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Collaboration in Social Hobby Groups: Transferring Qualities of Teamwork from the Social Sphere to the Professional Sphere

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COLLABORATION IN SOCIAL HOBBY GROUPS: TRANSFERRING QUALITIES OF

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Master of Arts, Writing

By

Emily M. McCormick

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ABSTRACT

Workplace collaboration has been the subject of much research and writing. Social collaboration can help inform our understanding of how people prefer to work together and should be studied for its aspects that could be transferred to the professional sphere. This research examines how members in social hobby groups collaborate with each other and what aspects of that collaboration can be applied to the workplace. I observed and surveyed five local hobby groups to better understand how the members worked together and what made this type of socializing appealing to members. One of the primary aspects of this social collaboration is a feeling of belonging in a social sphere. This can be brought into the professional sphere by allotting more time for employees to socialize in non-work capacities and through business leaders promoting a positive working atmosphere.

KEYWORDS: workplace collaboration, social collaboration, collaborative communication, team work, mutuality in collaboration, appreciation in the workplace

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INTRODUCTION

Being able to work well with others is a vital set of skills that we spend a significant amount of time trying to develop in our students. Many classes in college include at least one group project, often with the stated intention of helping students develop these soft skills, although many people may remember group projects in school negatively and may transfer those negative feelings into the workplace, especially on new projects, during crunch times or other periods of high stress.

In the context of collaboration, the workplace environment could benefit from insights into successful hobby groups, which exist to bring together people with similar interests. Some organize themselves to offer education and experience in the hobby. Some give members an outlet to serve the community or raise awareness for an important issue. Some are just a group of friends who all happen to know the same craft. No matter the size or the type though, all successful hobby groups have convinced people to give up their valuable free time to join with other people and engage in a shared interest. Often, these groups lead to members teaching each other, helping each other, or working together to create one finished product.

One of the largest differences between hobby groups and teams within the workplace is the level of agency. People may find jobs that they love or leave jobs they hate, but having a job is in itself a necessity for most adults in the world. No matter the person's feelings on their job, having an income, and in many cases health care and a retirement fund is a necessity, and losing or quitting a job suddenly can put a person's life at risk. Hobby groups do not have the same consequences should a member decide they no longer want to be part of the group. They may face social ramifications, especially if they were a person who took on leadership roles within the group, but quitting a hobby group does not carry the same stakes. However, the lack of consequences also

points to a difference in rewards. Hobby group members are not paid for their time. They find it fulfilling to simply be part of the group and engage in the hobby. In the age where a person can look up how to do practically anything on the Internet, these groups still thrive, so they are not only places to learn about a hobby, but also a place people truly want to engage with other people. They want to collaborate.

Much research has been done on workplace collaboration, but existing research provides few insights into collaboration that occurs outside the workplace. Though there are some significant differences between the environment of a hobby group and the workplace environment, there are enough similarities that it is worthwhile to look to these groups as a source of information for how we can better form and maintain collaborative teams in the workplace. My research examines five hobby groups. Through observation notes and survey responses, I look at how members of these groups interact with others in their group and what motivates them to continue to be part of the group. Then, I discuss the results of my research using Thompson, Perry, and Miller's (2009) five dimensions of collaboration: governance, administration, organizational autonomy, norms, and mutuality. Finally, I make a recommendation on which of the qualities of social collaboration can be transferred to the workplace, and how. By discussing how to integrate these aspects of social collaboration, I hope to provide a way for teams in the workplace to collaborate in a more rewarding and equitable way for the individuals and thus allow for more successful projects for the company.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although common themes connect research on teamwork in the workplace, each author tends to use a slightly different vocabulary and of course focuses on a particular aspect of collaboration. They all, however, remained firmly planted in the workspace or occasionally the university student experience as a source of knowledge. My research explores the social sphere in hobby groups to see what aspects of collaboration can be applied to the workplace. Looking at how people collaborate when that collaboration is completely voluntary can bring new insights into how people prefer to work together.

To unify the following literature, I use the dimensions of collaboration as described by Thompson, Perry, and Miller (2009). Their article aims to pin down a meaning of collaboration that can cross disciplines and provide a multi-dimensional model to better report research in this area (24). They state that "collaboration is a process in which autonomous or semi-autonomous actors interact through formal and informal negotiation, jointly creating rules and structures governing their relationships and ways to act or decide on the issues that brought them together; it is a process involving shared norms and mutually beneficial interactions" (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 25). From there, they identify five key dimensions of collaboration: governance and administration (which address structural aspects), mutuality and norms (which describe social capital dimensions), and organizational autonomy (which acknowledges agency) (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 25). I discuss existing literature on workplace collaboration through the frame of these categories and connect the data from my own research to this model as well.

Governance

Governance refers to the members of the group being able to understand how to jointly make decisions about rules (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 25). Even in very casual groups, people often have at least an unspoken sense of how rules are made. This was an aspect of collaboration that does not seem to receive as much attention as other aspects, such as trust-building which will be discussed as part of the norms dimension of Thompson, Perry, and Miller's (2009) model.

Linda Twiname, however, touches on this in her 2008 article, discussing her experience working with a company to reorganize the hierarchy of the factory and how employees communicated with management to affect their work experience. The article partially focuses on how more engagement in the workplace can lead to better conditions for employees. She argues that action research, a methodology that involves the researcher and the participants taking active roles in the study, could help correct power imbalances imbedded in most companies. Her goal was to give workers a method of collaboration through which both they and management would benefit, as opposed to only management. She states that "[action research] can be utilized to break the polarization of power imbalance, particularly in environments where power holders become willing to share power" (p. 148). One of the sources of tension in this factory was the sense that workers did not know when or why new rules or procedures would be implemented, leading to breakdowns in communication between management and employees. Through Twiname's (2008) research, workers established a representative group to bridge communication between them and management. This led to employees having more of a voice in the ways that procedures and rules changed and management being more aware of the needs of the employees.

Administration

Administration describes the administrative structure that groups must have to achieve the shared purpose (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 26). This is discussed in Pontefract's (2014) article about workplace collaboration where he argues for what he calls "asymmetrical leadership" in modern organizations. Pontefract (2014) defines symmetrical leadership as leadership is equal parts command and control—leaders command employees to work on tasks and control them through various methods (p. 7). He suggests an "asymmetrical leadership" system where leaders spend a small amount of time per year shadowing the employees on the front lines and allow those employees to give feedback and input on how their jobs may be improved (Pontefract, 2014, p. 7-8). He speaks of collaboration in terms of how a whole company works together, but his central point is the importance of input and communication across the hierarchy of the business—specifically the importance of employees having a chance to directly communicate and give input to their leaders. This connects to Twiname's (2008) work as well. In order to give workers a better understanding of their management's perspective and then a better platform from which to communicate their own perspective, she helped to reorganize the administrative structure of the company. The new representative team that bridged the gap between the two companies altered the structure of communication in the company.

