
# Crafting self-care practices: learning textile craft in time and space

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14th March 2019

Dear Tamsin,

| | |
|---|---|
| **Project Title:** | Young people's wellbeing and autotelic practices: a narrative and go-along inquiry of youth activities |
| **REC Project Reference:** | NS-190005 \| NSFI-0001 |
| **Type of Application** | Further information application, following initial application |

Keele University's Faculty of Natural Sciences Non-psychology Research Ethics Committee reviewed the above application.

**Favourable Ethical opinion**
The members of the Committee gave a favourable ethical opinion of the above research on the basis described in the application form, protocol and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

**Reporting requirements**
The University's standard operating procedures give detailed guidance on reporting requirements for studies with a favourable opinion including:

- Notifying substantial amendments
- Notifying issues which may have an impact upon ethical opinion of the study
- Progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

**Approved documents**
The documents reviewed and approved are:

| Document | Version | Date |
|---|---|---|
| CV | 1 | 27/02/19 |
| Research proposal | 1 | 27/02/19 |
| 01 Ad Crochet | 1 | 27/02/19 |
| 01 Ad Kirtan | 1 | 27/02/19 |
| 01 Ad Martial Art | 1 | 27/02/19 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 Ad Mind | 1 | 27/02/19 |
| Appendix | 2 | 14/03/19 |
| Application form | 2 | 14/03/19 |
| Risk assessment | 1 | 14/03/19 |

Yours sincerely,

**Dr Sandra Woolley**
**Committee Chair**

# Abstract

This research has been designed to understand how people are crafting time and space to engage with self-care activities through textile crafts. Craft research focuses heavily on the importance of the community and much less on the individuals' experience of the activity, specifically, the pathway of learning the skill. Self-care is often seen as a still activity, one which involves taking time out to passively engage in an activity. I begin to challenge this and argue that self-care is an active and ongoing process, one which requires an investment of time to learn. I aim to explore the idea that there is a distinction between the practice and the learning process.

Through participation and observation of a series of workshops run in collaboration with a Students' Union, I begin to develop an understanding of the role of organisations, such as universities, in supporting and developing spaces for accessible self-care practices, supporting individuals through the learning process, and most importantly, supporting individuals through the challenges that learning a new skill often brings.

By conducting a scoping review of 14 publications and repurposing the data, I have been able to identify the values of craft for its practitioners (intrinsic and extrinsic) and begin to unpack the value of communities in practice.

Self-care practices involve a process of learning and well-being is a benefit for some individuals and, as I found out, not a direct or guaranteed outcome of crafting for all. I will challenge some of the normative perceptions of how people achieve well-being through self-care practices and how activities are marketed for self-care.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Introduction

Self-care is the least selfish act of all. Caring for the self consistently will maintain well-being and will positively influence our whole self, including the self we give to others. People perform self-care differently. Some watch television or go running, other people bake or craft. Crafting as a practice of self-care has been used for decades, centuries even, however many people use time and/or space to justify why they cannot perform acts of self-care. Temporalities and spaces of self-care are explored throughout the thesis to begin to understand how these impact practitioners' actions through craft.

Increasingly, the importance of self-care is being encouraged and aided throughout academia, however very few of these studied are identifying what self-care practices might look like (Jones and Whittle, 2021). I began to think what self-care looked like for myself. What did I do? Why did I do it? What effect did it have on my everyday life? I had conversations with friends and family, and after conducting a survey and biographical interviews for my Masters' degree, it became clear that it was not necessarily *what* people were doing, so much as *how* they were doing it. Self-care is personal, it is the care of the self after all. However, I could not find the answers to understand *how* people were doing self-care, leaving me with a challenge to solve.

In recent years, human geography has developed its' understanding of care in a socio-spatial context (Middleton and Samanani, 2021; *see also,* Conradson, 2003, Parr and Philo, 2003). Traditionally, care is defined as "the proactive interest of one person in the well-being of another" (Conradson, 2003, p.451). This interpretation is aimed at one person caring for another, however this definition can also be used for self-care, for if an individual is not caring for themselves, they will eventually become unable to care for others.

A simple search online of 'self-care practices' will throw out some basic suggestions such as 'wake up earlier', 'get a good night sleep', or 'eat healthy'. However, these suggestions are often a

reaction to those who are attempting to manage everyday stress and anxiety. I wanted to understand how proactive performance and practices of certain activities, particularly craft, could affect the practitioner. Societally and systemically, it is common to react to a decline in well-being, but less common to implement long-term proactive approaches to improving or even simply maintaining well-being.

