and soundness of a supporting argument (Polkinghorne 2007). Silverman (2015) suggests that interpretive claims should be plausible, reasonable and convincing. Mishler (1990) described the essential criterion for judgements of validation to be based on the degree to which a reader can rely on the concepts, methods and inferences of a study as the basis for future theorising and empirical research. In this case, I have followed Creswell and Poth (2018) who recommend several strategies that researchers can adopt within a study in order to establish integrity of findings.

In the first instance, for research to be 'valid', it should involve an agenda that is politically, ethically and morally motivated (Creswell and Poth 2018). Placed firmly in relation to current health agenda my research has provided new dialogue about how embroidering, as a contemporary craft, might enhance health and well-being. I have claimed that the stories presented in my findings show original insight into potential, meaningful changes that may occur as a result of embroidering. The understanding of the meaning of embroidering as situated, practiced and experienced may help to inform others regarding the possible therapeutic potential.

Because the stories are co-constructed they must be considered as imperfect, partial, subjective and fundamentally bound to social context and linguistic genre (Finlay 2002). The evidence is transferable rather than generalizable. Their value resides in the detail of the knowledge gained about embroidering as living experiences that would not be possible to achieve within the limitations of scientific research (Polkinghorne 2007).

Substantive validation was based on a detailed understanding of the topic area together with a critical application of literature and theory taken from the field (Creswell and Poth 2018). In this case, I built on the findings of previous qualitative research that listed numerous benefits of engaging in crafts and specifically textiles. Since the literature used was published in the English language it may have compromised cultural validity. It could also be argued that I could have widened my research findings by making better use of grey literature, such as newspaper articles, unpublished research and internet citations. In addition, my work may have benefited from greater use of literature outside of occupational science and occupational therapy.

I consider systematic documentation of an innovative and rigorous approach to analysis to be a strength of my research (Silverman 2015). I undertook a systematic approach to data analysis (Bonsall 2012) and created a comprehensive audit trail of my analytical work thus enabling an external audit (Creswell and Poth 2018). The presence of an audit trail, in order to follow the workings of the interpretive process, is considered as important standard practice in qualitative research (Willis 2007). This should be combined with an ongoing research log which documents small 'analytical leaps' that contribute to the process of analysis (Silverman 2015, Creswell and Poth 2018). My personal journal was essential and documents pitfalls, dead ends, perseveration and conceptual leaps. I used several other methods to support my learning. My approach tended to be chaotic rather than systematic and so I

developed techniques to capture my thoughts during everyday activities. Supervision notes offer the most consistent evidence of my theoretical reasoning. I also valued peer review where my supervisors and colleagues became 'critical friends' in order to keep my research honest and open to alternative meanings and interpretations (Creswell and Poth 2018). Member checking is a validation method taken from quantitative research that can be used to help develop credibility rather than accuracy or truth in analysis (Willis 2007). Silverman (2015) suggests that dialogue from member check strategies should be considered and analysed as additional data. This is supported by McLachlan and Garcia (2015) who adopted a social constructionist epistemology when they found that participants altered their perceptions of research phenomena between interviews. I did not use this form of validation; however I did return transcribed data to the participants to make sure that they were happy with the content. Use of participants as co-researchers is considered as the highest form of validation (Creswell and Poth 2018). In the case of my research, participants were interviewed numerous times over an extended period. This approach offers an equally robust validation method (Creswell and Poth 2018). On reflection I felt that I expected too much in terms of attempting to involve my participants in an analysis of their behaviour and experienced outcomes. The chosen research area was entirely dependent on my own initiatives, ideas and experience. An action research methodology would also have suited a shared research issue.

I consider the fact that I purposely selected a sample of experienced embroiderers, who typically embroidered every day, and focus on a detailed exploration of embroidering in ordinary life, adds strength to my research. However, because the study involved only five women, the findings cannot be generalized as being representative of other significant numbers of embroiderers. The chosen participants were self-selected and as a result were highly

interested in talking about their embroidering practice. The findings therefore need to be considered in the light of these particular embroiderers who were extremely experienced and passionate about their craft. However, although the results cannot be generalised, it is anticipated that the findings will resonate with other people who embroider in their everyday lives. I base this claim on the response I received when I presented my research to various Embroiderers' Guilds. For example, there were many positive reactions from members of the audience to the notions of secrecy and intimacy during engagement.

The participants were all Caucasian women who lived in the South East of England and were educated at least to degree level. One participant had a Doctorate. Due to the homogeneity of the sample, the data lacked cultural, gender and social diversity. Difficulty in recruiting men to this study has perhaps highlighted the fact that some people, who embroider in their everyday lives are marginalised (Wilcock 2006). Future research needs to consider methods of recruitment that facilitate inclusion of people who might be prevented from participation because of issues of occupational alienation and marginalisation.

The interviews were undertaken with one participant at a time over two-years. Each participant was interviewed between three and six times over a period of six months. Although transcription was undertaken as soon as possible after an interview the data for each person was not analysed until the end of the collection period. This meant that there was some considerable time delay between the interviews, and subsequent interpretation. Repeated listening of interview recordings, combined with the use of fieldwork notes helped to remind me about the circumstances of each meeting with the participants. However, it needs to be recognised that, the addition of other non-verbal communications such as body language, laughter and anger, would have added depth to my findings. As it stands, the

data and subsequent findings depend mainly on verbal data from informal interviews.

The age of three of the participants meant that they were recalling events from over 60 or 70 years ago. During interpretation of data, it was apparent that the telling of some of the reported stories did not match up with subsequent recollections. Selective memory might have altered a participant's recollection of an experience from the past. In order to help plot stories, audio transcripts were repeatedly played in order to try to be as authentic to the persons telling as possible. Even though the stories were not considered as being representational of facts, but in construction of meaning, interpretation involved some reading between the lines in relation to the timing of events. Where possible, however, data was returned to participants for clarification and elaboration.

Another significant problem with validity in narrative research can relate to how well the participants understand and express meaning as experienced during interviews (Polkinghorne 2007). For instance, they may leave out significant aspects because they do not see the relevance. Polkinghorne (2007) outlines four main interrelated validation issues that need to be considered in narrative research. Initially, language has limited capacity to capture the complexity and depth of meaning in experience. In order to alleviate this, I encouraged my participants to tell stories to help them explain difficult concepts. Olivia's 'plop up' story is an example of how the use of figurative rather than literal expression can provide clarification and deeper insight (Polkinghorne 2007). This leads on to the problem of the level of reflection needed to recognise the layers of meaning present that are outside of awareness. People rarely spend time deliberating on why they do something, and my participants were no exception. To compensate, I tried to ask reflective questions during the interviews and used the time between meetings to think about the conversation and develop new areas of questioning to help the participants explore experienced meaning in

more depth. The participants also reflected on our discussions and we often started our conversations with their agenda. For example, Millicent was extremely assertive in telling how embroidery 'saved her' when her daughter died and continuously reverted to this theme despite my various attempts to explore other areas of her practice. Millicent was the oldest participant and a vastly experienced embroiderer. I found her data the most difficult to analyse because of the amount of detail (over 8 hours) combined with the temporal discontinuity of her accounts.

The importance of building a rapport with my participants was critical in relation to the quality of the data obtained during our conversations. In my opinion I feel that I established a good relationship with my participants. This enabled me to learn more about the context of their embroidering practice (Creswell and Poth 2018). With trust, I was able to employ my natural human capacity to learn about culture, through a reflexive approach (Holliday 2002). The texts obtained during interviews were complex because they are co-constructions between me as a researcher and the participant (Polkinghorne 2007). Conversations in research settings involve internal dialogue and outward shared meanings (Finlay 2002). Reflexivity is key in exploring personal introspection and deliberation of inter-subjective influences (Finlay 2002). I am not an embroiderer and therefore I had no strong opinion about embroidering as a meaningful occupation. This meant that I could be open minded when listening to my participants' accounts of their work. Contrastingly, I may not have understood everything that I heard or visualised (Holliday 2002). This is acceptable in interpretive research as long as the researcher acknowledges this and uses strategic procedures in order that caution and restraint are considered in the interpretation. (Holliday 2002). I was a novice embroiderer in comparison to my participant experts and I tried to use this to my advantage. The participants laughed at my awkward attempts at cross-stitch and machine embroidering under their instruction.

Because interviews were usually undertaken in the participants' own homes we were able to sit and stitch together. In this situation the participants were empowered, as they were the host and I the visitor. As our relationship developed, I was able to ask more 'difficult' personal questions which my participants were willing to reveal about deeper complexities of the meaning of embroidering in their lives. In conclusion, I believe that the data that I collected and interpreted provided authentic, genuine, deep and detailed evidence about how embroidering was situated and experienced in the lives of my participants.

Validity was further strengthened because I transcribed the recordings myself and included non-verbal information such as pauses, gestures and laughter (Silverman 2015). I selected the collection of stories in my findings because I considered that they resonated with the claims that I was making in the findings. Divergent cases were not exemplified, which must be considered as a limitation. The individual embroidering stories in section one of the findings provide a commentary of the relevance of embroidering in each person's life. These are considered revealing in themselves as they offer insight into individual experiences among the participants. This is a strength of narrative research (Creswell and Poth 2018). Generation of rich and thick descriptions allows the reader to make decisions about the interpretation provided and other alternatives that may be transferable to other settings because of shared characteristics (Creswell and Poth 2018). The short stories in section two of the findings were developed from recorded conversations and written in the participants own words which also allows the possibility of alternative interpretation (Silverman 2015). Each story was carefully chosen and abridged because it offered sensitive insight into the special meaning that embroidering had in the lives of my participants. The stories, as I have interpreted them, are compelling, powerful and convincing and I hope 'resonate' as details of the

stories are considered appropriate evidence to authenticate the findings (Silverman 2015).

As I stated earlier, systematic and clear description of the process of narrative analysis is vague in social research literature. I experienced considerable difficulty in identifying a method of analysis that suited the purpose of my study. Although I could justify the value of using a narrative approach to analysis, no previous published examples suited my requirements. The method that I developed was based on a relatively new process of narrative analysis (Andrews et al. 2013). Use of a relatively untried method of analysis is a limitation of my research; however, I believe that I have designed an efficient method that others could use to study change in ordinary and situated occupation as it occurs over time. Despite this limitation, the analysis is considered rigorous enough to assert my claim that the findings of my research serve as a basis for understanding the possible changes that occur as the result of embroidering.

The final stage of analysis was difficult to describe in words because it relied on making conceptual links between what I experienced in the field and my emerging analysis. As my scrutiny deepened, I identified a variety of concepts. I understood that they were connected, but I could not grasp the narrative structure (Frank 2010). For me, this was the most challenging aspect of the research process. I found that I tended to 'think' my best thoughts when I was engaged in another activity such as running, swimming or driving. It seemed that when my body was 'occupied' in an activity which required little thought, my mind focused on my research conundrums. This was significant because my experience related to the data. This is an example of how the researcher is implicated in the interpretation of the findings. Through a diffractive process my involvement involved reading for patterns of differences that I believed made a difference. So, in this way I was able to factor myself within the data as Heidi the researcher, embroiderer, therapist

and academic developing insights through one another, and attentively and carefully reading for differences that mattered in the fine details of the data. The following excerpt from my diffractive diary shows how I began to understand that when the embroiderers were routinely stitching, they also engaged with their thoughts.

After a run

Diary entry: Wed 21st March 2018

Just reading xxxxxx's presentation for the Flow fringe and had some thoughts. Participants suggest that there are different states during activity. Routine engagement in a task such as stitching alters thought in some way – but there is some ambiguity. When I run or swim or drive – my body is engaged in an activity that is just right – I'm comfortable and my body is running on automatic – I can think – I mean really think about important stuff – I work things out – and often come up with my best ideas. I never think about worrying thoughts – just puzzles – I problem solve. Maybe during routine tasks embroiderers can think about their creative puzzles? So, this is multi-tasking – body engaged in one task and mind engaged in another. Some of my participants also multitask, doing routine tasks whilst watching TV or listening to music. Which then is the activity in which one is fully engaged?