Similarly, Faraj, Kudaravalli, and Wasko discuss how leaders develop in online communities in their 2015 article, "Leading Collaboration in Online Communities." They propose that "sociability and knowledge contribution behaviors as well as structural social capital tend to lead to being identified as a leader by members of the online community" (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015, p. 393). Here we see social behaviors and knowledge-sharing acknowledged as important characteristics, not only of a collaborative community, but also of

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leadership. I imagine that a similar phenomenon to what they describe could be observed in social crafting groups, which often have informal hierarchies, and often those hierarchies are predicated on skill level. They state that structural social capital is represented by "betweenness centrality," or "the degree to which a participant is in the 'middle' of the communication between various members in the group" (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015, p. 400). They found that while structural social capital is associated with identification of leaders, the likelihood of leader identification is significantly greater if they also contribute knowledge and show social behaviors (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015, p. 406). Finally, they found that "knowledge contribution has the most likelihood of increasing the number of times a leader is identified by others" (Faraj, Kudaravalli, & Wasko, 2015, p. 403). In this online community, knowledge-exchange was a powerful part of determining leadership roles.

Organizational Autonomy

Organizational autonomy describes the level to which the actors within a group can act autonomously and the tension between acting in self-interest or in the interest of the collective (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 26).

Ren, Kiesler, and Fussell (2008) discuss this dimension quite a bit in their case study set in a hospital operating room that examines the challenges of multi-group collaboration, and specifically, high-stress multi-group collaboration. With overlapping groups in a high-stress environment, many quick decisions are being made about whether one person's group will be prioritized over another. The authors identified three critical factors to effective multi-group collaboration: trajectory awareness of what is going on outside a person's workstation, information systems integration, and information pooling and learning at the organizational level

(Ren, Kiesler, & Fussell, 2008, p.107). Trajectory awareness is described in a way that can be applied to organizational autonomy. Being aware of what is happening outside of their own perspective is the first step to making decisions regarding self-interest and group-interest. Then, those members of different groups have to balance their own self-interest with the larger multi-group interest to keep things running smoothly. Ren, Kiesler, & Fussell (2008) note that "key decision makers such as charge nurses and charge anesthesiologists are constantly interrupted with requests for information and unexpected events that require adjustment in the schedule" (p. 116). They describe how these key decision makers must make these schedule changes while keeping in mind the priorities of the Operating Rooms, which is to interfere with work flow through the OR as little as possible. The authors add in the last part of their article that, "a collaborative culture encouraging relationship building, informal communication, and perspective taking will facilitate multiple group coordination" (Ren, Kiesler, & Fussell, 2008, p.127). This article is one of the few to address the need for a work culture that encourages characteristics of good collaboration, and yet this is a very small part of the author's argument and they do not expand on how to achieve such an environment.

Norms

Norms describe how people generally show an "I-will-if-you-will" mentality in collaboration that's based on their perceived obligations to one another. As people work together, they build trust in their relationship and move away from that mentality towards a more sustainable, longer term commitment to each other (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 28).

This definition is applicable to Cheng, Yin, Azadegan, and Kolfschoten's (2015) work that focuses on the development of trust in teams where people collaborated both in-person and

virtually (termed hybrid teams by the author). This research looked at student groups in China and the Netherlands and asked participants to rate different aspects of trust on a weekly basis over the course of a project. They were also asked to explain why their ratings changed, what work had been done that week, and the frequency and type of communication (Cheng, Yin, Azadegan, & Kolfschoten, 2015). The researchers hypothesize that trust development has a cultural component and found that the levels of trust in the Chinese group all increase initially while the Netherlands' group declines at first before increasing in the 3rd week (of 8). In both samples, the level of trust fluctuates in the middle and towards the end and the level of trust decreases in most factors at the end (Cheng, Yin, Azadegan, & Kolfschoten, 2015, p. 277). The Chinese students had been grouped randomly and needed to get to know each other first. The Netherlands students selected their own groups and so had more initial trust in the group, which may partially explain the drop (Cheng, Yin, Azadegan, & Kolfschoten, 2015, p. 279). They found that the Dutch students had to perform under high pressure with teammates with whom they were already somewhat familiar. The individuals in the Chinese teams got to know each other on the job (Cheng, Yin, Azadegan, & Kolfschoten, 2015, p. 280). These two different samples can be applied to the workplace as well. In some cases, people are complete strangers at the beginning of a project and in some cases they are already familiar with a person before the beginning of a project, depending on the size and organization of the overall company.

We can also see the pattern of including social behaviors and commitment in Bond-Barnard, Fletcher, and Steyn's (2018) work. In their article they aim to identify the factors of trust, collaboration, and the likelihood of project management success through a survey distributed to project management professionals and students. Their study "confirmed the hypothesis that the level of trust predicts the degree of collaboration, which in turn, predicts the

success of the project. When practitioners promote trust and collaboration in a project, it is more likely that the project will be a success in terms of time, cost and quality objectives but more specifically that it will be perceived as a success by all the stakeholders involved" (Bond-Barnard, Fletcher, & Steyn, 2018, p. 448). The idea of predicting the success of a team is similar to the work of Kolfschoten, de Vreede, Briggs, and Sol, who examined the idea that collaborative work practices are engineerable in their 2010 article. However, though they aim to find collaborative techniques that lead to self-sustaining groups, they focus only on workplace models of collaboration and do not mention social forms of collaboration. They break down collaboration into seven main resources: effort, knowledge, time, technology, money, political influence and physical workspace (Kolfschoten, de Vreede, Briggs, & Sol, 2010, p. 306). They also make a point to say that "collaborative success depends on willingness of participants" (Kolfschoten, de Vreede, Briggs, & Sol, 2010, p. 304). Though there is some discussion of how willingness of participants affects these goals, very little discussion about how the participants actually work together exists. Rather, again we see a focus on trying to predict and measure successful collaborative groups without a discussion of how to encourage these characteristics into a work environment or what the benefits would be to the individual employee.

Mutuality

For mutuality to exist, groups "must experience mutually beneficial interdependencies based either on differing interests or on shared interests—usually based on homogeneity or an appreciation and passion for an issue that goes beyond an individual organization's mission" (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 27).

One example of this is in Barmby, Sessions, and Zangelidis's (2016) article that examined the effect of collaboration on office absences by studying optometrists who either worked solitarily or shared their office space with a colleague. They found that a non-cooperative situation tended to result in a higher absence rate on account of the extra effort the absent colleague imposes on the present colleague. More cooperative relationships, then, resulted in lower absence rates (Barmby, Sessions, & Zangelidis, 2016, p. 24). When social behaviors are generally positive, not only do collaborative groups function better, but so does the workspace as whole, as colleagues who merely share space see a positive effect as well.

Mutuality is especially relevant to my research reported here. A common theme of many of these articles is the discussion of commitment and engagement, which can be understood as a facet of mutuality in that members must all participate in the group for the interdependencies to feel beneficial. Many researchers acknowledge commitment and engagement as necessary parts of collaboration (Bond-Barnard, 2018; Boughzala & de Vreede, 2015; Kolfschoten, 2015; Twiname, 2008), but there is relatively little discussion of how to create an atmosphere that encourages the qualities. Twiname's research is a notable exception to this observation, in that she took a much more active role in her research than is usually seen.

Additionally, many of my sources that discuss building a positive working environment focused on ideas that fell into the mutuality category. For example, Cheung and Yeung (2015) studied the effect of promoting a nurturing culture in the workplace, specifically with regards to the employee's education and income level. After analyzing their data, they state "cultivating organizational nurturing culture in the work unit or organization is a means of promoting job performance, mental health, and quality of work life in general. Cultivation implies the strengthening of training, feedback, appreciation, reward; the consideration of workloads; and

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other ways of upgrading" (Cheung & Yeung, 2015, p. 261). This nurturing culture, in other words, helps build the mutually beneficial interdependencies that in turn make employees feel more engaged, and appreciated in the workplace.