Companies, organisations, and institutions, including universities, often promote well-being weeks or self-care events, but these short term (days or weeks), reactive activities are not sustainable for an individual's well-being in the long term (months into years). Sustaining well-being requires the investment of time and space to practice self-care consistently. One key inspiration for this research was the identification of the National Health Service's (NHS) suggested '5 steps to mental well-being'. It is their third step – 'learn a new skill' – that I was particularly interested in, and I explore in great detail in chapters Five, Six, and Seven. These five steps to well-being have been adopted in some way, shape, or form by organisations to 'support' their people. However, from experience, learning something new in a couple of hours, particularly a craft such as embroidery, crochet, or origami (popular and common activities available during the aforementioned well-being weeks) can be challenging for beginners – the frustration from the mistakes, the slipped stitches, or reading a pattern that requires time to learn in the same way it takes time to read music or learn a new language. I wanted to understand, therefore, how the learning process and the challenges affect the practitioners. I wanted to understand how, for those who overcame the challenges of learning a new skill were able to incorporate their skill into their everyday self-care routine. The findings of this thesis therefore propose to not dismiss the NHS '5 steps to well-being' or stop people learning new skills for self-care, but to re-think and carefully consider the way in which well-being and self-care practices are presented. I will develop my argument that learning new skills can benefit well-being but achieving well-being should not be the reason to practice an activity as well-being and happiness are not guarantees. This accepted

view that well-being is an achievable outcome is necessarily teleological and in Chapter 2 I will describe how I use Ahmed's description of happiness as a journey, rather than a destination, to justify my argument.

The practice of craft as a self-care activity is a complex one. Craft practices require skill and embodied knowledge that is passed from generation to generation (Torell and Palmsköld, 2020). These skillful activities, however, are challenging and are not often learned overnight. As such, I will refer to Wenger's (1999) theory of the learning process (meaning, practice, community, and identity) throughout this thesis and I will unpick the ways in which meaning is found from the practice of craft (Chapter 5, 6 and 7); I will identify *how* craft is practiced within time and space (Chapter 6 and 7); I address the ways in which communities are vitally important to the learning process temporally and spatially (Chapter 5, 6 and 7); and finally, I demonstrate throughout chapter 5 how many crafts have traditionally been identifiable by gender and how this could be potentially damaging for those hoping to improve and/or maintain their well-being.

Spaces of self-care take different forms and have evolved over the last 200 years. From the asylum (Bell *et al*, 2018) to therapeutic landscapes (Gesler, 1992) and most recently, therapeutic taskscapes (Smith, 2019). By adopting a place-centered approach to self-care, I suggest that spaces of care should be relational (Andrews, 2018, p.39). That is, they need to be fluid and subject to change in order to support individuals' practices of self-care depending on the practitioners learning and practice needs. The current literature on well-being and self-care practices is largely normative and fails to address the bigger picture. That is, the common theme is that to be happy, one must do what makes them happy. However, there is little in the way of discussion or critique on how practitioners move towards the point of happiness. To learn a new skill, the practitioners must navigate the learning process before they can practice a skill fluently. Some geographers have begun to address the learning process of skilled practices (e.g. Hawkins, 2017; Straughn, 2017), however I will develop this literature in relation to textile crafts whilst also

addressing the learning process that is involved in these skills from the position of a researcher but importantly, as a beginner and learner myself. I was a crochet beginner when I began the participant observation in September 2020 and as such, I navigated the learning space of the Crafternoons that I studied, in the same way all Crafternoon attendees did over the following six months.

Methodologically, this research aims to understand this process from a unique perspective. Most academics thus far have observed self-care practices within pre-existing groups. This research aims to work beyond this. I have adopted a two-step research process. Starting with a scoping review and the analysis of 16 papers. The analysis objectively begins to understand the value and experiences of crafts from the perspective of the practitioner. Many of the academics in these publications are themselves experienced crafters, or at least they have some experience and/or knowledge of the skill they are addressing, and the different embodied practices of learning and doing are absent in much of this literature. In the second stage of this research, I observed a group of crafters from the onset of the Crafternoons. Whilst I have dabbled with some craft practices in my childhood (some 15 plus years ago), I considered myself a novice to many of the Crafternoon activities. As such, I have been able to develop a nuanced understand how young people engage with these activities, understand how an organisation such as a Students' Union [SU] can facilitate these practices, and appreciate some of the barriers to learning new skills in the form of predominantly textile crafts. Furthermore, I have been able to gain an insight into the learning process as a beginner myself and whilst this is not an auto-ethnography, my own observations of the learning process have been personally informed. The main objective of this thesis is, therefore, to explore and understand how young people use self-care practices to maintain and/or improve their well-being and to understand how an organisation, such as a university, can facilitate spaces of self-care for its' staff and students.