The final narrative structure as written in the findings was a result of mind mapping, discussions with my supervisors and peers and constant diffractive practice. The narrative structure shows how embroidering can begin with the notion of a need, develop through an intimate companionship and results in an embroiderer experiencing an altered state or states. Life events and the social and cultural context could be both supportive and obstructive in a number of ways. This became my interpretation of the meaning in the storied texts that are presented. This is one possible interpretation; and another researcher would have identified similar but different relations in the findings. The interpretations that I have made and

presented are thus considered as plausible, credible and faithful to the experiences of my particular participants.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Overview of final chapter

This study evolved out of my professional practise in using crafts as a therapeutic intervention and the respective problem in effectively justifying doing so. Embroidering was selected as a suitable craft due to its resurgence in popular culture (Banks-Walker 2019), combined with the espoused belief that the activity is therapeutic. Embroidering was offered as an untapped resource for health promotion because of the limited research evidence related to its therapeutic potential.

Consideration of the health related potential of crafts was justified in relation to the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP) which aims to relieve pressure on health services and ensure sustainability for future years (NHS 2019). Under this plan, health is re-considered as a dynamic process based on a person's capacity to self-manage (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Recent evidence reports that engagement in art occupations can potentially impact both mental and physical health through prevention and promotion, management and treatment (Fancourt and Finn 2019). As an occupational therapist I could envisage the use of crafts to meet future health priorities and keep people healthy for longer. I considered occupational therapy as crucial in the development of new services based on professional knowledge of the connection between occupation and health because many of the current health problems appear to be to occupational issues.

Considered as complex and compound interventions, art activities combine multiple components that are known to be health promoting (Fancourt and Finn 2019). Despite the consideration of art activities in order to address the complexity of the challenges of

being mentally and physically healthy, understanding the mechanism or means of this potential has been hindered because of diversity in the definition of arts and the tendency to research various rather than specific activities within one study. For this reason, my research aimed to understand how embroidering as a particular craft could provoke meaningful change in the context of a person's everyday life and consider the possible impact on health and well-being.

I chose a narrative approach to my research because I felt that it endorsed the centrality of story as experience in human life.

Narrative inquiry captures the distinctiveness of human action and allows for a new and dynamic viewing of the situation (Polkinghorne 1995) in grasping the complex and unintended consequential results of human action of into a unified whole (Ricoeur 1984). Adoption of narrative within the methodology allowed detailed understanding of the complexity, meaning and value of embroidering in the context of a person's everyday life (Nyman et al. 2013). I also advocated that narrative methodology was congruent with occupational therapy theory which understood the unique person-in-context as being in a constant dynamic state throughout the temporality of life, informed by and expressed through the doing of occupations (Pentland et al. 2018). Appreciation of the storied nature of living offered the potential to collect and interpret embroidering stories from women who regularly embroidered. The methods of narrative research also set the margins of my study. I consequently chose to concentrate on five people over time which enabled a deeper level of enquiry. During fieldwork visits, I met men who embroidered but did not manage to recruit any to this study. I subsequently found that gender was a potential barrier for involvement in embroidering in my culture. Through narrative analysis I was able to establish the possible meaning of the consequences of routine embroidering for the women in my study. Findings developed in the framework of an inductive study cannot be generalised, however, the results are

considered as authentic to the experiences of the participants and thus of sufficient value in answer to the research question.

The significance of the findings to my personal professional knowledge is immeasurable. As a result of my doctoral journey, I can proficiently articulate how embroidery can promote transition towards enhanced health and well-being. I can also justify the use of embroidering in a clinical setting. This final chapter will present principal and conceptual conclusions with a statement and justification for the claim of contribution to knowledge. The chapter will conclude with the agenda for future research and a plan for dissemination of the findings.

Occupation as a mechanism for change in the occupational therapy process

My research has identified the ways in which embroidering can facilitate change in the context of a person's everyday life. The occupation of embroidering appears to be sufficiently varied in order to be used to meet different personal needs and embroiderers seem to purposely engage in embroidering to satisfy or change their emotional or physical state. This is a significant finding, which gives more detailed support to Wilcock's theory of an occupational perspective of health, where humans have an intuitive potential to perceive their needs and support their health through an occupation (Wilcock 2006). Therapeutic potential is suggested to reside in the process of embroidering which involves an intimate, personal and transformational mind, body and material relationship interpreted as a companionship which tends to exclude other people. A number of mainly psychological changes have been shown to occur through the embroidering process, most of which are pleasurable. The value of some types of embroidering can be seen to relate to high levels of occupational engagement (Morris and Cox 2017) and as such can be described as involving optimal types of experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1998). This reflects embroidering as more than observable doing, a past-time, but one that can promote a sense of being, becoming and

belonging that is seen as essential to health and well-being (Wilcock 2007, Pentland et al. 2018).

Despite the suggestion that occupation is essential to health and well-being and that occupation should be the means as well as the end of therapeutic intervention the RCOT definition of practice (Pentland et al. 2018) shows very little practical know how about occupation as a mechanism of impact. In this publication, although 'doing' is reported as transformational, reference to the therapeutic use of occupation is largely absent from the occupational therapy process. This suggests that the profession lacks comprehensive understanding of how occupations can be used to promote the optimal change essential to intervention.

During the process of my research I have established a methodology that can be practically applied to enable occupational therapists to research occupations as mechanisms of change through focusing attention on the complex processes involved in the doing of specific occupations. Through application of narrative research, I have illuminated the possible variability and adaptability of *one* occupation with the notion that *distinct* processes significantly influence both the intended need, and possible responses of engagement. This supports research that calls for occupations to be understood as complex interventions (Pentland et al. 2018, Fancourt and Finn 2019). Doing this has enabled me to show the ways in which embroidering can be used as a powerful agent of health rather than simply a diversional pastime. Embroidering has been shown to have the potential to promote the highest form of occupational engagement and thus can be considered as an intervention that occupational therapists could utilise to promote optimal health and well-being. The profession would benefit from this understanding in order to broaden the professional focus and embrace the potential in using crafts for health promotion in order to support the priorities of the NHS (2019) long term plan. In spite of the complexity crafts are considered as contemporary, adaptable, versatile, appealing,

resourceful and sustainable interventions for maintaining and improving physical, mental and emotional health. Offering crafts as an alternative to medical interventions is particularly recommended as well as the use of therapeutic use of crafts to engage the body and mind during times of monotony, trauma or isolation.

Reiteration of main contribution to knowledge

My original contribution to knowledge resides in the notion of the importance of an intimate and reciprocal mind/body/material companionship. In the development of such a close affiliation the person and product become inseparable. Entanglement occurs through deep and sustained engagement with tools and materials. I suggest that this entanglement is at the center of therapeutic potential.

Embroidering can promote meaningful and purposeful change in a person's everyday life through an agential companionship involving body, mind and materials. This solitary and reciprocal relationship is intimate, situated, and develops over time and this is proposed as the means for therapeutic potential. Once established this companionship can provide resources that can be used to cope with everyday life. Embroidering offers sufficient diversity in techniques in order to meet a variety of personal needs which seem to range from relaxation and escape to excitement and risk. Correlated responses range from sedative to stimulative. The combination of responses become meaningful experiences associated with embroidering. The power of the agential companionship may explain the recent enthusiasm for crafting in everyday society and supports research that shows that the arts are a crucial component of health and well-being.

Principal conclusions

Embroidering incorporates a variety of related stitching techniques which include free-style stitching, embroidery kits, machining, tapestry, cross-stitch and counted thread work. The findings propose that embroidering is an appealing craft that involves the creation of a 3-dimensional image or picture with needle, thread and fabric. Embroidering encompasses a slow, but animated progression of building up an image through deliberate, thoughtful and purposeful action with materials. Some types of embroidering seem to be relatively convention free and this differentiates it from other textiles which primarily involve learning a set procedure in the construction of a piece of fabric. This implicates that some forms of embroidering can promote a sense of transcendence with relatively low skill. Embroiderers seem to use distinctive methods of stitching to alter their physical and emotional state which include, stitching for rest, adventure, escape, sense of self, breaking the rules and connection. Embroidering has thus been found to be an intuitive form of therapy that can influence health through doing, being and becoming in an entangled body, mind and material companionship.

The solitary aspect of embroidering seems important and appears to be conditional on close relational affiliation or entanglement of body, mind and materials. The embroidering companionship can induce effects on the body and mind and promote physiological or emotional responses that include being absorbed, liberated, addicted, passionate aesthetically stimulated, calm and frustrated. Cultural 'grand' narratives have been found to either promote or inhibit purpose and practice and responses including the field or practice, embroidering as a feminine construct, amateurism and the ambiguity of an embroidery as a product.

Further conceptual conclusions

The research methodology and method selected has provided a forum to uncover informed detail of the narrative structure of embroidering and how grand narratives can influence and prevent occupational engagement. The therapeutic possibilities offered in embroidering appear to be supported and responsive towards relations in what I interpreted as an intimate companionship with the person (body and mind) and materials both of which appear essential and agential in practice. Importantly, the intimate relations between person and material seem to be reciprocal which has been overlooked in prior research. My findings question the dominant idea that social engagement is a major factor in the health potential of arts, crafts and textiles. Contra wise, I argue that although embroidering can meet the need to be connected to wider society, this is not through direct social engagement, but undertaken through an intimate, habitual and compelling craft-making companionship usually within the home. This suggests an unrealised value in home-based activity. Social detachment with exclusion of other people is presented as a necessary and important aspect of the therapeutic potential. The embroidering companionship is fundamental; an embroiderer is not alone but entangled with something that they love.

The conclusions of this thesis further suppose that therapeutic potentials in embroidering, can be subject to the level of occupational engagement. The more experimental and daring embroidery techniques seem to promote higher levels of engagement. The findings from my research allows the proposition that the feeling of being absorbed occurs because the embroiderer gives their complete attention to their embroidery so that they become 'united' or entangled. This adopts the full sense of the definition of absorption. This questions whether occupational absorption can occur during activities where a deep bond with the body (or other bodies), materials and tools has not occurred or where a person is participating in more than one activity. Embroidering is considered

as more than a possible distraction from a life situation; it can offer absorption and emancipation. In this way, engagement is more than a momentary sidestep into a safe place, but an opening of possibilities which departs from relations imposed by other bodies, things, ideas, or institutions (Fox 2012). Rather than providing simple distraction through transient entertainment, my findings indicate that embroidering is a form of doing that enables a person to find, be with and become themselves through an intimate and ongoing companionship. This might not be unique to embroidering and translate to the other crafts. Absorption is suggested as an alternative narrative to distraction or diversion. The concept of entanglement may be an additional aspect of total absorption where the embroiderer is so attached to their embroidering that they are connected; even at a distance (Barad 2007). This appears conditional on congenial relations of body, mind and materials. Each element in this relationship has the capacity to influence and be influenced which can either promote or inhibit engagement. My findings reveal that even within one craft, there are multiple therapeutic potentials. Ultimately, the therapist needs to know which form of stitching to prescribe in order to enable the intended level of engagement as this will influence the outcome of intervention. This means that occupational therapists need to effusively consider the complexity of engagement including the characteristics of specific tools and materials with people who have individual bodies, living in particular contexts with preferred ways of thinking. Acknowledging materials and tools as agents within the therapeutic process is considered as essential in order to enable occupational engagement and to date they seem to have been largely ignored in occupational therapy research, theory and practice.

Resilience, health and well-being can be enhanced through the process of embroidering which involves doing, being and becoming. Rather than purely being seen as a form of self-forgetting, this is realised as developmental way to achieve affirmation of self where

the embroiderer is enveloped within a sanctuary that provides respite from mundane or traumatic social responsibilities, restrictions or imposed narratives. Dampening of the default mode network is considered key in this experience.