This idea of a nurturing culture and more specifically, the feeling of being appreciated can be found in a number of professional periodicals as well. These periodicals point out that employees who feel appreciated tend to be happier and more productive in their work (Chadha & Kumar, 2016; Collie, 2019; Giulioni, 2015; Palmieri, 2012; Pathak, 2013; Ramsey, 2010; White, 2014). Many of these articles describe specific ways appreciation can be shown, including personal notes (Chaha & Kumar, 2016; Collie, 2019; Giulioni, 2015; Palmieri, 2012; Pathak, 2013; Ramsey, 2010), giving awards or public recognition (Collie, 2019; Pathak, 2013), or even just a verbal comment about the appreciated action (Collie, 2019; Pathak, 2013; Ramsey, 2010). The majority of these articles emphasize the importance of authenticity and individualism in showing appreciation (Collie, 2019; Giulioni, 2015; Pathak, 2013; Ramsey, 2010; White, 2014). White (2014) makes the point that "group-based, generic, impersonal awards leads recipients to feel the recognition is more for show than genuine appreciation for them individually" (p. 108).

Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, and Fletcher (2011) work with this idea of a positive working environment in their research identifying the range of positive experiences employees have at work and how those positive experiences overlap or relate to each other. They surveyed 2,846 U.S. workers, asked them to describe their best workplace experience, and found that one of the more frequent responses described others' recognition of the participant as "special, standing out in the crowd, and being positively different from others" (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011, p. 11). They coded this kind of interaction as "appreciation." Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, and Fletcher (2011) identify "recognition" as "*the* most frequent

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experience evoking positive emotion at work" (p. 12). Recognition was categorized as instances where others orally gave positive feedback to participants (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011, p. 12). These two categories have quite a bit in common and both speak to employees' desire to be recognized for their contributions and reaffirmed in their place in the workplace community. People want to feel that they are contributing to the group and that the group both welcomes and recognizes their participation. In my survey research, many participants described feelings of community and thus belonging as reasons they continued to be part of the group.

One research article that really does not fit within Thomson, Perry, and Miller's model focuses on the language used within a knitting circle to denote experience levels and the exchange of knowledge. Jacobson (2001) observed and conducted interviews of a knitting circle. Though Jacobson's (2001) research is not focused on workplace collaboration, it does address collaboration and learning in a social group. She states that "the language used by the speech community that is the knitting circle unites the group and provides an atmosphere of caring that ensures that questions can be asked freely" (Jacobson, 2001, p. 4). She goes on to state that "the knitting circle is a speech community whose members engage in informal teaching and learning situations. The language used by members of the community established social roles; novice knitters employ different speech acts than the more experienced knitters do" (Jacobson, 2001, p. 10). In this group, Jacobson (2001) observes social behaviors and an exchange of knowledge. The unexamined aspect of this knitting circle is the motivation of crafters to join or continue coming. Furthermore, Jacobson (2001) explores the speech patterns and knowledge exchange of this group, but from the perspective of communication rather than collaboration. Her focus is on

how the knitting group communicates information rather than the dynamics of how they work together. The two aspects are closely linked, but the difference in focus is a significant one.

With the exception of Jacobson (2001) and Cheng, Yin, and Kolfscoten (2015), all of the literature discussed in this section has focused solely on workplace collaboration. Scholars have said little about how people collaborate outside of the workplace and outside of the motivations that come with the workplace. Although the aspects of collaboration in social crafting groups differ from what has been observed in the workplace, practices from social collaboration should be used not only to enhance the quality of workplace collaboration but should especially be applied to improve the experiences of the individual employees. My research examines the characteristics of social collaboration that could be transferred to the workplace for this purpose.

METHODS

I initially became interested in this topic as a way to bring women's technical communication for social purposes into the technical writing literature. One of the easiest ways to observe this kind of communication is in the local crafting group. Group members, often women, tend to join these groups either to engage in a social circle, learn a new skill, or often a combination of both. To make my research more applicable to the average workplace, I decided shift my focus from the gendered aspect to hobby groups more broadly. Before I began my research, my study (#IRB-FY2019-438) received approval from the MSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) in February 2019. I observed five hobby groups and seven meetings. I administered a survey to all willing participants and received 55 responses. That data was then compared to existing research on workplace collaboration.

Research Design

To research this topic, I observed and surveyed a few local hobby groups and compared the data to existing research on collaboration in the workplace, which I began to discuss in my literature review. The purpose of the surveys was to account for experiences participants had in the group I was not able to directly observe. I was especially interested in how members shared information of their craft or hobby and what motivated them to continue being part of the group, and so the surveys allowed me to gather more pertinent data on that topic. My observations allowed me to note interactions happening in real time and make notes about the overall structure of the meeting and group as a whole.

Sample and Sample Selection. I searched for local hobby groups through the local library's directory and then did further research to find out how active they were and when they

met. I observed groups that had met for at least six months because I felt that longevity of the group indicates an effective collaboration style—people enjoy the collaboration enough to continue to make room for it in their schedules. I ended up with five groups: the Ozarks Area Crochet Group, the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society, Woodturners of Southwest Missouri, Springfield Astronomical Society, and the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild. I observed two different sub-groups within the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild: Community Quilts and the Featherweight Group. Within these groups, I was able to find participants with a wide range of membership longevity. I collected surveys from people who had been part of the group for a single day and people who had been part of the group for more than 30 years. The largest category was people who had been in the group 5-9 years—34.5% of my respondents fit into this category. Another 32.7% had been involved for 10 years or more. Those who had been involved for less than a year made up 10.9% of my responses.

The majority of the participants were retired white women, most likely middle class. All of the groups I observed required some disposable income to purchase materials and equipment for the hobby and three of the five groups required the additional expense of yearly dues in order to be official members. The largest group that I observed was the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild, which accounted for 58.1% of my responses. All of the groups I observed did have a range of ages, though the leaders in charge of the groups appeared to be mostly of retirement age. The Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild and the Ozarks Area Crochet Group were made up entirely of women. All of the other groups were mixed gender, though the Woodturners of Southwest Missouri and the Springfield Astronomical Society were heavily male-dominated. The Greater Ozarks Audubon Society was the only group that had a more even mix of men and women.

Collecting Data. I observed seven meetings—two meetings that were different groups within the Ozarks Piecemakers Quilt Guild and one each of the other groups. At the beginning of each meeting, I talked to the leader of the group and asked them to introduce me during their announcements and allow me to explain my research to the whole group. After I had introduced myself, I asked everyone who felt comfortable doing so to fill out a survey. Participants only filled out one survey for the duration of the research, though I visited one group more than once.

Procedure

As discussed above, I approached my research by observing hobby groups, and conducting a survey of those hobby group members. Following my observations, I compared my notes with the published research on workplace collaboration.

Observations. To help focus my observations, I compiled in advance a short list of key interactions I was especially interested in recording. My focus was on social interactions and more specifically, collaboration between group members. For that reason, I paid special attention to the following occurrences:

- People talking about or demonstrating the internal organization of the group such as leaders giving announcements, members talking to particular people who are in charge of certain areas, people in leadership positions discussing plans for the group, etc.
- People talking with each other and what they tend to talk about (i.e. discussions of family, current events, project they're working on, the hobby itself).
- People assisting each other or offering advice.
- The overall structure of the meeting.