I am not claiming that practicing craft will be beneficial for all, far from it. I do however hope to unravel some of the challenges that learning skills for self-care may present and demonstrate how, with the appropriate support that is not temporally and spatially bound, it is possible to create relational spaces of care for young people. To do this, research with a students' union and a scoping review is used to explore how people learn new skills and, to understand the value that craft brings to the life of the practitioner.

The remainder of this introductory chapter will outline the context for this research; identify the research aims and why it is necessary to explore how crafts are used and performed for self-care; define the key crafting terms used throughout this thesis; and finally, to explain the structure of this thesis.

## Research context

The history of making and crafting is inherently economic and political (*see* Egginton, 2014). Hall and Jayne (2015) argue that crafting is still economic and political, though the social, economic and political conditions are different and as such, handcrafters' motivations to craft have shifted. Some may suggest that there has been a "return" of craft that "knitting is back", however it never actually went away. This craft 'return' that is spoken of, refers to the recognition of the practices' social and economic significance and therefore, the 'return' relates to way in which researchers have oriented themselves towards it. Television programmes in the UK such as "The Great Sewing Bee", "The Great Pottery Throw Down", and "Kirstie's Homemade Home" occupy primetime viewing slots on our TVs. Alongside the popular glossy magazines such as "Ideal Home" handcrafts have been framed as "trends" that urban elites aspire to create (Hawkins and Price, 2018), however these also show the increasingly varied (if not classist) aesthetic to crafting By this, I mean to highlight the commercialisation of handcrafts beyond sewing, knitting and woodwork, such as ceramics and pottery which, for the most part, are particularly expensive hobbies to maintain. For others, however, these crafts are less "trendy" and more material and

mental solace away from the hustle and bustle of the consumer world (Hawkins and Price, 2018, p.1). The slow and often methodical movement offers time and space to relax, to engage the mind, sometimes resulting in optimal experiences, or flow. Geography's creative (re)turn has seen the development of more creative methods and practices over the last couple of decades. However, did it ever really go away? Craft practices have been a part and parcel of everyday life for many individuals for many decades, centuries even. For many years, women have been encouraged to practice crafts to improve and/ or maintain their well-being. Textile crafts such as knitting and embroidery have long been blighted with the narrative that they should be performed by the hysterical woman, to prevent or cure female neurosis (see Price and Hawkins, 2018). Today, however, craft practices such as quilting, crochet, or knitting, are more often seen as purposeful practices that are performed by the caregiver (Leone, 2021). The products of these purposeful practices are also deemed useful. For example, they could be given as gifts to family and friends (Stalp, 2007). These gendered narratives are seen throughout the crafting literature, both feminine crafts and masculine crafts are presented in such a way that masculine crafts are skilled (see Ingold, 2013 and Sennett, 2009), whilst feminine crafts are useful and should only be performed once the children are asleep, and/or only when the housework has been completed. But what makes a practice a skill?

A skill is "the ground from which all knowledge grows" (Ingold, 2018). Skilled practices are visceral and intellectual, involving both doing and thinking. They are reflective, conscious and can be automatic. Importantly, Ingold emphasizes that "old hands know that however prepared you may be, to practice any skill means exposing oneself to the befalling of things and enduring whatever they have in store". This claim is important in the context of this research. I emphasize the challenges that are often experienced in the face of learning new skills. Ingold, however demonstrates that skill is not just learned and retained but learned and developed – the learning process is on-going.

Skilled practices such as crafts take time – time to practice and time to learn. The latter, time to learn, has received some recognition within social sciences and geography, but I wish to expand this further. This thesis explores the temporalities of learning in line with and beyond existing research. I observe and unpick the ways in which people practice craft – how are they doing it? Why are they doing it? How long does it take? However, I will also begin to understand how not just time, but space is affecting the crafter. Where are they doing it? How is the space affecting their practice, but also how is their practice affecting the space?

## Defining craft

Before I go any further, I think it is important to know what it is meant by the term 'craft' and how I will use it going forward. The meaning of 'craft' has shifted over time. I will, therefore, outline here a brief genealogy of the term and how I am using it throughout this thesis.