Consideration of the context is also been shown as integral to any curative use of embroidering. The social and cultural environment is central to all occupational therapy theories, however the opportunities and constraints offered in particular occupations lacks theoretical understanding. This research has shown how certain social narratives can endorse or strain the need to embroider, the embroidering companionship and possible responses to embroidering. For example, access to the field of practice is based on social preconceptions such as perceived gendered nature of activities, notions of amateurism and value of functional over beautiful products of personal endeavor. Occupational therapists are called to professionally challenge the outdated gendered and amateur narratives associated with embroidering and other crafts in order to enable more people to benefit from the therapeutic potential.

In essence through devoted research into one occupation my study has revealed the manifold components that can be health promoting. I am now in the position where I can adequately and proficiently advocate how embroidering can be considered and used as a therapeutic intervention in occupational therapy. I can also articulate the value of embroidering in the wider health promotion arena with indication of the processes by which health and well-being can be achieved through participation. Study of other crafts in this way will allow therapists to harness the therapeutic potential.

The use of narrative inquiry has been essential in the development of my conceptual conclusions. Narrative theory has been shown to be extremely compatible with the occupational therapy process. This is because narrative inquiry recognises everyday life as transitional, emphasises how experience is storied and centers on a person-in-context which aligns with the occupational

therapy process (Pentland et al. 2018). Methodologies associated with phenomenology or grounded theory would perhaps have not allowed such detailed exploration of the occurrences in the 'doing' of embroidering and it is this that I perceive to be of most value in my research. Ethnography would have focused too heavily on the social rather than the individual experience. Narrative inquiry allowed me to investigate the individual combined with the social and cultural. From experience, I advocate that narrative inquiry is an appropriate and facilitative methodology to allow detailed exploration of participation in occupation; studying doing and being in context and over time. The process of analysis that I have developed may also be considered a practical tool in order to operationalise narrative inquiry, which otherwise can be a challenge. Overall, I believe that narrative inquiry combined with narrative analysis worked well to answer the research question.

Conclusion of implications for occupational therapy

There are several important implications for occupational therapists who use or are considering using embroidering and other crafts as therapeutic interventions. Initially, the findings have indicated that embroidering can be differentiated from other textiles and crafts. This is an important finding and this provides sufficient evidence to encourage therapists to be mindful of the complexity of crafts. Further, techniques in just one occupation have been shown to be diverse and offer alternative therapeutic responses. It seems that techniques that involve repetitive actions combined with reduced or limited decision making can be soothing and sedative, whilst those that implicate more adventurous and experimental approaches are more simulative and possibly absorbing. Clearly, occupational therapists need to understand the variability and complexity of crafts and other occupations in order to take advantage of the therapeutic potential.

The notion of occupational engagement has been shown to be related to therapeutic potential which places question on previous concepts of distraction and diversion as inferior therapy. Whilst I don't despise these terms, I do believe that they are misleading. I would like to emphasise that the use of 'absorbing' occupations and the possibilities of occupational entanglement offers the potential to meaningfully engage a person away from unwelcome diversions and distraction of everyday life. This encompasses self-affirmation as well as self-forgetting in an intimate and affectionate relationship with the tools and materials used in embroidering.

The concept of solitary occupations is presented as one that encourages the benefits of social withdrawal and attention towards the close, quiet and possibly exhilarating relations of body, mind and materials. Occupational therapists can also promote health and well-being through effective prescription of solitary occupations such as embroidering when a person is separated, detached or disconnected from their everyday life.

The effect of the interaction of the body and mind with tools and materials is another area that needs further consideration. The consequence of this affiliation seems to either entice or prevent engagement. Colour and texture have been shown to be effective in promoting a favorable bodily reaction that encourages desire and ultimately happy addiction. Materials considered as agents can be unappealing, wayward and un-cooperative which correspondingly promotes frustration and disengagement. These influences also need to be considered in activity analysis, grading and adaptation of occupations as interventions.

Summary of propositions

- The therapeutic potential in embroidering is located within an entangled agential body, mind and material companionship which is secluded, intimate, reciprocal and collaborative.
- Embroidering involves a variety of techniques all of which offer different therapeutic potential. With this understanding embroidering can be used as a mechanism of change.
- People seem to use the variety of techniques involved in embroidering to regulate their physical and emotional health and well-being.
- Embroidering can encourage certain responses that satisfy diverse physical and emotional needs.
- Solitary occupation can be therapeutic in several ways; in social withdrawal or when a person is separated, disconnected or detached from everyday life.
- Embroidering offers the possibility of occupational absorption rather than distraction or diversion and this is of high therapeutic value.
- Consideration of the agential companionship of body mind and materials is needed to further explore the transformative potential of engagement in specific crafts so that occupational therapists can return to using crafts as media for improving and sustaining health and well-being in line with global health initiatives.
- Embroidering is an untapped resource for health promotion because of the associated dominant gendered and amateur narratives which prevent engagement from a large proportion of the population.
- Narrative inquiry is underutilized as a research methodology and occupational therapists. Narrative inquiry has been shown to be an effective research design in order to understand the specific mechanisms of impact within occupation.

Summary of limitations of the study

The study was located in the United Kingdom and involved participation of five women who regularly embroidered and therefore the findings of this study cannot be considered as representative of other embroiderers or the population as a whole. The sample self-selected and as a result were highly interested in talking about their embroidering practice. The results need to be considered in the light of embroiderers who were extremely passionate about their craft. Although the results cannot be generalised, it is anticipated that the findings will resonate with other people who embroider as part of their everyday life.

Strategy for dissemination

Work in progress has been presented for the last five years at the University of Brighton Doctoral conference. In addition, findings have been presented to the members of three local Embroiderers Guilds with an invitation to write an article in the National Embroiderers Guild publication. A related student project was presented at the Royal College of occupational therapist's Annual Conference (Gregory and von Kurthy 2018). This is currently being re-written for publication in the Journal of Occupational Science. The findings will be presented at the Tenth International Conference on Health, Well-ness and Society 2020. The findings of this research are likely to be of interest to occupational therapy students and practitioners as well as other professionals within a health promotion arena. As such, I will look to relevant conferences and health related journals for publication. Initially, I am planning on writing two articles, one which demonstrates how narrative can be applied as a methodology in order to uncover the therapeutic means of occupation and the other which advocates embroidering as a possible therapeutic intervention in occupational therapy.

Agenda for further research

During the development and conduct of this research, each of the following goals were achieved:

- Findings enable understanding of how embroidering can influence change within the context of a person's everyday life
- Findings enable understanding of how embroidering is situated and practiced within a person's life
- Findings contribute in the understanding of embroidering as a complex occupation within everyday life

Further work will allow this research area to progress as follows.

The main components of my research agenda include:

- Investigation into other crafts as potential mechanisms of change, for example mosaic, enameling, felting, macramé, weaving or crochet using narrative analysis.
- Investigation of possible differentiation in the experience of absorption especially during solitary activities such as reading, painting or running.
- Investigation into the experience of doing solitary crafts during periods of social isolation.
- Comparison of physiological responses to different types of embroidering i.e. heart rate, brain imaging.
- Exploration into the influence of different materials and tools during participation in crafts.
- Investigation of hand use during occupation: passive and active sitting. Exploring the experience of 'itchy hands'.
- Interpretation of collected data through different theoretical lenses i.e. practice theory, phenomenology, agential realism.
- Exploration regarding how people purposely use occupation to regulate their health and well-being.

- Inquiry into the experience of men who engage in gendered occupations such as knitting and embroidering.
- Cross disciplinary research for example occupational therapy and textile students investigating the meaning of textiles in relation to health and well-being.

There are several further ideas that emerged from my fieldwork which I would like to develop in the future. I have always been interested in activity analysis and its use as a therapeutic tool. My interest remains and I would like to focus on re-conceptualising activity analysis in occupational therapy practice and especially how to incorporate understanding of tools and materials as agents. I would also like to explore the concept of occupational engagement in relation to the influence of tools, materials and techniques. In addition, I will challenge the notion of the use of crafts for diversion and distraction and aim to develop the notion of value in engagement and absorption. This relates to further exploration of the use of occupation as the means of recovery and promotion of health and well-being rather than the end point of intervention.

Final statement: the future

In conclusion, and in retrospect, I am aware that in attempting to understand the therapeutic potential of embroidering I set myself a particularly arduous research task. In doing so I have learnt a great deal about embroidering and my profession but also and importantly, about myself. I can tend to over theorize, think too deeply, complicate things, run before I learn to walk and I always take the scenic route in my attempt to understand complex theoretical concepts. I can also be extremely influenced by new ideas and these can interfere with my interest in more conventional and systematic concepts. Like my participants, I tend to shun conformity and look towards innovation and creativity. This can be very unhelpful in a research task and I thank my supervisors for the kind way they

brought me back to earth. I have also learnt to value my creative, unconventional and innovative mind. These attributes are my gift and I intend to enhance these skills in my future research. Throughout the difficult and at times unfathomable research journey, I have remained resolute and engaged with the scholarly nature of the process. I have really enjoyed learning how to read, question, interpret, critique, propose, design and develop new ideas and theories. I particularly enjoyed working with my participants and their enthusiasm and honest sharing of their intimate embroidering practice enabled me to continue at the most difficult times. I valued their experience and their time and 'giving up' on my research task would in effect, negate what they had given to me.

In the future, I would like to develop my research in collaboration with others as I believe this greatly enhances research possibilities and potential. Lone research is limited. I believe that cross disciplinary research will be particularly useful especially between occupational therapy, craft and textiles. Practitioners in these disciplines have a lot in common and I fully appreciate the point that joining with different communities of practice can create a dynamic process of knowledge making with the potential to create new possibilities in understanding (Jefferies 2016). I am excited about becoming involved in a wider narrative. Occupational therapy will greatly benefit from broadening its theoretical scope, especially in the development of more creative approaches to research.

The main drive for my future research agenda will be the promotion of embroidering and other crafts as valuable and powerful resources for health, alongside the medical model. In doing so I will judiciously condemn gendered and amateur notions of occupation; advocating that such understanding is culturally imposed and sufficiently dated to disregard. I will promote the importance of the agential mind, body and material companionship in relation to occupational engagement and the significance of solitary occupation in addition to social prescription. In my opinion the profession of

occupational therapy needs to review its awareness of the use of crafts as legitimate interventions to support of the priorities of the 2019 NHS long term plan. The occupational issues of contemporary society are changing, and occupational therapy can to evolve to support people in managing their health and well-being within increasingly complex and stressful lives. Crafts including embroidering have a 'new' purpose in this current and fluctuating environment. The suggestion that engagement in the arts including craft is influential to health and well-being implies that it is essential for occupational therapists to endorse the nuances of therapeutic use in order to have a voice in this debate. This is our heritage and it is vital that we share it. The professional research agenda needs to progress from the current emphasis on the role of occupational therapy in different settings, the effectiveness of occupational therapy as an intervention or how other professions perceive occupational therapy towards how specific occupations and in particular crafts can and do enhance health and well-being. I look forward to my role in this debate. I remain excited about the future and I look forward to sharing my findings with others both within and outside of the profession.

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Appendices.