I used this list as a way to decide when to record my observations and when not to, in an effort to avoid compiling information that would not be useful. I wrote quick, handwritten notes during the meeting and fleshed them out on a computer shortly after the meeting ended.

After I completed my observations, I looked for patterns in my notes and coded them into five categories; Self-organization, hobby discussion, non-hobby discussion, structured education, and unstructured education. These categories were more concrete than my observation short list and allowed me to more accurately group the interactions I observed. I wanted to keep the distinction between hobby-related conversation and non-hobby-related conversations as I felt the former mirrored workplace knowledge exchange and the latter mirrored social behavior more closely.

Three of the groups that I observed had planned programs meant to educate members on a topic within their hobby. It was my understanding that another meeting I attended also often had educational programs, but not during the meeting I observed. To account for this, I coded for structured education—preplanned events meant to share knowledge with members—and unstructured education—moments when members asked questions or needed help and were assisted by other members. I also wanted to distinguish between hobby-related conversation, which often included members asking each other for advice, and members teaching each other (unstructured education). This distinction is one that Jacobson (2001) makes note of in her research on speech patterns in a knitting group. She distinguishes between how experienced knitters ask each other for *advice* and novice knitters ask experienced knitters for *help.* The varied level of experience is worth noting in this setting. Finally, though I made notes on the overall structure of the meetings, I did not include these in my coding unless they exemplified

the group's self-organization. Rather, they were more helpful to give context for other observations and the survey responses from the group members.

Surveys. The following are the questions I organized into a paper survey. I chose these questions to get more information about instances of collaboration in the group that I had not been able to observe. I also chose these questions to collect information on the motivations of group members and their beliefs on the benefits of being involved with the group.

- How long have you been a part of this group?
- How often do you come to group meetings?
- Do you feel that you benefit from being part of the group?
- If you feel you've benefitted, how so?
- Do you feel your skills benefit from being part of this group?
- If you feel your skills have benefitted, how so?
- How often do members help each other with or give input on projects?
- Can you describe a time that other members of the group helped you solve a problem you were having with your craft/hobby? Who started the conversation and how did you help them?
- Can you describe a time that you have helped other members with problems they've had with their craft? Who started the conversation and how did you help them?
- What is the main reason that you continue to be part of this group?

After being introduced by the group leader, I went to each attendee and asked them to participate and fill out my survey. I explained the consent form and what participation would involve and answered any questions the attendees had. Most participants that were willing to fill out the survey completed it during their meeting and handed the completed form to me before leaving. A few took their survey home and mailed the completed form to me later. When I sorted through these responses, I organized the multiple-choice answers by group and coded the short answers into common themes. The resulting data can be seen in the following Results section in Tables 1-8.

RESULTS

The two methods of data collection used complemented and tended to reinforce each other. Two of the coding categories were structured and unstructured education and I saw these themes in the responses in the surveys as well. Similarly, I grouped instances of participants talking casually about their hobby and asking each other for opinions in my observation notes. Quite a few references to this type of conversation appeared in the survey responses. Overall, the data reveals a recurring theme of friendships and social interactions being an important, and quite possibly the most important aspect to the groups being observed.

Observations

As discussed previously, I sorted my observation data into five categories; Self-organization, hobby discussion, non-hobby discussion, structured education, and unstructured education. There was quite a bit of variety in the groups depending on their structure, size, and overall purpose. The Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild Community Quilt meeting was by far the most internally organized meeting that I observed. By contrast, the Ozarks Area Crochet Group was probably the least internally organized. Springfield Astronomical Society had the least amount of non-hobby discussion, while the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild groups and the Ozarks Area Crochet Group had the most.

Self-Organization. Two of the five organizations that participated in this study (Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild and the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society) were branches of a national organization and another one (Woodturners of Southwest Missouri) was closely tied with a national association. This most likely lent more internal structure than there might otherwise have been. All three of these groups had officers leading the group and organizing meetings. In

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the case of Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild, chair-people were elected to head particular

programs or sub-groups within the branch. Springfield Astronomical Society has leaders who are

the point of contact through their website and set up the meetings and field trips. Otherwise, the

structure is very informal. Ozarks Area Crochet Group has a member who similarly is in charge

of reserving meeting spaces and allowing new members into the Facebook group, but otherwise

there is no internal structure.

Within the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild, I observed two different groups. The

Featherweight Group was led by two chair-people who gave announcements during the meeting,

but otherwise the group has no formal hierarchy. Community Quilts on the other hand, was the

most internally organized group I observed. This group's purpose is to make quilts to be donated

to various charities in the communities including Harmony House, Ronald McDonald House,

and a project started by a member of Community Quilts to place blankets in police cars for

children who have been in traumatizing situations. The group produces over 1,000 quilts every

year and to do this they are highly organized. The group has broken the creation process into six

steps: Cutting pieces and putting together kits; sewing top quilts together; cutting batting; sewing

top quilts, batting, and backing together with the longarm sewing machine; binding on smaller

sewing machines; and finally hand stitching and label sewing. Members self-divide according to

what they want to do and what they see needs to be done. Most women work at one stage of the

quilt-making process for an entire meeting. Those that move around tend to be the two chair-

people who head the group and the people who are trained to use the longarm sewing machine,

of which there are only a few. For each stage of creation is a shelf in the storage room that quilts

are stored on so each member is able to find quilts to work on or deposit quilts that they have

completed at their stage. There is also a consistent practice of appreciation and inclusion in this

group. Members go out of their way to make sure everyone has a group to go to lunch with or someone to talk to. The co-chairs make a point to thank every member for their work as they leave for the day. These aspects do not exactly fit into the category of self-organization, but they help illustrate the way the group works as a whole, and possibly how the members work together as seamlessly as they do. They also connect very nicely to the mutuality dimension of collaboration as discussed by Thompson, Perry and Miller (2009).

All of the groups I observed showed some amount of self-organization depending on what that particular group needs. For example, the crochet group is fairly small and the people involved do not feel the need for a lot of internal organization, while the Community Quilts group is highly organized to produce as much as they do. The craft of quilting and the goal of Community Quilts are both suited to a highly organized group. The astronomical group, as another example, needs a form of leadership to organize meetings and trips to the field for observations, but otherwise does not appear to have much hierarchy. Their level of organization fits their needs.

Hobby Discussion. When coding for this category, I specifically looked for notes referencing casual hobby talk between members rather than programs (which I count as structured education) or requests for help (which I considered unstructured education). Often though, discussion of the hobby often intertwined with participants asking for help or advice on their projects, so at times it was hard to draw a clear line between the two.

Of the groups that I observed, the group that seemed to stick the most to hobby-focused discussion was the Springfield Astronomical Society. The other groups had more of a mix of hobby and non-hobby discussion, especially before and after meetings. Conversations at the Springfield Astronomical Society meeting focused mostly on the shared hobby. People shared

stories of observations they had done and places they had gone to observe the night sky. For two members who were new to the group, these conversations often crossed into unstructured education as they took notes or asked follow-up questions to the person telling the story. On the whole, conversation was largely hobby-focused.