Craft, in its simplest form, means creative arts. According to the TATE, craft is "a form of making which generally produces an object that has a function: such as something you can wear, or eat or drink from" (2021). Crafts are frequently associated with craftsmanship and materiality; however, the term can become "complicated" (Gauntlett, 2018) when we begin also consider the term 'art'. The latter, 'art' is traditionally thought of as drawing or painting (JRA, 2021). Gauntlett (2011) describes craft as "the inherent satisfaction of making; the sense of being alive within the process; and the engagement with ideas, learning, and knowledge which come from not before or after but *within* the practice of making" (p.24-25). The complex description of craft recognises the importance of learning processes as being located within the practice of doing, which will be explored in detail throughout this thesis. Gauntlett's definition of craft also emphasizes the connections that are made within the practice of craft to both the self, to others, and to the world and space around us (Leone, 2021).

Craft often uses one of five mediums: Ceramics, glass, fibre, metal or wood. Each of these are manipulated, traditionally with the body, to create a tacit object. Today the boundaries between

craft and art are blurred and the term ‘craft’ is used to describe both practices – artists engage with similar mediums to crafters (sometimes referred to as ‘fine art’) (JRA, 2021). One main problem when distinguishing art from craft and vice versa, is that ‘art’ has a positive connotation, whilst ‘craft’ does not (Markowitz, 1994). Craft is often seen as lacking, lesser than art, or simply a hobby. Jansen (1991) claims that originality is what distinguishes art from craft, along with profoundness and associations with personal ideas or emotions (Markowitz, 1994).

Historically, the distinction between art and craft is a western concept that is associated with hierarchies (Leone, 2021, p.2). Fine art was created by “white men with formal training” (Lenoe, 2021, p.2). I discuss in Chapter 3 the way in which craft practices are gendered, however it is here that I acknowledge the cultural differences in art and craft. The ‘fine art’ movement has had the greatest impacts upon non-white people living beyond the borders of Europe and the United States. In essence, work created outside of these realms, has been labelled “primitive art”, “folk art” and “decorative art”, sometimes associated with artisans, but not artists, and especially not fine artists. Products of crafts were distinguished as those objects that served just as decoration and not functional (Leone, 2021; *see also* Patel, 2020, 2021). Whilst crafting has traditionally been an activity of leisure for many, particularly white women, for people of colour it has been and does continue to be a means of survival (Ivey, 2019, p.312) whereby the products provide financial support.

Craft objects can, and should, be distinguished from manufactured objects. Korn (2013) claims that whilst both craft and manufactured objects objectify complex layers of ideas about the way in which the world is constituted, a maker of crafts is, generally speaking, a lone individual who seeks to find out “how life might be lived with meaning and fulfillment” (p.152). That is, they perform an activity that has the potential to give meaning to life, and to offer value. By contrast, manufactured objects are those made by a corporate entity and the products have little existential content.

On evaluation of the above, craft within this thesis will refer to the practice of artistic handcrafts performed by individuals, using a medium such as ceramics, wood, metal, fibre, or glass, to make something with a function. My focus is on how craft is practiced non-professionally, not for profit or significant economic gain and is not produced *en masse* involving corporate entities. By this, I mean craft practices that are not relied upon for sole income and generally for little to no profit.

## Crafting crochet

This thesis observes a number of handcrafts, however the main craft that was observed throughout the Crafternoons was crochet. As such, I will provide a brief overview of the craft. Crochet is textile craft performed with a single tool called a hook (see Appendix Figure 1). The hooks can be bought in different sizes, usually the same length, but the thickness varies from 0.5mm-10mm. The material used is referred to as yarn, or commonly known by knitters as 'wool'. The yarn comes in many different forms, such as synthetic acrylic fibers, cotton, and animal wool such as sheep or llama to name a few. The hook is maneuvered and used to weave a series of loops of yarn around and through other loops created by different types of stitches (see the pictorial glossary) which makes up the pattern and design of an artefact or product. Crochet is unique from knitting as it is possible to knit using a mechanical loom, whereas this is not, as yet, possible for crochet. Any item of clothing or product that uses the method of crochet is produced by a person. This is temporally significant and should therefore be represented in the value of the item. A crochet pattern is sometimes used by the practitioner to make a specific crochet object that is of a specific size. Most patterns will specify the stitch type and order. Like knitting, there are crochet charts that show a more visual representation of the stitch, rather than a numerical or letter code. Each crochet pattern will generally include a gauge which is a measurement of stitches, usually in inches, that the practitioner can refer to in order to cross reference their own work and to ensure that they are making the product to the correct size. This is achieved by altering the amount of tension in each stitch (see Appendix Figure 11).