Appendix One

Example of search log

Search activity Log: 17th November 2017

My research question:	How does the practice of embroidering relate to health and well-being
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List of sources searched:	Date of search	Search strategy used, including any limits	Total number of results found	Comments
One search	3/11/2017	"health and wellbeing" AND (embroidery OR craft) AND "occupational therapy"	147 – 17 relevant	Search string 1 Filter peer reviewed Journal articles
One search	3/11/2017	"occupational therapy" AND (creative activity OR creative therapy)	9,135	Search string 4 Filter peer reviewed Journal articles
AMED, CINAL, PsycInfo	3/11/2017	"health and wellbeing" AND handicraft	2	Search string 2 Filter peer reviewed Journal articles
AMED, CINAL, PsycInfo	3/11/2017	"creative therapy" AND (craft OR embroidery) AND (health OR wellbeing)	1	Search string 3 Filter journal article Peer reviewed
One search	3/11/2017	"Health and wellbeing" AND (craft or textiles)	39	Search string 5 Filter journal articles
One search	6/11/2017	"creative Needlecraft"	90	Search string 6 Filter Peer reviewed

				Scholarly articles
One search	17/11/2017	"Art and Craft" AND (Occupational Therapy)	52	Search string 8 Filter Journal articles and occupational therapy and rehabilitation
Hand search	19/11/2017	Deok Ju Kim Reference list included some new research articles	6 Goldie 2006 Heenan 2006 Stickley, morgan and Bertrom 2007, Cohen 2006 Secker, Kent, Shenton, spandler 2006, Lloyd, Wong and Petchkovsky 2007	Hand searches prove better results – need to hone search skills

Appendix Two

Critical overview of relevant and most recent papers

Experiencing Therapy Through Doing: Making Quilts Virginia A Dickie, 2011	Elements of Crafts that Enhance Well-Being: Textile Craft Makers' Descriptions of Their Leisure Activity Pöllänen, Sinikka. 2015	Shaping textile making: its occupational form Jill Riley 2011	"I just love it": Avid knitters describe health and well-being through occupation Brooks, Laura; Ngam Ta, Kim-Huong; Townsend, Anne F; Backman, Cathernine L.	Exploring the role of sewing as a leisure activity for those aged 40 years and under Clarke, Naomi, Alice 2019	The Benefits of Knitting for Personal and Social Wellbeing in Adulthood: Findings from an International Survey Jill Riley, Betsan Corkhill, Claire Morris 2013	"Stitching's better than Valium" An exploratory study of skilled participation in embroidering Authors: Angela Gregory & Heidi von Kurthy (2018) Unpublished
Methodology	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology	Methodology
Ethnography. Builds on PhD – ethnographic. Focus on quilt making as therapeutic. Deductive thematic analysis looking for examples of laypersons and data extracted into QSR N6 software.	Qualitative Based on analysis of written narratives purpose was to study how craft-making can contribute to well-being. Based on authors previous research which established craft as ordinary (reproductive) or holistic (ideas, designing, preparing and assessing the product and process). (Pollanen	Ethnography. understanding the occupational form 'itself'. This is an in depth ethnographic study of what is done in a socio-cultural and historical context separated from the experience of doing it. This uses Bourdieu's concept of the field which is a social and intellectual space with distinctive features and internal mechanisms or a structured	Qualitative based on phenomenology (no more detail). Undergraduate study. To explore how knitting contributes to a) physical, mental, emotional and cognitive health; b) happiness and well-being; c) formation and maintenance of occupational identity. Undergraduate study informed though phenomenology (starks &	Qualitative informed through interpretivist paradigm (no more detail). The role/experience of sewing, in the lives of people aged 40 years and under who engage in sewing for leisure. Involved creative research methods including photos, online written accounts, interviews, and sewn items. Global study recruited 78 participants.	Survey; quantitative (nominal and ordinal). Purpose to identify the benefits of knitting for individuals' personal and social wellbeing as a prerequisite to investigating its therapeutic use. Self-selective population of virtual knitters with 3514 valid responses in 2 weeks of survey going live. Quantitative data transported into SPSS 16	Qualitative methodology based on a hermeneutic phenomenological approach. Justification; qualitative research appears to suggest that engagement in creative occupations may promote health and well-being. Limitations - understanding is indiscriminate. Research needs to re-focus on specific art and craft occupations in order to begin to

	2009). Thematic analysis described. Final stage was deductive and based on a theory which became the main finding – ethos of self-management and psychological empowerment.	system of social positions. Also domain which is a sphere of action in a socio-cultural and historical context or field.	Trinidad, 2007). Data gathered via multiple methods including 21 individual interviews, attending guild meetings. Transcripts and field-notes analysed.	Focus on younger participants based on increase in mental health issues amongst this group. Limited research on sewing as a specific creative activity and how it may impact on health and well-being in everyday life. 2 data strands; on line and interview. Used blog to purposively select participants who engaged in sewing. Interviews based on convenience sampling. 73 online and 5 interviewees. Thematic analysis.	for descriptive statistics and to test relationships and differences among variables. Qualitative data were coded in NVivo 8 to establish categories and themes.	understand the nuances of related therapeutic potential. Research question: What is the experience of skilled participation in embroidery. Semi-structured interviews with five skilled hand/machine embroiderers. Thematic analysis.
Findings	Findings	Findings	Findings	Findings	Findings	Findings
Women engaged to fulfil a desired mood or an explicit use to deal with trauma. Relaxing, and predictable tasks and creative tasks in different aspects of quilting. Activity mainly based on	Process of engaging in crafts is hard, demanding and the participants were proud of their ability to manage it. Ability to control the environment was important in the process.	The study looked at what people do – the occupational form in the process. This focuses on the physical and social cultural aspects of doing which is considered to have meaning. Attention is	Knitting as therapy; relaxing, calming associated with repetitive actions. Distraction from thoughts. Frustration Increased sense of control Enjoyment in manipulating	Pride and accomplishment; gifting (external validation), tangible object of effort, mastering techniques, working through challenges. Frustration experienced but usually related to	Knitters are extremely passionate about their craft (deduced in reaction to the response). There is a significant relationship between knitting frequency and feeling calm and happier.	Engaging in embroidering has powerful therapeutic and sensory qualities with vast opportunities for skill acquisition. explored 3 main themes: Stitching is better than Valium; sensory qualities of

<p>conformity, following a procedure and repetition of action. Semi-autonomous, mindless and mechanistic unless designing or measuring. Mathematical as well as creative. This is what is seen as therapeutic. Feeling of being in control and just following instructions. Differentiated between mundane therapy and exceptional. Variation meets these 2 different needs. Differentiates between doing as therapy and doing for well-being. Mainly solitary, but social due to methodology. The product became symbolic through dealing with significant event; quilts as narratives – gave a voice. Part of emotional health. Everyday quilting was routine and</p>	<p>Enabled them to feel more capable of doing it in the future. Relevance of artifacts: useful and functional, given as gifts, living into the future, passing down traditions, Human relation to the product made the process meaningful. Materials important to process but no further detail. Researcher suggests that they have meaning beyond their necessity for making. Hoarding materials (sustainability), working with new materials required complicated learning. Success in making so deeply rewarding that participants repeated the performance. More rewarding than domestic</p>	<p>towards the influencing context. Textiles defined to weave or plat – a construction which includes skilled interactions with the body, equipment and materials. Passing on tradition. Traditional materials related to the area important i.e. wool/Wales Theme 1 – Traditional nature of textile making: Traditions inform contemporary practice. It has recognisable and essential elements which can promote new patterns of action. Theme 2: Relevance of skills and knowledge. Technical, practical and tacit understanding of techniques tools and materials. Processes and practices are repetitive. Materials and</p>	<p>materials; texture and colour; appreciated sensory and aesthetic properties Giving gifts; charitable giving Accolade from others; social connections; being part of a group Keeping hands occupied whilst sitting; use of idle time; ability to concentrate on other tasks such as watching tv, lecture or social conversation. Mental challenge; logic, maths, technical problem solving; helps mental focus or ability to concentrate on another task Knitting alone and in groups. Satisfaction in product Contributed to sense of self; part of identity; part of daily routines Outlet for self-expression; choosing projects,</p>	<p>success and achievement rather than failure. Calmness; limited expansion due to nature of data, however some indication that this related to low demand and repetition. Relief from stress and daily challenges. Taking time out for self; down time. This was combined with feelings of having to earn this time as sewing was seen as indulgent. Social interaction; connection to others and belonging to a community, shared interests, making the item for a person suggested that the article took on something from the maker, 'part of me', a sense of permanency in the product and living into the future, connection to</p>	<p>Participants knitted for perceived psychological benefits; relaxation, stress relief, meditative qualities all related to repetitive nature of process. Means of being productive whilst in passive activities such as watching tv or waiting. Tactile engagement which offered a sense of accomplishment, creative outlet and connecting to tradition and a means of giving to others. Statistical significance in relationship between frequency of knitting and perceived mood and specifically calmness, happiness, sadness, confidence and anxiety. Impact of texture over colour was evident but not statistically significant. More respondents</p>	<p>materials and the satisfaction in learning new skills. stitching described as 'real therapy'. Cathartic and used to help them through difficult life events. Used to forget about problems and divert the mind. Sense of calmness and relaxation from repetitive hand action. Some embroideries were not meant for others but for self to keep. Feelings of enjoyment, joy, satisfaction, pride achievement which inspired continual participation. A form of communication to others i.e. difficult emotional messages better 'given' as an embroidery. Embroideries were personal products linked to identity. A record of events; a narrative</p>
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<p>intuitive. Needs a prepared field, difficult to transport. Aesthetic components important including, seeing, touching, and smelling fabrics</p>	<p>tasks. Focus on task helped; calm the tempo of life, escape, reflective, self-protection. Repetition related to these experiences where a mental space is created – go inside head and lock everything else outside. Evidence of two mental states – absorbed in task or thoughts – related to ordinary or holistic tasks. Importance of controlling external conditions lead to feelings of being in control. Sense of agency and empowerment over materials and tasks. Participants actively organized their making as a resource for well-being. A flexible resource for dealing with difficulties</p>	<p>equipment are important physical elements of the occupational form. Theme 3: Creativity shapes practice in innovative ways. On the surface, textile making can seem to be about conforming, planning, preparation, procedures in constructing a structure – following rules – a cyclical repetitive process. Purpose relates to successful outcome of product (not personal need). Preparation is essential and success depends on this. Need to understand principles of construction. Need to understand materials and how they behave. Can be a work of art in itself or a practical product that is a durable material object.</p>	<p>yarns, colours; provided a creative outlet</p>	<p>past generations of women. sense of symbolism i.e. this means ‘love’. self-awareness; connecting with themselves, just for me, making clothes that fitted them improved self esteem, and flow; sewing was rewarding in itself, fascination with colour and texture, just enough challenge to block out external stressors, distraction, experience of autonomy and control, absorption and altered sense of time. Generally there was a variety of reasons for engaging in sewing which were seen to be similar to studies with older participants. Author suggests that the benefits of sewing are not age dependent.</p>	<p>suggested that colour/texture was not significant. Knitting helped thing through problems The respondents’ comments illustrated how knitting helped their thinking, memory, problem solving and concentration. Use of mathematical skills, budgeting, planning, organising and visual special awareness – general improvement of cognitive skills reported. Knitting helped ‘clear the mind’ and the process of knitting was described as a diversion from negative thoughts. Coping with stressful events – one stitch at a time. Keeping hands busy so concentrate on other things. Learning new techniques could be frustrating and taxing.</p>	<p>account. The feel, touch and emotion attached to fabrics implied a sensory effect; a covetous feeling towards a hoard which included beads, fabrics, threads and other objects. This was secret. Colour, texture and pattern were important. Participants were attracted towards materials. Pleasure in sourcing materials. Suggestion of an inner desire to create through stitching that was organic, unpredictable and original. Fear of not being able to engage in the future due to health difficulties. Satisfaction in learning new skills; importance in the possibility of progression and learning. Being part of a guild assisted with</p>
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	in lie. Solitary participation is the norm, but the researcher emphasized the importance of social connections through making. Ordinary crafts and holistic crafts played a different role – self-management and empowerment.	Product gives purpose to the process. Creative making is possible for experienced and skilled crafts people. This involves changing an existing domain. Tradition is a starting point, but then one can re-shape the rules. This involves risk taking, thinking laterally, experimenting and exploring with unlimited possibilities. A gateway to freedom.			50% had knitted in a group and reported benefits from this. Increased confidence and lead respondents to try new things, learn new skills, be more adventurous with colours.	learning with associated satisfaction through passing on skills to others. Indication that embroidery is a journey where skills are acquired over time. Variety in techniques, use of mixed media and evolving nature of embroidering meant that there was no clear-cut definition of the occupation itself. Participants questioned whether it was an art or a craft.
Critical review	Critical review	Critical review	Critical review	Critical review	Critical review	Critical review
Outline of procedure given with some theoretical explanation. Unquestioned use of term creative activity. Limited justification for purpose outside of original study. Dated references. Appears to be data recycling.	Excessive population for qualitative study created diversity in findings. Textiles undefined – type of textiles absent and some questionability about focus on textiles or general	Based on data from an existing study with new interview questions – but not clear on this. Clear rationale: textile making has been studied in relation to subjective meaning but this study takes a more contextual view – there	Clear outline of procedure especially analysis of data as a team. Made findings credible. Relatively clear question. Findings supported by verbatim quotations. Implications for occupational therapy provided with	Limited methodological explanation or theoretical explanation. Large population for quantitative study. Sewing is undefined other than as a creative activity and textile. It is not clear what types of sewing are under study. On-line nature of	Bespoke survey with no prior validity or reliability testing. No justification for questions in survey. Uncritical statistical analysis of ordinal data. Thematic analysis is used to back up quantitative data. Unexplained	This study was the result of a pre-registration MSc in occupational therapy and remains unpublished. Limited description of theoretical perspective or methodology. Use of thematic analysis did not give justification to the