When I observed the Community Quilts group, one of the leaders spoke to me about how organic advice and education can be. She described situations where a person may put up quilt pieces on a felt board to start arranging them and she may get unsolicited advice from other members who see what she is doing. As I will discuss in later sections, one of the common descriptions of members helping each other from the survey responses was people giving advice on color combinations or borders for a quilt. I would count these instances as hobby discussion to reflect the egalitarian quality of the interaction. These women are not necessarily "correcting" each other, but offering their own perspective and opinion for the quilter to do with what she wants.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Featherweight Group within the Quilt Guild had the least amount of hobby discussion. Most often, people would take some time to show their progress in their quilt and the members around her would give feedback or praise. At one point in time, two women discussed brands of lamps they use to light their quilting space at home. The vast majority of conversation was not hobby focused, however, and tended to be the members catching up and sharing their personal lives with each other. Similarly, the Ozarks Area Crochet Group and the Community Quilt Group also talked about non-hobby topics much more often than they talked about their shared hobby.

The Woodturners of Southwest Missouri and the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society both have much less data to inform this category than the other groups. Both groups' meetings were

focused around a presentation and their spaces were both large enough that I was not able to observe the entire group in a single room in the times before and after the meeting. I was also somewhat limited in that the time after these presentations was when I was distributing surveys and so had less ability to observe than other groups that had more time for casual discussion through the meeting.

      Non-Hobby Discussion. This is a broad category meant to show how often I observed group members simply socializing outside of their shared hobby. Any conversation that did not pertain to the hobby they were currently engaging in was counted as part of this category. In both groups from the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild and the Ozarks Area Crochet Group, there was more of this conversation than hobby discussion. In all three groups, members made a point to catch up with other members' lives. In one case in the Featherweight Group, a member had recently had health troubles and announced to the group (a group numbering between 20 and 30 women) what those health issues had been and where she was in recovery. Through the meeting, she was able to talk openly about her health issues to other members who relayed their own experiences dealing with hospital stays and surgeries.

      Similarly, in the Ozarks Area Crochet Group, members talked about aspects of their home life freely. Even in such a small group (only six members) it was common for multiple conversations to occur at the same time and for people to move between them. Most often, conversation revolved around the members' lives outside of the group. One member even made a point to ask a quieter member about what had been going on in her life.

      In the Community Quilts and Featherweight groups, conversation also tended to revolve around whatever was going on in the lives of the members. These groups were much larger than the crochet group and members tended to group up around tables, so multiple conversations were

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always going on. Notably, in the Featherweight group, members moved around the room more often than in the Community Quilts group (where quilters typically had a station for the entire time) and seemed to use this as an excuse to visit with more people around the room. I heard comments about how one member had not yet visited with another member, implying that she was trying to catch up with many of the attendees that day. Overall, these groups showed most clearly the social aspect of these hobby groups.

      Structured Education. Four of the six meetings I observed had some element of structured education. I defined this as any time a member or guest planned to explain a part of the hobby to the larger group. The meetings with the Wood Turners of Southwest Missouri, the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society, and the Springfield Astronomical Society were mainly comprised of structured education. Many of those meetings were structured education in the form of a presentation from either a guest speaker or a member of the group. In the case of the Featherweight Group however, during the announcements portion of the meeting, one of the chair-people of the group called up another member to explain a pattern called "Nesting Robins" to the group as a whole. The group would be using the pattern for a project, and this member had experience using it, so she spent some time explaining how it would work and directing interested members to find her if they had any questions after announcements. I also know, through survey responses and conversations with members of the Quilt Guild that the Guild provides numerous classes and workshops to members, but I was not able to observe any of these. Similarly, the Woodturners of Southwest Missouri have a mentorship program that they heavily encourage their new members to take advantage of on top of the structured education provided by guest speakers and presentations at meetings. I was not, however, able to observe mentors working with members, as this typically occurs one-on-one.

The groups that *only* engaged in unstructured education were the Ozarks Area Crochet Group and the Community Quilts group within the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild, though I include the latter with the understanding that their umbrella organization offers numerous structured education opportunities.

Unstructured Education. I defined unstructured education as instances of members teaching each other as problems or questions come up during the meeting. As mentioned before, I differentiated between members teaching each other and asking for opinions, which I classified as hobby discussion. These two categories can intertwine easily, for instance in the case of the new member at the Springfield Astronomical Society meeting. He engaged in conversation with an experienced member and periodically the conversation would turn to his questions about the hobby and the more experienced member would answer those questions and the new member would take notes on those answers.

Similarly, when observing the Community Quilts group, one member asked what makes some quilts stiff and others soft. This started a discussion about batting, stitching, and quality of fabric. This is another example that is at once conversation and education. I ultimately categorized it as unstructured education to emphasize that the member had a question that was answered by people who had the experience to know what might cause that. In answering, not only does the initial question asker have an answer, but others in the group might also learn about what can make a quilt stiff.

In other cases, it was easier to classify unstructured education. In the Featherweight Group, one member asked a co-chair how a pattern worked and she spent some time explaining it. This was a clearer instance of a less experienced member seeking knowledge from a more experienced member. Once the co-chair had explained the pattern, the interaction ended shortly

after and the member who asked the question moved back to her sewing machine and the group she had been sitting with. Another instance of this occurred during the presentation at the Springfield Astronomical Society. Attendees asked questions as they came up during the presentation, and twice when someone brought up a question, both the presenter and experienced members in the audience answered. Though I count the presentation as structured education, I decided to count these particular interactions as unstructured, since members in the audience also helped to answer questions, making it more conversational and less formal than it would have been if just the presenter was answering questions.

As when talking about hobby and non-hobby discussions, I have less data for the Woodturners of Southwest Missouri and the Greater Audubon Society, simply because I had less opportunity to observe before and after the meeting when most of the socializing was taking place.

Survey Responses

A survey was given to all willing attendees of the meetings I observed. The survey had two purposes in my research. The first purpose that inspired my use of surveys in the first place was to ask participants directly about situations where they had been helped or they had helped other members of the group so that my understanding of group dynamics was not solely reliant on my observation notes from a limited number of meetings. The second purpose that ended up being extremely useful in my research was to give the participants a chance to directly tell me why they enjoyed the group and continued to be a part of it. The following is a breakdown of each of the questions on this survey, organized by group and response.

Question 2. The first question on my survey asked if the participant was over the age of 18. This was to ensure that I had not included responses from minors, who are a group not included in my IRB application or approval. The second asked how long the respondent had been a part of the group. As can be seen in Table 1, the most commonly reported membership duration was between five and nine years, and the second most common being between one and five years. Interestingly, four of the six respondents who were part of the group for less than a year were attending their first meeting the day I observed.

Though the majority of participants have been part of their group for nine years or less, I was surprised at how many participants had been involved in their group for more than 20 years, though the group that had most of these long-standing members, the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild has existed in the community for quite some time. The respondent that stated they had been in the Springfield Astronomical Society for more than 30 years made a note that they had also been a member of the group preceding it.

Question 3. The results from the next question fell in line with expectations. As discussed previously, the participants were primarily white women from middle age to retirement age. The majority of participants, regardless of gender were around retirement age. Table 2 shows the breakdown of self-reported attendance with a large majority reporting that they attend either "Always (I've attended every group meeting since I became a member)" or "Often (I attend most of the group meetings)." The most common response by a large margin is "Often," which indicates that these participants are engaged and motivated to come to as many meetings as possible, but occasionally have other life obligations, which makes sense in a mostly retired population.

Table 1. Responses to Question 2: "How long have you been a part of the group?"