<p>Social relevance emphasized in findings and discussion due to nature of study. No definition of the term 'therapeutic'.</p>	<p>concept of crafts. Focus on women despite some men recruited – suggested a difference between why men engage in textiles. Credibility and transferability mentioned. Results related to Scandinavian context – why crafts popular. Narratives were out of context and also analysed as one off reports lacks reference to narrative theory.</p>	<p>are no studies that describe the occupational form of textile making itself. Some detail on different methods of data gathering appropriate to ethnographic design. Participant obs' in meetings, workshops, outings, seminars, courses and exhibitions. Also still photography, documentation, objects and materials and in-depth qualitative interviews. No explicit detail on how interviews were conducted, or if methods were modified. No detail on how observations were documented. Interview data was transcribed verbatim. The author could have been more explicit about how these findings are relevant in a wider context. Findings are</p>	<p>idea of future research to focus on other crafts from a longitudinal perspective i.e. over time. Also quantitative research to test measurable effects on health/well-being</p> <p>Limitations: large population and 3 research questions made findings difficult to comprehend. Limited theoretical underpinning. Could have undertaken ethnographic approach; no discussion of why the phenomenological approach was taken and limited theory referenced. Findings did not really show anything new.</p>	<p>accounts prevented further elaboration of answers making the researcher have to predict. No elaboration of interview procedure i.e. length of time or questions asked. Did not include images within analysis. Results and discussion were amalgamated which made it difficult to clearly identify extract findings from this study.</p>	<p>over emphasis on group/social engagement despite finding that solitary engagement was the norm – this was not discussed. Evident in the following statement: Despite being an individual pursuit, the potential of knitting to promote social inclusion was strongly evident. Knitting provided a vehicle, through belonging to real time or virtual groups, for improving social contact and communication and for making friends. Therefore, knitting's social aspects enhance its therapeutic potential (p56)</p>	<p>richness and complexity of the data which resulted in the findings not representing individual participants experiences (identified by the researchers). The participants discussed other sewing techniques such as quilting so it is not clear if the results were specifically related to embroidering or another textile in which they engaged (identified by the researchers). Limited explanation of recruitment method or sample. Interview questions were semi-structured and displayed in a figure. Good limitations identified. Credibility, transferability and generalisability mentioned.</p>
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		considered as restricted to context and might be transferable with no indication to where or how.				
Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research	Recommendations for further research
More dated research focuses on the use of creative activities during illness or trauma. Less evidence about how they relate to everyday life, either as an ethnography or a focused inquiry into therapeutic effects. Justification for future research on real people doing real life occupations in order to allow people to articulate a link between occupation and health.	More consideration needs to be given to the things people do in their everyday lives. To see how new trends i.e. technology changes the nature of leisure-based craft making	Further research into the impact of cultural traditions on occupational forms and domains, and how creativity, innovation and technology shape occupation.	Longitudinal qualitative inquiry into the health benefits of knitting and Quantitative research to test hypotheses on knitting's measurable effects on well-being, mental health, and cognitive skills. Study of similar leisure occupations where the doer is devoted to that occupation. Studies need to include masculine perspectives related to occupations like knitting.	No specific recommendation made however suggests a more open approach to understanding the multifaceted role of sewing in and of itself for all age groups (but not genders).	Further research Into the specific benefits of knitting for people with different problems and conditions.	Further research needed to explore the complexity of embroidering in more depth and in the context of everyday life. Further research about how learning impacts upon participation, wellbeing and enjoyment. Further emphasises the impetus to research traditional occupations such as embroidering.

Appendix Three

Recruitment e-mail/Flier



Do you enjoy embroidering?

I am an occupational therapist/lecturer in occupational therapy interested in the therapeutic use of craft and in particular, embroidering. I am conducting an in-depth research project that focuses on people who embroider as an interest. I am looking for willing embroiderers to share with me what embroidering means to them in their everyday life.

If you would be interested in participating in this study (or know anyone who might be interested) and would like to find out more, I would be happy to hear from you.

Heidi von Kurthy (Occupational Therapist/lecturer in occupational therapy)

Doctoral research student University of Brighton

Telephone: 01273 644111

e-mail: h.vonkurthy@brighton.ac.uk

Appendix Four

Participant information sheet and consent form

University of Brighton

School of Health Sciences

M Phil/PhD in Health Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

1 Study title

Craft and Wellbeing: A narrative investigation into engagement in embroidering.

2 Invitation

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish. Please contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

3 What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of people who embroider and how this relates to their wellbeing. I would like to begin to explore deeply the link between embroidery and personal feelings of health and wellbeing. The research will ultimately inform occupational therapy practice in relation to how a complex and specific craft activity relates to well-being. Occupational therapists work with people who are experiencing health or social difficulties that prevent them from living a full and meaningful life. We use crafts as therapy to help people develop their skills and enhance well being. Although many people who enjoy crafts may talk about how this makes them feel happy or relaxed, in practice we know very little about this phenomena and through research I hope to explore this link more explicitly.

4 Why have I been invited?

You have been invited to take part in this study because you have identified yourself as an embroiderer.

Unfortunately you will be unable to take part in this study if:-

- you are under 18 years old.
- you are experiencing an acute phase of physical or mental illness.
- you do not embroider for at least 5 hours per week.
- you rely on income generated by sale of your embroidery.
- you do not feel confident in spoken English.
- you are not willing engage in the length and intensive relationship of the study (please see section 6 and 7).
- you live a long way outside of a two hour radius of Brighton or Eastbourne.

5 Do I have to take part?

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is your decision to become involved. The purpose of this information sheet is to give you the information that you require to make an informed decision to participate or not. If after reading this information sheet you have any additional questions or require more information, please contact me via e-mail or telephone and I will provide further details as requested. If you are willing to participate in the study you will be required to contact me so that I can find out a little more about you and your embroidery. I aim to recruit 4 people and include men and women with different cultural backgrounds. Not everyone who contacts me will be recruited, however, I will contact everyone who expresses an interest in participation and make sure that if you are not required as a participant, that I keep you in contact with the research findings and any other research opportunities relating to craft. If selected as a participant, I will ask you to meet with me at a mutually convenient time in a public location such as a museum, gallery or cafe. At this

meeting I will ask you to sign a consent form to show that you have agreed to take part. If in the future you decide that you no longer wish to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

6 What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part in the study you will be involved for duration of six months of data collection. For example during this time we may meet six times. This time will be agreed at an initial meeting with me in a public building of your choice. During the meeting we will discuss and agree a plan of how and when we will work together to gather data about you as an embroiderer and how you relate your embroidering to your sense of well-being. We may agree on the following ways to gather data:

Meetings: this may involve me coming to your house and talking about embroideries that you have completed or are work in progress. You might wish to demonstrate embroidery techniques that you have learnt or developed as I am keen to learn.

Formal interview: this will be undertaken in a private room in a public building and scheduled for approximately one hour during which I will ask you questions when, where, and why you embroidery and how it relates to your well-being.

Visits: we may meet at galleries or other places that relate to your embroidering.

Blog or Diary: you may wish to keep an embroidery diary or blog to note down your thoughts and feelings when you embroider.

The purpose of this time is to gather really rich data about you and your embroidering. I will also ask you to reflect specifically on how your craft relates to your well-being. It is important that you are happy to talk or write in depth about your craft and how you feel it relates to your wellbeing.

If we agree on undertaking a formal interview it will be recorded with a digital recording device. This data will be accessed only by me and will be saved on a protected server within the University. Once the data has been transformed into written form, the digital recording will be deleted. At other times when we meet more informally, I will write field notes afterwards. I will bring the notes to our next meeting to help focus on what happened at our last meeting. In all written documentation there will be no reference made to your identity, locations or events. We will agree on a pseudonym for you that will be used in any written document. If you agree to me using any visual images of your work, they will remain your property, however inclusion may disclose your identity. If used diaries or blogs are used they will remain your property and I will ask you to loan them to me for data analysis. When we first meet and discuss a research plan we will also decide a date that our research relationship will stop. After this time you are welcome to keep in touch with me to find out about the findings of the research.

7 What will I have to do?

I hope that involvement in the research will relate to your interest in craft and in sharing your passion for embroidery with me. You will be required to spend time with me talking about you as an embroiderer and how this relates to your sense of well being. Over the six months we may meet up to six times, however we will agree on a plan at our first meeting. I would expect you to tell me how and when you would like to meet so that the research does not become too intrusive or restrict your life in any way.

8 What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You will only be asked to share information that you are happy to disclose. At any point in the research any risks, discomfort or inconvenience to you will be identified, discussed and kept to a minimum. There is a risk that in focusing embroidery in relation to your well-being, you may identify something that you did not previously know about yourself. This may be a good thing, however, it may also cause you distress. If this should happen, I would ask you if you wanted to continue to talk about your feelings as part of the research. If you would rather stop the research, I will make sure that you get home safely and provide details of further support that may help you in resolving your distress. You can withdraw from the study at any point, however, I would request use of any data collected up to the point of your withdrawal.

9 What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will not benefit directly from taking part in this study but the information gained will help improve the understanding of the therapeutic use of craft in occupational therapy.

10 What if there is a problem?

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study or any possible harm you might have suffered can be addressed by contacting my supervisor. For contact details see the bottom of the information sheet

11 Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Data will be collected by the methods outlined above and agreed between ourselves. Your identify will be safeguarded unless you agree to use of copy written images of your work. Data will be stored using a password protected file on a secure server within the University. Data will be transformed into written form and analysed by me as the researcher. I may show anonymised sections of this written information to my supervisors or other research ambassadors from the University in order to make sure that I am using the data with integrity. As the researcher, I will use the data to write my interpretation of your embroidery and how engagement relates to your wellbeing as a story. The story may contain direct quotations; however your identity will remain anonymous. Data will be retained for the duration of the study and may be retained for use in future studies that I undertake.

12 What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

If you don't want to carry on with this study, you may withdraw at anytime and without giving a reason.

If this happens I will request to use the data collected up to your point of withdrawal, however you retain the right to decide whether that data can be used.

13 What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be written up as part of my doctoral studies. I also intend to publish the results in a professional journal. You will not be identified in any report or publication. I will provide you with the results of the study on completion. It is important to know that the stories that I produce are not intended to be a true reflection of reality, but my interpretation of the significant elements related to how embroidery may relate to well being

14 Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Brighton Research Ethics and Governance Panel Committee.

15 Contacts for further information

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Please keep a copy of this information sheet for future use.

Date

Thank you for considering taking part in this study

Appendix Five

Application for Ethical Approval

Title

Craft and Wellbeing: A narrative investigation into engagement in embroidering.