# of Years	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	Total
<1	0	1	0	2	2	1	6
1-4	0	2	1	2	6	1	12
5-9	3	0	1	1	5	9	19
10-14	2	3	1	1	0	1	8
15-19	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
20-24	0	0	0	0	3	1	4
25-29	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
30+	0	1	0	1	0	0	2

Table 2. Responses to Question 3: "How often do you come to group meetings?"

Responses	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	Total
Always	1	1	0	0	4	2	8
Often	2	5	3	3	15	9	37
Sometimes	2	1	0	2	0	1	6
Rarely	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Never	0	1	0	1	0	1	3

Questions 4 and 5. As shown in Table 3, the vast majority of the responders felt they benefitted from being in the group. The next question asks participants to describe how they feel they benefit. Table 4 shows responses grouped by common themes. The two largest groups mentioned either a social aspect or an educational aspect. In grouping these responses, I counted any response that fit into these categories, with multiple participants giving answers that fit into multiple categories. For example, one respondent from Community Quilts wrote, "Social interaction and making quilts for various charities makes me feel beneficial," which was grouped both in the Companionship/Social Interaction category and the Personal Fulfillment category.

Table 3. Responses to Question 4: "Do you feel you benefit from being part of this group?"

Responses	Groups						Total
	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	
Yes	5	8	3	4	19	13	52
No	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Somewhat	0	0	0	3	0	0	3

Questions 6 and 7. Similarly, the next two questions ask participants if they feel their skills benefit from being involved in the group and then asks them to elaborate. Their answers give some further insight into the structured and unstructured education that they may experience during meetings. Interestingly, Table 5 shows more mixed feelings about how beneficial the group is to the participants' skills. Though there is still a very strong majority in the "Yes" column, there are double the number of "Somewhat" responses and one "No" response.

Table 4. Responses to Question 5: "If you feel you've benefitted, how so?"

Grouped Responses	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	Total
Companion-ship/ Social Interaction	4	8	0	3	17	11	43
Learning/ Improving Skills	3	4	3	5	9	11	35
New Ideas/ Creative Fulfillment	0	0	2	1	2	2	7
Personal Fulfillment	0	1	0	0	6	1	8
[Left blank} or N/A	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

Table 5. Responses to Question 6: "Do you feel your skills benefit from being part of this group?"

Responses	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	Total
Yes	4	6	3	4	19	12	48
No	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Somewhat	1	2	0	3	0	0	6

For those respondents that felt their skills did benefit from being part of the group, they mostly identified structured education and help from other members as reasons why, as is shown by Table 6. Following those categories, the third most common response was related to being exposed to new ideas or ways to do things. The Community Quilts group in particular had seven responses that referenced being exposed to new ideas or different ways to do something. These responses were not unexpected, but they do reinforce the role of information sharing in motivating group members to continue to engage in the group.

Table 6. Responses to Question 7: "If you feel your skills have benefitted, how so?"

Grouped Responses	Groups						Total
	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	
Space/ Time to Practice	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
Group-Organized Education	0	5	3	3	5	5	21
Help from Other Members	3	2	1	2	7	6	21
Exposure to New Techniques/ Ideas	2	2	0	2	7	4	17
[Left Blank] or N/A	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

Question 8. The next three questions were intended to gather information about how often people in the groups helped each other. Table 7 shows how often the participants felt that people helped each other in their group. The most common response was that members "Always" help each other or give input on projects, with the next most common response being "Often." There was more agreement in these responses than I initially expected. I had assumed that responses would be more varied based on how outgoing or introverted the individual person was and how each meeting was set up, but there is a large consensus that members help each other and give input most of the time in most participants' experiences. However, it should be noted that any active members would most likely feel fairly positively about the group to continue being a member—referring back to the element of free agency that exists in all of these groups.

Table 7. Responses to Question 8: "How often do members help each other with or give input on projects?"

Responses	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	Total
Always	2	3	1	2	7	10	25
Often	3	4	1	2	11	2	23
Sometimes	0	0	1	2	1	1	5
Rarely	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
[Left Blank] or N/A	0	1	0	0	0	0	1

Questions 9 and 10. The responses to Question 9 ("Can you describe a time that other members of the group helped you solve a problem you were having with your craft/hobby? Who started the conversation and how did they help you?") and Question 10 ("Can you describe a time that you have helped other members with problems they've had with their craft/hobby? Who started the conversation and how did you help them?") were too varied to compile into a table. In the Ozarks Area Crochet Group, three of the five respondents left Question 9 (Describe a time that other members have helped you) blank, while one respondent described a time that she was given suggestions for borders to add to an afghan and another respondent noted that nothing specific came to mind. On Question 10 (Describe a time that you have helped a member) however, two respondents left inapplicable answers and the other three were able to describe instances. One specifically talked about teaching a group of young girls some basic stitches. The other two responses talk broadly about how if anyone asks for help, others in the room help out and try to find solutions. One response in particular mentions that "Nobody keeps track" referencing the casual atmosphere of the group.

The responses in the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society, by contrast tended to have more detailed answers. Two responses to Question 9 stand out with their descriptions of being given equipment to borrow during birdwatching outings. One mentions members lending them a spyglass and helping them identify birds and the other talks about being lent binoculars and a bird book. Help with identifying birds was mentioned by four out of the eight respondents. Three responses to Question 10 mentioned that the respondent is involved in programs or gives presentations, taking an active role in how the group operates. Another response details how the respondent helped a group of young birders plan how to start a youth birding group. These responses show more of a focus on either creating or actively contributing to programs put on by

the Audubon Society, rather than helping individuals hone skills related to the hobby. One response did refer to helping people identify birds and another response described the respondent introducing their friend to birding and the Audubon Society, which is more similar to how the crochet group tends to help the individual.

The Woodturners of Southwest Missouri, like the crochet group, tended to talk about individuals helping them or vice versa. This group is also the one with a mentorship program that may make these interactions more common than they might otherwise be, especially considering that the hobby itself is uniquely immobile. Each member has their own shop set up and demonstrating or working on the craft during meetings is very rare outside of the mentorship program.

In the case of the Springfield Astronomical Society, responses were more mixed. Two responses to Question 9 mentioned the respondent being helped to set up their equipment to observe and another response that mentioned being helped after asking another member to observe an object and confirm the respondent's observations. Three of the seven responses were either left blank or indicated the respondent couldn't think of a time they had been helped. Similarly, the responses to Question 10 were fairly varied. Two responses described times the participant had helped someone find an object during an observation and another described helping someone learn to use their equipment.

In the case of the Community Quilts group, only four responses to Question 9 and six responses to Question 10 out of 19 being left blank. In Question 9, there were nine instances of respondents describing times that they had asked for or gotten advice from other members in the group. One member specifically mentions that she was trying to decide between different borders for a quilt and ended up changing her mind completely after talking with her group and

integrating several ideas they had for her. Six instances described members either asking for or being shown how to do something that they had not known how to do or were having trouble with. Five comments emphasized how often the group was helpful or the fact that advice may come unsolicited or organically during casual discussions. These comments showed how organically members helped each other or gained knowledge from each other. In responses to Question 10, three participants indicated that they felt they were still beginners to the craft and did not yet feel qualified to offer help. Five responses gave examples in which they had offered advice in a case where there was no right answer (such as color selection, border selection) and used words like "opinion" or "suggestions" to convey the optional quality to their advice. Six responses described instances of the respondent teaching another member how to do something, such as how a pattern worked or how to square up triangle pieces when sewing them together.