Investigators:

Heidi von Kurthy

GS (Supervisor)

KA (Supervisor)

School of Health Sciences

A Doctoral study

Timescale: Data gathering April 2015 – March 2017

Data collection will take place in the field.

2. Introduction

Occupational therapy philosophy is based on the belief that engagement in meaningful occupation has a direct effect on our health and well-being (Kielhofner, 2009; Wilcock, 2006). More specifically, it is suggested that the practice of everyday creativity or acts of originality may enhance physical as well as psychological well-being (Bodine, 1999). Creativity is described as a healing process essential to the spirit, as food and water to the body (Phillips, 1999). The concept of the healing nature of creativity is significant in literature and healing powers are attributed to writing poetry, storying, photography, journal writing, painting, dance, music (Hasselkus, 2002), craft (Tubbs & Drake, 2012) and embroidery (Parker, 2010; Tubbs & Drake, 2012).

My practice as an occupational therapist has comprised working with older people in hospital, people who have experienced neurological damage with a final specialisation in adult mental health. Throughout my career, I have utilised craft as a therapeutic intervention. I have, first hand, seen the amazing capacity of the use of craft in the recovery of many, many people. As a therapist, I have become increasingly perturbed with the existent assumptions and resulting misperception that the profession holds with regard to the therapeutic potential of craft. This underlying unease has developed into a sincere passion to add to the emergent research base for the use of craft as a therapeutic intervention in occupational therapy.

Qualitative research about creative activity in occupational therapy has clearly established a link between engagement in craft and health. Research, however has tended to focus on people with serious health conditions in group situations, making it difficult to understand how the craft activity itself may be related to the individuals health outcomes as reported by research. In addition research has suffered from use of the term of phrase, 'creative activity' presented as the foundation of the profession (Friedland, 2003; Perrin, 2001; Wilcock, 2006) and treatment medium since its inception (Griffiths, 2008). Resulting research is non-specific about which specific art and craft activities are being researched and therefore understanding of the therapeutic value is limited.

In my opinion, the concept of creative activity in occupational therapy is underdeveloped with limited debate regarding its theoretical base. Modern practice has unquestionably replaced activities that previously existed under the construct of art and craft under the blanket term creative activity. The underlying philosophy of the value of meaningful occupation, as opposed to participation in generalisable activities, also appears to have been lost.

Research in occupational therapy has a focus on paradigmatic analysis (Polkinghorne 1995) used to describe or categorise particular occurrences' within data and also to note the relationships between categories. This type of information is useful; however it does not adequately capture the complexity of human action in context or show consideration of the concept of meaningful occupation.

I perceive the unquestioned use and under definition of the concept of creative activity to be its therapeutic downfall. No wonder therapists choose, over this, therapeutic tools that are more tangible, easier to measure and therefore evidence. Pre-occupation with engagement in activities of daily living over leisure is common in occupational therapy (Timmons & MacDonald, 2008). Research suggests that there is an impressive amount of evidence that shows some success of interventions that utilise the creative arts within mental health (Leckey, 2011). The problem is that it is difficult to justify in practice due to lack of clarity, and the many interpretations of the concepts that impact of the effectiveness of the creative activities that people engage in (Leckey, 2011).

The current research intends to re-focus on the unique and personal occupational engagement of individuals who choose to participate in a specific craft activity. An exploration into the relationship between the person, the context, the integral activities and participant defined well being will allow deep consideration of underlying concepts. This idea

that occupational therapy could benefit from a multifaceted understanding of the essence of an activity through direct examination of specific activity was postulated by Dickie (2011) in her study of learning within quilt making. For this reason I have, therefore, selected embroidery as a valuable occupation of study in order to bring into question assumptions of the occupation itself, and the underlying constructs involved. Ultimately, this research aims to challenge existing and dominant views about the therapeutic value of creative activity in occupational therapy and, in looking at one craft in depth, illustrate how engagement in craft relates to health and wellbeing.

3. Purpose of study

Study question:

How does participation in embroidery relate to peoples **individual concept of their wellbeing**]

Aims:

- **[To explore peoples concepts of wellbeing in relation to pursuit of engagement in craft.]**
- To **gain deeper understanding** of how embroidery is lived for people with diverse skills in their craft.
- To **gain deeper understanding** of how embroidery is situated in a person's life specifically in relation to well being.
- To explore the diversity and complexity of embroidery as a human occupation.
- To explore how embroidering relates to a person's concept of their personal wellbeing.

4a. Methods:

Narrative inquiry is designed to capture the distinctiveness of human action which is described as the outcome of the interaction of a person's previous learning and experiences, present situation and proposed goals and purposes (Polkinghorne 1995). If all human action is unique to the individual (Pierce, 2001), narrative inquiry is designed to focus on the particular and special characteristics of an action rather than what is common. The result of narrative inquiry is a collection of individual cases in which attention moves from case to case rather than case to generalisation (Polkinghorne 1995). Research of this type allows understanding of the complexity of everyday life and the meaning, value and engagement of activities in context (Nyman, Josephsson, & Isaksson, 2013).

Commented [HK1]: Wellbeing in this study will be defined by the individual.

Commented [HK2]: Additional aim in order to validate study question.

Commented [HK3]: Discover has been deleted and replaced

Commented [HK4]: As above.

Humans are unique in our linguistic ability to contextualise meaning in our life and to be connected to our world through stories (Polkinghorne, 1995). Narrative research understands how meaning is established in everyday situations (Josephsson & Alsaker, 2014). As Polkinghorne (1995) suggests, rather than providing a mirror or representation of reality, narrative can offer a tool to provide possible understandings of human occupation (Josephsson, Asaba, Jonsson, & Alsaker, 2006). This arises from the communicative aspect of narrative which enables researchers to assign causality between circumstances through ordering of events *and* a more open and creative interpretation of the meaning attributed to human occupation. Josephsson et al (2006) suggest that understanding of communication between order and creativity is fundamental to narrative inquiry as it enables contextual reasoning in order to understand the material and also the space for consideration of multiple and changing possibilities.

I am interested in finding new knowledge on the complexity and situatedness of embroidering in everyday life and for this reason will aim to construct new stories from a diverse population of embroiderers.

Design

Participants: Four hand embroiderers. Sample recommended by Alsaker and Josephsson (2011) due to large amount of data obtained from each single participant.)

Commented [HK5]: Justification of sample size.

Sampling method: Convenience Sampling will be used in order to approach people who are easily accessible and to take opportunities for obtaining a sample where it exists (Holloway and Freshwater 2007). Where possible chain referral sampling will be used where participants suggest further individuals who fit the inclusion criteria. The study aims to aim to select a diverse population relating to skill, age and gender identity.

Commented [HK6]: Convenience and chain referral sampling used with justification.

Inclusion criteria:

- Participants must be willing to engage with researcher in an intensive data gathering relationship lasting approximately six months.
- Participants will be willing to invite the researcher into their home and local environment for collection of observational data.
- Participants must be embroidering for a significant amount of time each week (at least 5 hours).

- Participant must not be financially dependent on income related to sale of their embroidery.
- Participants must not be in an acute phase of illness.
- Participants must be willing to explore how embroidering relates to well-being.
- Participants must be willing to share images of their work.
- Participants should live within a two hour (approximate) distance of Brighton or Eastbourne.

Exclusion criteria:

- People under the age of 18
- People who do not comfortably speak English.

Commented [HK7]: Added

Data to be collected will be agreed between me as the researcher and the participant. *All participants will agree to the researcher observing them in action in context* (1) plus one or more of the methods described below:

- (1) Observations in context (field visit): All participants will decide on embroidery related events of personal significance to which to invite the researcher. Events may include a craft show, an embroidery group, joining them at home or in their studio, and shopping for fabric/thread/materials.
- Semi-structured interviews using visual images (actual or virtual) of embroidery that illustrate how embroidering and well-being are related
- Written blogs or diaries undertaken for the purpose of the research i.e. these will not exist before the research and will be developed with the participants as a data gathering source. Data collected will be meet the aims of the study and be about the relationship between embroidering and personal wellbeing. The data collected will be the decision of the participant with informed understanding that I will use the data for analysis.

Commented [HK8]: Examples of observational visits

Commented [HK9]: Information about what will be collected

Time: Participation in the research will require the participant to commit to being observed and interview/blogged over an extended period (Nyman et al., 2013) of at least six months of data collection. This extensive period is considered necessary to enable richer data due to establishing trust in the relationship where the researcher becomes

part of the participants ongoing enacted narrative (Nyman, Josephsson, & Isaksson, 2012). The first meeting will involve a discussion about the research and agreement on the most appropriate methods to generate data. Due to the intensity of the data gathering it is also important at this stage to propose a point of completion of data and the ending of the relationship. [It is anticipated that each participant will provide data from at least the equivalent of six 1 hour events.]

Commented [HK10]: 6 hours minimum from each participant

Recruitment: Initial contact will be through a post on Embroidery Magazine via Face book and direct contact with embroidery workshops such as Embroidery Now in Winchester (Embroiderynow.net, 2014) via advertisement (appendix 1). Interested people will be requested to contact me via Face book, e-mail or telephone. After initial introduction, I will answer any initial questions and, in the case of continued interest, send out a participant information form (appendix 2) via e-mail or post. At this point, I will ask for some demographic details including age, gender identity, embroidery experience, embroidery techniques employed and location. This is in order to gain a wide population. [In the case that interest is high, diversity will be more possible however, if this is the case, I will need to be particularly appreciative of anyone who contacts me and explain that they may not be selected due to my diversity requirements. I would like to recruit both men and women with different cultural backgrounds and diversity in embroidery skill]. Participants should live within a two hour radius of the researcher.]

Commented [HK11]: Diversity requirements

Commented [HK12]: In the case of over response - participants will be made aware that they may not be selected. See participant info sheet.

The participant information form will instruct potential participants to re-contact me if they would like to participate. At the point of contact I will make sure that the person meets the inclusion criteria and is committed to the purpose and requirements written in the information form. People who do not meet the entry criteria or (in the case that the research is oversubscribed) who are surplus will be thanked, given reasons for non-inclusion and asked if they will be interested in any final products of the research process. Their contact details will be stored if this is the case.

Selected participants will be invited to meet the researcher in a public building such as a University, museum or gallery following the Universities lone working policy. During this meeting I will answer any final questions and gain consent via signature of a consent form (Appendix 3) . Once the consent form is signed the participant and I will arrange to meet in order to mutually agree on the methods to gather data. A data gathering agreement will be devised, agreed and signed by both participant and myself. All face to face meetings will be conducted using the University lone working policy.

Data: The narrative in this case is framed as a discourse of human activity which connects motives, acts and consequences into a causal chain (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011). In this sense, personal meanings and experiences of the narrator relate to the broader social and political contexts within which the story unfolds (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011). The activities are set within a social arena which links the individual to the universal. These narratives are not complete stories, they are narratives in the making presented as events imbedded through activity in the individuals situation (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011).

The participant will initiate observations and invite me to join them for significant embroidery related events (Nyman et al., 2013). Each meeting will begin with a discussion about what had happened since the last meeting and a reflection on the field notes from the last visit in order to re-orientate the participant (Nyman et al., 2013). Interview questions will be open in order to allow for a free response (Polkinghorne, 1995; Riessman, 2008). Participants will be encouraged to share embroideries, with me, that have significant meaning for them in relation to their well-being. Based on Nyman et al. (2013) after each visit field notes will be spoken into a digital recorder and transcribed as soon as possible after the event. Data will consist of what occurred, what was discussed and researcher reflections. Participant departure from the study will be aided through the research agreement and continued opportunity for them to remain in contact once data gathering has ceased and gain a copy of the storied outcome as produced by myself in the voice of the researcher (Nyman et al., 2013; Polkinghorne, 1995).

Interview data, blogs and diaries will be transcribed verbatim with any necessary context specific detail and saved on a password protected network drive within the University. Written data and any photographs taken for purpose of research (including of embroidered items) will be saved as above. Photographs will not include facial images of anyone except me. Participants will consent to collection of data and consent to any further use including extracts that are anonymised in reports or publications. Photographs of original work will remain the property of the participant.

5. Analysis:

In the context of this study data is viewed as a co-construction whilst the narrative story will be an outcome of interpretation by myself as the author and as such one of the possible constructs rather than the true one (Nyman et al., 2013). Rather than providing a mirror or representation of reality, narrative as I intend to use it, can offer a tool to provide possible understandings of human activity (Josephsson et al.,

Commented [HK13]: Use of visual images

2006). Taking this one stage further, narrative also has the purpose to focus on the possible readings of acts in everyday life. In this way activity provides the material for humans to be able to process in order to make sense of experiences in order for life to have meaning (Josephsson et al., 2006).

Philosophical hermeneutics will be used as a base through which to interpret the stories of the participants within a cyclical process of continual observation, analysis and reflection (Coombs 2012). This methodological framework will allow me to interpret the narratives of embroiderers constructed from their interpretations of the experience of embroidering and the impact on their well-being (Coombs 2012). The hermeneutic task involves unravelling the interplay between actions, the social context and the interpretation of what is communicated (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011).

The concept of narrative emplotment (Josephsson et al., 2006; Polkinghorne, 1995) and possibility rooms (Josephsson et al., 2006) will be used as a lens through which to view the data once transcribed. Using Ricoeur's threefold mimetic process (Ricoeur 1984) texts will be repeatedly re-read and re-interpreted with particular focus on the way the participants interpreted how their embroidering related to wellbeing and the elements that comprised the narratives. Careful and regular reading of the text will enable significant events to highlight different emplotments and possible plots to emerge from the data (Alsaker & Josephsson, 2011). Emplotment relates to the linking of relations between events, motives, desires, action, materials and other people into a meaningful configuration (Josephsson et al., 2006). The configurations become possible plots that form the creation of possible readings or interpretations. As suggested by Ricoeur, events, individuals and ideologies will be used to emplot narratives as the basis for understanding the stories (Coombs 2012). In practice, I will attempt to identify significant characters, situations, feelings and motivations within the data in order to construct an individual story for each participant. In this way it is not themes that are identified but plots and these are constructed into a meaningful whole for each participant. The pre-understandings described in Ricoeur's mimesis (1) of structures, symbolic resources and temporal character will be considered and identified as possibilities rather than settled circumstances (Bruner 1986). Analytical questions will be asked by the researcher with regard to how participants negotiate meaning in relation to embroidering and experiences and connected hopes, desires (Josephsson et al., 2006) and well being. The analysis will result in my reworking and retelling of these stories as I interpret those elements

Commented [HK14]: An attempt to explain what I think I will be doing with the data - but I will seek instruction on this.

that contribute to the construction of the narratives as told by the participants (Coombs 2012).

It is anticipated that although the process will be similar in each case as I examine the narratives different participants will emphasise different stories and pre-understandings as they talk (Coombs 2012). Once pre-understandings have been identified as possible plots, these will be put together into narratives through mimesis (2) (Ricoeur 1984). In this stage, a central plot gives life to a meaningful story through linking seemingly separate events in substantive ways (Coombs 2012). This will involve chronological and non-chronological emplotment (Ricoeur 1984; Coombs 2012). In mimesis (3) a larger meaning is drawn from the narrative as a whole (Coombs 2012).

Validity and trustworthiness: Narrative is not required to be a true representation of the facts related to action, but the construction of a story that provides the reader with new insight and understanding of a complex phenomenon (**Polkinghorne, 1995**). In order to verify plausibility of the interpreted story it will be important to provide a transparent description of the research procedure (Polkinghorne, 1995). Alongside this, the researcher considers the complexity of the task of emplotment a particular challenge. For this reason, the researcher has approached a Reader at the University who is experienced in narrative inquiry and auto-ethnography. The aim is to set up a narrative analysis group within the University in order for researchers to 'try out' their interpretations of possible plots with other narrative researchers.

In line with auto-ethnographic tradition, the researcher also intends to undertake a personal diary of her research through embroidery. Significant events will be transformed into embroidery and constructed into a sketchbook. The embroidery will be presented with a written account of the significance of the event. The incorporation of the sketchbook will be further considered in relation to the narrative inquiry as a whole along with discussion with research supervisors.

Ethical issues:

Autonomy

- Informed consent: The potential participant will be fully informed of the requirements of the research before they give consent via informal questioning and provision of an information form. Participants can withdraw at any stage, however they will be asked to give consent to inclusion of any data gathered until the point that they withdraw as the data is part of the data set and will have influenced the research. Blogs and diaries will remain the

property of the participants and provided 'on loan' to the researcher for data analysis purposes only.

- **Confidentiality:** I will keep participant details anonymous with pseudonyms utilised in any written documentation. Demographic data will be known only to me and kept on a password protected hard drive on a university computer and on 'myfiles' a university network available only to me. Participants will consent to interpretation and publication of their stories. Participants will be made aware that any disclosed illegal or unethical acts will be discussed with the supervisors of the study and may be subsequently reported to the appropriate authority.
- **Coercion:** Participants will be required to contact me in order to express interest. No promises will be made that exceed reality and no financial incentives will be given. When possible, funding will be gained in order to reimburse participants for any travel expenses related to the research (although I will travel to the participant so that they will only be required to access local transport).
- **Professional role:** Participants will be advised that I will have no professional role in the relationship and that they will receive no occupational therapy intervention through involvement in the research.

Beneficence

This research is undertaken with the knowledge that it will not benefit the participants directly, but is intended to benefit others. In the nature of storying, however, the participant may enjoy the process as this act can be cathartic in itself. The welfare of the participants is of highest priority and if they become upset or unwell at any point within the research I will discuss their welfare with them in order to find appropriate help. If a participant becomes upset they will be assisted in gaining details of appropriate local support groups. Participants that identify a health issue or risk will be advised to discuss this with their GP. Ultimately it will be the participants' decision to withdraw from the study and I will make sure that they can do this without negative effect on their welfare.

Non Maleficence

As a qualified and experienced occupational therapist I consider myself competent to carry out the research. I will receive regular supervision

by two extremely experienced nurse educationalists. Reasonable action will be taken in order to mitigate risk as described above. I will avoid all actions that may discredit the University or put myself or the participants at risk.

Justice

I will respect participant privacy and dignity at all times and will not question a participant asking for this within the data gathering process. The participant and I will work out a research plan that is flexible and meets the needs of us both. Participants will be kept informed of the research process and provided with the results when completed. Any complaints will be directed to the research supervisors or divisional lead in occupational therapy, with contact details provided in the information form.

Data collected will be stored for the duration of the degree and unused data may be used for future studies by the researcher alone. The participant will give permission for all anonymised data used and publication of visual images which will remain their property.

Benefits of the study:

- The research aims to produce context dependent knowledge to be used to question current occupational therapy practice and develop ideas for further research.
- Through focus on narratives of embroidering, and relation to a person's well-being I aim to uncover taken for granted practices within occupational therapy
- A focus on narratives of embroidering will allow careful and close consideration of the activities involved in participation and the relation to a person's perceived well-being rather than combining activities into the over researched erroneous group of 'creative activity'
- Though narrative inquiry, focus on the detail may reveal important insights into the complexity and inter-relational aspects of embroidering, and well-being. The narratives as presented will allow readers to decide the meaning of the research through my interpretation. (Riessman, 2008)

Time Frame:

September 2014 – December 2015: Application for ethical approval.

January February 2015: Finalise ethics approval if necessary.

February 2015: Recruit first participant and begin data collection.

June 2015: Progression review.

July 2015: Begin to analyse results from first participant.

September 2015: Recruit second participant.

December 2015: Complete data analysis from first participant – identify emplotments.

February 2016: Begin to analyse data from second participant. Write narrative of first participant.

March 2016: Recruit third participant.

June 2016: Progression review.

July 2016: Begin to analyse data from third participant. Write narrative of second participant.

September 2016: Recruit fourth participant.

February 2017: Begin to analyse data from fourth participant. Write narrative of third participant.

March 2017: Complete data collection.

June 2017: Progression review.

December 2017: Amend narratives and complete analysis.

January 2018: Begin thesis drafting.

Transfer to PhD

June 2018: Progression review.

December 2018: Submit Thesis.

6. Funding: The study has been written with careful consideration of viability. Once ethical approval has been gained I will be in a position to apply for funding to enhance the study. Consideration will be given for funding in order for the researcher to recruit participants from a wider geographical area. Additional funds will include transcription fees, travel and paid cover for teaching.

7. Information for participants: Appendix 2

8. Consent form: Appendix 3

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18-Feb-2015

REGC-14-073.R1 - Craft and Wellbeing: A narrative investigation into engagement in embroidering.

Dear Ms. von Kurthy,

I attach the University of Brighton Public Liability insurance cover for your research application to Tier 2 Ethics and Governance (Manuscript 14-073.R1) which has now been approved.

If you require a sponsorship letter for IRAS, Local Authority or for any other agency, please let me have the contact name and address of the REC so I can complete the sponsorship letter and either send to them or forward to you.

Regards
Glynis Flood
Health and Social Science, Science and Engineering Research Ethics and Governance Committee

This email has been scanned by MessageLabs' Email Security System on behalf of the University of Brighton.
For more information see <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/is/spam/>

Appendix Six

Millicent First meeting

Analysis stage 1 – Comments from initial readings

- 1.1 Method of embroidery has changed due to life circumstances – embroidery can fulfil different needs and is adaptable to life impositions
- 1.2 sewing remembered as part of being evacuated -
- 1.3 did not come from a sewing family
- 1.4 learnt to sew at school – ‘class for the girls’
- 1.5 little story about being left handed – being made to use right hand – could adapt work so it looked like it was right handed – sewing is different with l hand.
- 1.6 learnt embroidery at school – made chair backs and tray cloths – very much in relation to the time – so its situated to time
- 1.7 evacuated and learnt lace-making – because of being in Bedford – situated to place
- 1.8 at age of 13 she was billeted to a dress maker – story about learning how to make clothes
- 1.9 taught herself short hand typing – again typical of the time – why didn’t she go into dress making? The had master got her a job in the civil service as a short hand typist.
- 1.10 Married with 2 daughters – knitting and sewing for them – making clothes – used to working with her hands.
- 1.11 Youngest daughter was born deaf – a beautiful sewer – M could pass on her skills to her youngest daughter – but not her eldest.
- 1.12 Youngest daughter diagnosed with MS after she left (boarding) school
- 1.13 Had to give up lace making when looking after daughter – because it needs constant attention.
- 1.14 started embroidering again because she needed to do something whilst she sat with her daughter. Nice quote here. Embroidering is something that you can pick up and put down
- 1.15 took an embroidery class – interesting that she wanted to go to a class – perhaps she needed to be taught by an expert – like lace and sewing?
- 1.16 Because she was being taught – she learnt to be more adventurous – began to design as well as stitch
- 1.17 before she joined an embroidering group she stitched using kits or iron on patterns – so the group was central to broadening skill and developing confidence with making own designs.
- 1.18 One group lead to another – joined the EG
- 1.19 EG workshops helped M become braver and braver – also offered aspiration – but could also have put her off – ‘these women with this wonderful work, and I thought what the hell am I doing here?’
- 1.20 Hand embroidering was something they could do together – Daughter designed and M embroidered – a joint project – something J could do despite her illness was design.
- 1.21 Moved to area to be with oldest daughter – no mention of husband. Quite a lot of moving around.
- 1.22 Trip to Parham to see the ‘lovely embroidery’ – more evidence of a joint interest in embroidering - gave them a focus and something to do together when confined to the house.

1.23 Discovered machine embroidering at a craft fair although she had heard of it through the ladies at the EG

1.24 not sure why she signed up because it was a lot of money – it must have appealed to her at the time.