The Featherweight group only had one blank response on Question 9 and three blank responses on Question 10. This particular group is defined by the member's love of the Featherweight machine, so there is a unique response to Question 9 that references learning not only about quilting techniques, but also maintaining the machine that the members use. Three responses specifically mention being taught how to maintain their machines. Another three responses described specifically being corrected or taught by another member. Three responses made a point to mention how willing everyone in the group is to help. One response talked about how just participating and seeing what other people do helps the respondent to get new ideas. As in the Community Quilts group, many responses either talked about other members teaching the respondent something or giving advice or opinions to help the respondent decide how to do something. Three responses used the word "advice" when talking about how other members had helped them. Interestingly, in Question 10, five responses make a point to mention not only how

everyone helps each other, but also included some language to downplay their own role in helping. One response that exemplifies this was simply "Nothing special just when anyone has a problem," whereas when the respondents described other members helping them, they tended to be more detailed in their descriptions.

Question 11. The last question on the survey asks participants why they continued to be a part of the group. With agency being such a large difference between the environment of a hobby group and the environment of the workplace, this question allowed me to see what motivated people to continue to engage. Table 8 shows the responses to this question grouped by common themes. There were 39 references to social interaction, friendship, companionship, or similar ideas. Interestingly, only nine responses mentioned learning and improving skills as a motivating factor to stay involved. The next largest categories after Social Interaction were Enjoyment of Craft and Personal Fulfillment, with 17 and 15 responses mentioning those topics respectively. The high number of responses that reference personal fulfillment (feeling good about the self, feeling good about helping the community) seems to come primarily from the charitable nature of the Community Quilts group. Many members talked about feeling good that they were helping their community or putting their skills to good use. Interestingly, the Woodturners of Southwest Missouri, Ozarks Area Crochet Group, and the Greater Ozarks Audubon Society all had an aspect of charity or community involvement, but the strongest reference to that dimension was in Community Quilts. Possibly this is because Community Quilts exists within a larger quilt guild and its primary focus is the community giving aspect.

On the whole, however, much of feedback identifies the social interaction and friendships as the primary or one of the primary reasons that people continue to be part of the group, even in

groups that spend quite a bit of time planning and organizing education, as in the case of the

Ozarks Piecemakers Quilt Guild.

Table 8. Responses to Question 11: "What is the main reason that you continue to be part of this group?"

Grouped Responses	Groups						Total
	Ozarks Area Crochet Group	Greater Ozarks Audubon Society	Wood-turners of SW Missouri	Springfield Astronomical Society	Ozark Piece-makers Community Quilts	Ozark Piece-makers Feather-weight Group	
Companion-ship/ Social Interaction	4	6	2	1	15	11	39
Learning/ Improving Skills	0	1	2	3	2	1	9
New Ideas/ Creative Fulfilment	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Enjoyment of Craft	1	5	1	2	3	5	17
Personal Fulfillment	0	2	0	0	12	1	15
[Left Blank] or N/A	0	0	0	2	2	0	4

LIMITATIONS

As I have worked on this research, a major limitation that arose was the lack of manpower. As discussed in the Results section of this paper, I was unable to observe two groups as thoroughly as the other three because their activities were occurring in several rooms simultaneously. In addition to that, I was also distributing surveys and giving explanations of my research to potential participants in the time that other members were interacting.

Another limitation was the restricted time frame of the research. I ended up observing one meeting per group (counting the Community Quilts and the Featherweight Group as a separate groups) due to time limitations. Though I had a very good amount of survey responses to use, if this research were to be expanded, I would want to extend my time period to strengthen the observational data. I would also want to observe more than five groups, and ideally be able to observe multiple groups with a primary purpose of community service to examine that facet a little more.

Finally, there is a limitation in the design of the research. Participants are most likely to be group members who have been consistently involved in the group and thus have positive feelings about the group. While I have a large amount of data representing people for whom the group works, I have no data from participants who did not enjoy being part of the group. So, where research on workplace collaboration would have more ability to speak on situations in which an employee does not want to be part of a collaborative team or is otherwise unsatisfied with the collaboration, I do not. This circumstance is simply a part of the differences between the professional sphere and the social sphere. The benefits of established social hobby groups are still worth exploring for possible application in the workplace.

DISCUSSION

The data clearly shows the importance of the social aspects for many of these groups. Participants also reference motivating factors like learning and engaging in their craft, or feeling personally fulfilled to be part of a group, but the social aspect is referenced by the most number of participants in both the survey question asking how the person has benefitted from being part of the group and the question asking why they continue to be part of the group. In my observations, a lot of interactions showed that the participants feel comfortable talking to other members when they need it. In the case of the quilters, they often feel comfortable enough to offer help without it being requested first. However, although interest in social interaction is most prominent in the results, all of Thompson, Perry, and Miller's (2009) dimensions of collaboration—governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality, and norms— can be seen in the collected data.

Mutuality, which focuses on members of the group experiencing mutually beneficial interdependencies, is the most obvious dimension in the data. I believe that the reason people voluntarily collaborate via hobby groups is because of the high degree of mutuality present in that category of group. While people do not need to take the advice and help of others in the same way that they might in the workplace, it is still one of the major benefits of being part of a group to be able to get help and give help on a shared passion. Many responses to the survey, when asked how the group benefitted them, described times when they had been helped or taught by others so that they could take their own skills and knowledge of the hobby to the next level. In asking participants to describe situations where they had been helped or they had helped others, the majority of responses described casual interactions that led to the sharing of knowledge. A number of responses to these questions emphasized how often and organically people offer help

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to others. Those kinds of interdependencies are not required by the group—a person could feasibly sit alone and practice their hobby along and talk with no one—but they are a main attraction to being in the group in the first place. This kind of interaction leads to the feeling of having a social circle or a community to rely on—sometimes to the point that the group becomes a support for people outside of the hobby as well. A few responses, especially in the Ozark Piecemaker Quilt Guild made reference to times that the group had helped the respondent through difficult times in their life, such as the loss of family members or sickness.

The norms dimension, which describes how trust is built over time as people work together, is also clearly apparent in the data (Thompson, Perry, & Miller, 2009, p. 28). This trust may be built faster in hobby groups because of the high degree of mutuality and the factor of voluntary participants. There is less suspicion of group members trying to "get ahead" if there is no direct, monetary reward for participating in the group. As was just described, one of the main draws to joining a hobby group in the first place is to interact and get help from others with the same interest. With that being the intention going in, rather than just trying to do their part or get the project over with (as can be the mindset, certainly in the classroom, and in the workplace) group members seem to be more willing to nurture that social contract that is developed as people collaborate and get to know one another. The environment of the hobby group is also typically a lot more low-stress than the workplace environment. If a person takes advice from someone they do not know very well and the advice turns out poorly, it may be a disappointing or frustrating moment, but the outcome produces fewer anxieties than a project not going well or a timeline being seriously misjudged. This allow more forgiveness as well as these relationships develop.