1.25 Teacher is important – this person was a demonstrator – not an embroiderer – how would it be with an OT as demonstrator – does the OT need to be an embroiderer to help someone engage? This is a problem in OT – I can't be a master in all crafts – it's not just prescribing but teaching – this is what used to happen – the Dr's used to prescribe but they were not experts in the crafts themselves and needed to OT's to teach the activities. Now OT's prescribe but have limited skills in crafts so can't teach or adapt to suit individual needs.

1.26 Machine embroidering involves setting up the machine in a specific way and using tools such as a hoop to hold the material. Need to learn to do this properly in order to engage -

1.27 –related to 1.24 'it was wonderful stuff' – so perhaps engaging to look at – something in it was appealing to her visual senses

1.28 When daughter died – Lost everything – her home for 50 years, her role as mother and carer, she had retired to look after J – her other daughter got married. "I was so lost because I didn't know what to do" – she was 'desperately unhappy'

1.29 chance visit to the library – advertisement – went to first class – brilliant teacher – still going to class 15 years later. Was really important to be 'whizzing away on the machine' at first session – engaged from the beginning – teacher was able to grade machining so that M engaged on first contact.

1.30 the group was a life line and continues to be a life line – 'I couldn't do without it now' – She goes weekly and she has become more confident in her ability 'I have got better and better'

1.31 Embroidering and driving are related – one needs the other – M needs to get to the group – the machine and equipment is heavy. She is getting old – her daughter is suggesting that she should give up driving – this has an impact on her life line of embroidering

1.32 I could not face it [giving up embroidery] it means such a lot in my life and it saved me when I was miserable'

1.33 took a year to practice – It was wonderful, I didn't make anything, I just practiced the first year I did not produce anything but a load of rubbish' – despite it being thought of as a load of rubbish – it was wonderful – I assume getting better and better – developing skill felt good and made M want to continue. Unpack why it was so engaging?

1.34 after 15 years she feels that she is quite an expert, 'not anything very complicated' but cushions, boxes and wall-hangings. So now she makes 'things' – produces - and links this with being quite expert. Product making is important – unpack why?

1.35 Exhibition at a National Trust House

1.36 Does not produce embroideries to sell – 'I never attempted to sell anything before, but this bloke offered £75 and I was gobsmacked. She is not professional – and 'it's the skill that you are paying for' – that's interesting – she values skill in her work – developing skill is engaging

1.37 that's their skill you are paying for

1.38 'my hand always goes up' – she likes to participate in Guild exhibitions – a reason to produce something

1.39 Machine embroidering can produce quick results. This one was worked up in a few days and it sold 'and when I saw the rest of the exhibition, I thought, this bloke he has got a peculiar eye'

1.40 Relates to abstract designs – she does not intend things to look like something i.e. tulips - they could be any sort of flowers

1.41 she keeps a lot of her work in carrier bags in her sewing room

1.42 She makes gifts for friends – cushions and boxes

1.43 She made all of her own Christmas cards for friends – but many of her friends have died – this was the first year where she did not make Christmas cards.

1.60 Employment history is complex – worked in Nottingham in a sewing capacity.

1.61 she became skilled enough to be asked for a second opinion from an embroidering conservationist. She knows some tricks that perhaps are not taught ‘officially’.

1.62 These are the hand stitched boxes that M is currently working on

1.44 working on a new project – projects keep her engaged

1.45 Because she produces things for two groups – she tries to marry them up – so she is only working on one thing at once – so not more than one project on the go.

1.46 ‘the idea being’ this is about problem solving – ‘how it will be fastened in such a way that when you open it the flaps fold down’

1.47 M has a ‘gammy hand’ which is currently affecting her ability – which she is unhappy about.

1.48 Tension in practice when an idea doesn’t work – problem solving – ‘I have tried so many ways of fastening it – unpicking it and sewing it on and trying something else – and I am feeling a bit unhappy about that’ -

1.49 She needs to be active – she can’t sit and do nothing

1.50 M has recently experienced several falls – one of which hospitalised her. Her physical capacity has diminished, and she is not able to do things as well as she did before – but she needs to be engaged and over Christmas there were no projects – so she still did it – made the elephant box but she is unhappy with it

1.51 the next project – very much thinking of how to make something out of something else – mentally engaging

1.52 relates to reduced capacity due to her ‘gammy hand’ on the elephant box.

1.53 she started embroidering as soon as she came out of hospital.

1.54 ‘look at that, its not really acceptable under normal circumstances, having that stitching showing’. Following section talks of the effect of the needle – the thin circular needle was too small to hold and the big needle was easier to hold but meant that it was difficult to get small stitches – but that was the only thing that she could do

1.55 She worked at getting the box finished – it took her days – and actually – she is quite pleased with it – all things considered – this was her occupational therapy.

1.56 She worked in Bulgaria (not sure when) perhaps early on before she had children? She became interested in their folk law and she went to school there and learnt Bulgarian embroidery – she became very skilled in Bulgarian embroidery.

1.57 Bulgarian embroidery is counted thread work – need to count it accurately – quite different from her current ‘abstract’ practice. She works with colour and patterns – which she develops/changes rather than repeats

1.58 all her Bulgarian embroidery is now in the Guild archives with authentic and original Bulgarian costumes that she acquired.

1.59 She used to take groups of people to Bulgaria when she lived in Birmingham

1.62 Another project – time taken in making – remembers it but not where it has gone.

1.63 flippant comment about age and the need to sort out her embroideries and stuff. Some idea of being chaotic – many, many years of stuff.

1.64 Millicent’s life work – she feels that it is not valued by others (daughter) and that it will be thrown away when she has gone. Quite a sad comment – but they are not important to anyone other than Millicent.

1.65 one of her first pieces – hanging in wardrobe – its being looked after because of its status as a first piece – or because it is functional as a waistcoat.

1.65 Based on Van Gogh – she perhaps likes basing embroideries around her interests

1.66 not much opportunity to wear it now.

1.67 This really was very beautiful. I think she was very proud of it. Also combined her other skill of dress making

1.68 She made a bag – something she likes to do – not something asked for by the group. The tissue holds a memory of wearing it. This story is significant as its shows the significance of her work.

1.69 This took a significant amount of time – nearly a year.

1.70 she finished this whilst on a cruise – putting the lining in – in a public space – showing it off – she must have been very proud to do this. She wore it for the first time on board for all to see and admire.

1.71 Cushions are also significant – as they are functional and show her interest in travelling – so they each have a story. I think this is important for Millicent – her pictures tell a life story – and thus also hold a memory. Maybe losing her daughter was significant in this memory making?

1.72 A purpose built room right at the top of the house. Away from everyone else. But Millicent prefers to stitch in the back room – why? Its sunny and cosy in the back room and not cluttered. Up here needs some tidying to be a workable space – its become a store room.

1.73 There are hundreds of plastic bags full of completed embroideries.

1.71a every cushion tells a story

1.72 these cushions remind me about the pictures she drew on board the train in Canada. It captures not just a time – but a whole experience – but she will do it when she returns – to hold onto the experience – to re-live the experience. But also marks the passing of time – makes it real. These cushions are more than photographs.

1.73 Her daughter designed this – must have been when she was very ill because she never saw it finished. Made out of old dresses – was that on purpose – to remember her by. Did this start off the whole cushion making process? I don't think so – but it does show how much emotion is involved in the construction – she couldn't finish it until 10 years after she died – but she kept it for that length of time and eventually completed it.

1.74 Boxes are something that comes from Millicent – they are special gifts or for a special purpose.

1.75 Book covers are also significant – she make a special book cover for her favorite book – kind of using embroidering to illustrate her passions in life.

1.75a another special book cover for a book her friend wrote and must have given her.

1.76 likes to learn traditional embroidery techniques and designs – Bulgarian, Indian – fits in with love of travelling and culture

1.77 she stores everything up here and it's a 'mess'

1.78 this is a great quote that shows how much stuff she has and how much she has made. Mixture of projects from group but also capturing of life events and interests.

1.79 not much work is framed – this poppy piece was framed

1.80 'study in yellow' was named and framed – she was too proud of this to sell it – now its in a bag and she wishes that she had.

1.81 she is very skilled – knows lots of techniques and tricks – but she can still try new things – but she is quite assertive and won't do anything too far off her interests.

Appendix Seven

Common narrative themes across participants

- Body, mind and materials become conjoined in the act of embroidering which becomes a consuming and deeply personal relationship that can be addictive. A personal and inseparable relationship that unites body, mind and materials.

Common historic narrative themes

- Importance of access to materials which were considered as 'special'.
- Opportunity to engage in some form of textiles.
- Praise/encouragement from others to engage in a 'female' occupation related to home making.
- Life events fueled/inhibited engagement.
- Embroidering self-selected as an acceptable textile activity unique to the individual – separation from others/imposed persona's – developing personal identity.
- Practice becomes habitual
- Embroidering re-discovered in later life but in a new form – machine embroidering
- Past embroideries still in possession and hold a story related to the historic context of personal embroidering practice.

Common physical narrative themes

- Embroidering can promote a corporeal reaction to colour, texture, shape, dimension and design that can be either pleasurable or repellent.
- Embroidering can satisfy an aesthetic need – humans have an aesthetic need that is satisfied through embroidering.
- Allows the opportunity to create a (visual) effect that relates to personal causation, and expression of identity outside of that which is imposed by others. This can be a very liberating experience as it allows exploration, adventure, excitement, freedom, play and breaking free from convention.
- Fulfils a biological need to be active when sitting – active as opposed to idle sitting – prevents itchy hands.
- Embroidering requires mental and physical effort – it can be a personal investment and a struggle and needs a personal, safe and comfortable space to participate.
- Embroidering is done within the body. The act is private and secret but not isolating. It can be done within a physically weakened body and can be adapted to meet different physical/mental needs.
- Embroidering can provide a physical and emotional escape from a difficult life situation or simply the tediousness of life itself.
- Embroidering can promote tension as it requires 'time out' of everyday life/expectations – this can be seen as self-indulgent/selfish.

Common social narrative themes

- Though typically a lone activity, embroidering is about connection to others. It provides the opportunity to show an internal state, or message to others in a tangible form and as such can be about social relationships and currency.
- Embroidering can involve social connections either real or virtual that help and sometimes hinder practice.

- Embroidering is seen as a feminine pastime and lacks importance and Kudos in a western culture.
- Embroidering techniques are situated in culture, tradition and heritage.
- Embroidering can offer a sense of identity and/or freedom from social conformity – in practice it can be liberating which is in contradiction (an alternate narrative) of the westernised image.
- Embroidering and embroideries can create a reaction in other people, and this can fuel or hinder practice.
- Embroideries need to have a purpose in order to come into existence.
- Embroideries can and often do tell a story and are created for an audience – even if the audience is the person themselves.
- Engagement in embroidering can be fueled or inhibited by a (difficult) life event/situation.
- Social meaning can change depending on when and where someone embroiders.
- Embroideries are personal and can take on the persona of the person that made them and can have little meaning/purpose outside of that person.

Common material/special narrative themes.

- Materials/tools matter; they have agency. They can be engaging, assistive, facilitative, and promote a physical/emotional response.
- Materials/ tools can also act – they can hinder, interrupt, deter and prevent embroidering practice.
- Materials/tools and techniques can offer endless opportunity for embroidering/embellishment – there is no end to their potential to work with them.
- Materials can be controlled, manipulated and used to create an effect which can feel liberating and empowering – but with caution as they can also be extremely disempowering – needs to be carefully graded.
- Touching and looking at materials, fabrics, textures and colours can promote a physical/emotional response.
- Materials can be coveted, loved, treasured, adored, respected and thus hoarded.
- Materials and tools are essential to practice and need to be available and accessible. They can be expensive.
- Different methods of stitching or materials can promote a distinct physical/emotional response within an individual.
- Embroideries become entities that require space, storage, display or giving away.
- Embroideries can become material symbolic/personal stories.
- The embroidering process is co-dependent on the person, fabric, threads, tools and situation. The evolving embroidery is an entanglement.