Although less prominent in the data, governance and administration can be seen in my notes regarding self-organization. Depending on the size and purpose of the hobby group, people have different understandings of how rules are created and how the group is structured to be most effective. In the case of the Ozark Piecemakers Quilt Guild and the Springfield Audubon Society, their tie to a larger, national group informed these aspects quite a bit. In my observations of the Community Quilts group, a conversation occurred about the officers following bylaws. At the other end of the structural spectrum is the Ozarks Area Crochet Group. This group had a leader in that one member had been part of it for a very long time and had the responsibility of reserving rooms and keeping members informed on the Facebook page. But the group needs a hierarchy for very little else, and so it is largely nonexistent in the actual meetings. The leader of the group, with her large amount of experience, often helps others or gives advice, but so do other members who have been involved for a similar amount of time.

The nature of voluntary hobby groups is that they have more autonomy than in a workplace setting. One of the primary differences between the environment in these hobby groups and the environment on a team in a workplace is the autonomy that comes with a hobby group—if group members do not want to be part of the group, then they will stop attending without really any consequences. A small number of participants referenced having leadership roles or otherwise helping the group operate. These people might face some consequences for quitting, but nothing on the scale of an employee refusing to work.

In addition, although members share knowledge and help each other, they often work on their own projects. A quilter will give color advice to a fellow quilters and maybe even teach her how to work a particular pattern, but at the end of the day, the person quilting determines how she will use that information and she does not have to accept the advice or help of the other

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member. By contrast, in the workplace, most collaboration works towards a single end product or goal that all team members should contribute to—which means that they need to agree on how each person will contribute.

What this research seems to come down to is that in hobby groups, people have the time and freedom to socialize and nurture relationships with each other. The friendships and social interactions in the observed groups are often mentioned as major reasons the participants enjoyed being part of the group and kept coming back. People build a social network within these groups that gives them a sense of belonging. Consequences to mistakes and setbacks are much lower and there is a general atmosphere of everyone wanting to be present and engaged.

The dynamics of a hobby group cannot be completely replicated in the workplace. The motivations of employees will be fundamentally different than those of hobby group members, and this is not a bad thing. I do not think that the way to improve collaboration in the workplace is to try and emulate such an environment, as that would likely just come off as artificial when deadlines do truly have to be met and stressful periods have to be worked through.

However, the data suggests two levels of change would improve collaboration in a workplace. The first is on the level of the employees that are collaborating. With such a strong amount of data pointing towards people working well together when they enjoyed each other's company, workplaces should put more focus on giving group members time to actually get to know each other when building new collaborative teams. Socializing outside of the context of the project and having time to converse casually will most likely give employees a better idea of who their team members are outside of the context of the specific project and help build mutuality.

The next level of change, which I think could be much more powerful than giving employees more time to socialize, is at the management and executive level. When talking about creating an environment that gives people a sense of belonging, it is more effective when the leaders of the organization set the example. The way that workplaces have traditionally expressed appreciation and belonging to employees is through pay raises when possible, benefits that help employees take care of themselves and their families, and transparency in leadership and leadership decisions. These material benefits can translate to the company valuing and caring for the employee.

Though these are very material benefits as opposed to the hobby group which tends to have more emotional or social benefits, there is also something to be said for managers who actively cultivate an environment of appreciation and care. For many participants in this research, the social interaction was a major motivating factor to continuing to be part of the group. Managers can help replicate this by leading by example in cultivating a warm and welcoming atmosphere. As White (2014) discusses, business leaders should work to show genuine appreciation for the efforts of their employees. White's (2014) focus on authenticity pushes back against some of the techniques suggested by others, such as writing a set amount of thank-you notes per month (Palmieri, 2012) or giving out badges like a video game (Chadha & Kumar, 2016). He instead emphasizes the importance of business leaders getting to know their employees and how they prefer to be recognized for their achievements. Twiname (2008) touches on this as well. The most important part of Twiname's (2008) research, and the central focus of it, was restructuring business in such a way that the skilled tradesmen had more of a voice with the managers of the company. For Twiname's (2008) work, the needs of the tradesmen went beyond feeling appreciated; they needed to feel that they had some amount of

communication and even input between them and their managers. In making an effort to notice an employee's work and make them feel supported and valued, listening to their ideas and concerns is a necessity as well.

In White's (2014) call for authenticity, there is also an implication that business leaders should make an active effort to recognize when things are going well, or someone has put effort into their work—things that are easy to let slip through the cracks. White (2014) and Palmieri (2012) also focuses solely on the business leader as the responsible party to set a tone of appreciation and nurturing in the workplace, while Chadha and Kumar (2016) focus more on techniques that entail leaders setting up systems or spaces of recognition and requiring employees to participate. While this could be effective in some work environments, the onus should not be placed on the employees to build a nurturing culture without adequate modeling from leaders. Ramsey (2010) makes the point that "no matter how chaotic, unstable or transitory the job situation becomes, it's up to the leaders to humanize the workplace" (p. 12). Leaders setting the example for the group was also something that appeared in the Community Quilts subgroup of the Ozarks Piecemakers Quilt Guild. Both chair-people of the group made a point to thank members as they left for the day.

Overall, it seems that this research shows how much people enjoy working with each other and learning from each other when given the chance to enjoy the process. While more anxieties are associated with collaboration in the workplace, and in the workplace in general, managers and executives can help reassure and cushion employees from these anxieties by cultivating an environment of appreciation and belonging among employees.

CONCLUSIONS

Though there has been quite a bit of research about workplace collaboration, we can approach collaboration from the perspective of the hobby group to gain a better understanding of what motivates people to work together even when they do not have the motivations of salary and professional achievement. Collaboration in hobby groups has to function in a way that is mutually beneficial to any leaders of the group and all of the members; otherwise the members would simply stop participating.

This research collected observational data about how five different hobby groups functioned and survey responses from participants that described what they get out of the group and why they continue to participate. The data clearly indicates that these groups are very effective in building friendships and social networks. These hobby groups truly become communities for their members. This social aspect is a very important one for these groups, and also an aspect that can be difficult to replicate in the workplace. In fact, it really should not be the goal to replicate this environment, as the motivations and goals of the hobby group and the workplace are extremely different. If a company tried to simply transplant the culture of a hobby group into the workplace, it would feel extremely artificial the first time the company had to work through a period of stress, whether that be a looming deadline, conflicting personalities, or even financial strain.

However, workplaces can cultivate something similar to this environment by developing a genuine culture of appreciation and care for employees. This can be done in a very material way, by giving employees benefits, or pay raises when possible. It can also be done with management leading by example and genuinely looking out for employees. Ideally, both material benefits and genuine appreciation would be used along with giving employees more time to

socialize and get to know each other to create collaborative cultures that feel more organic and genuine. Participants in this research felt valued and felt like they belonged in the community of their hobby group. The recommended courses of action attempt to translate that sense of belonging and community in a very genuine way in the workplace environment. It should not be expected for employees to show dedication to the workplace in the exact same way they show dedication to the hobby they pursue in their free time, but these recommendations aim to give employees beneficial motivation to be more dedicated to their work and peers while they are in the workplace environment.

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APPENDIX—HUMAN SUBJECTS IRB APPROVAL

Missouri State
UNIVERSITY

To:
Rhonda Stanton
English

RE: Notice of IRB Approval
Submission Type: Initial
Study #: IRB-FY2019-438
Study Title: Collaborative Communication in Social Hobby Groups
Decision: Approved

Approval Date: February 4, 2019
Expiration Date: --

This submission has been approved by the Missouri State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the period indicated.

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Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Should any adverse event or unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others occur it must be reported immediately to the IRB.

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

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