### Crafting care-full practices

Crafts and care are synonymous. Care can take many forms – a performance of actions, the giving of time, the self, or material items. In the case of crafts, care has the potential to take the form of all three (time, the self and material). People weave time into their everyday to make a blanket, a scarf or a quilt for a loved one. In doing so, the crafter is able to care for the self, as well for others around them. This thesis begins to unpick the ways in which crafts are used by individuals to care for both the self and others.

By observing weekly Crafternoons at a SU, I was able to understand how organisations such as Student Unions can be utilised by higher education institutions (I develop the distinction of the organisation within the University as an institution in further detail in Chapter 4) to provide and facilitate the spaces of care for their users, both staff and students, whilst simultaneously encouraging and supporting self-care in a fluid and relational way. Student Unions are student-focused and student-led organisations that represent the voices of it's students (UK Council for International Student Affairs, 2020). It is important to note that SUs are independent of the university in which they are situated. This thesis presents the 'gentle geographies' of care (Conradson, 2010), demonstrating how craft has the potential to be all things for all people. I will present the argument that the practice of craft enables care of the self and care of others, whilst facilitating and aiding constructive challenges for its practitioners.

The remainder of this chapter will summarise the structure of the forthcoming thesis, outline the research questions of this study, and address how I will go about answering them.

## Chapter outlines

This thesis is split into eight chapters, including this one. There are two literature reviews, methods and methodology, three analysis chapters and a discussion and conclusion. A brief outline of each is provided here.

Chapter 2, '*What is well-being*?' narrates the varied and ambiguous term that is 'well-being'. I begin the main body of this thesis by outlining the complex and varied understanding of well-being. I identify with Dieners' eudaimonic approach to well-being to tell the story of how well-being is used as a measurement of success of self-care practices. Whilst I do not measure the well-being of practitioners in this study, it is important to understand how I chose to focus on the practice of self-care and not necessarily the outcomes of the practice. As such, I engage with literature from primary care to the social sciences and finally, the geographies of health, well-being and care. Across and within disciplines and industry, the term is widely used, yet the definition varies greatly. Some have medicalised the term, often associating it with 'mental health'. Others describe well-being as an emotion or feeling that is essentially an outcome or desire. This chapter draws comparisons between the different understandings and critiques of the ways in which well-being is measured using Diener's theory of Subjective Well-being (SWB). To achieve well-being people, practice 'self-care'. In Chapter 2 I will outline how self-care has been presented and I will close the chapter with an overview and critique of happiness – the emotion commonly associated with well-being and the emotion that many people seek to achieve through practices of self-care

Chapter 3, '*Space, time and practices of well-being through craft'* draws on more theoretical literature from the field of geography and outlines the value of space when considering well-being and self-care practices. Beginning with therapeutic landscapes, therapeutic taskscapes (Smith, 2019) and relational spaces of care (Andrews, 2019), I demonstrate the ways in which spaces are associated with well-being, how the space affects the body, and the way in which fluid and relational spaces shape and encourage spaces of care. This chapter also begins to understand the effects of time on well-being and the practice of self-care. I draw on Barraitser (2017) and Adams' (2004) work who argue time should be viewed in three contexts – past, present and future. This tri-temporal understanding of life has been used to structure Chapter 6 (time).

Finally, the third section of the chapter delves deeper into the conception of craft and the way in which the practice of craft, specifically textile craft, has been developed, gendered and encouraged as a practice for self-care.

Chapter 4, '*Methods and methodology',* outlines the ontology, epistemology and methodology of this thesis. This chapter is split into three sections. First it demonstrates the ontological and epistemological approach. I describe the post-structuralist approach that is used throughout this thesis and begin to draw comparisons with similar studies. I then move onto the next two sections which outline the process of the two main methods used in this study – a scoping review and an ethnography. Here, the framework is the same for both – they begin with an explanation of the methods and justification for their use in this study, before illustrating the process for each. Finally, I complete each section with a description and explanation of the method of data analysis used for each method.

Chapter 5, '*A scoping review of craft practices for the purposes of well-being'*, is the first of the analysis chapters in this thesis. This chapter describes and analyses a scoping review, conducted in the summer of 2020 with the aim of repurposing pre-existing data to understand *how* textile handcrafts affect the well-being of their practitioners. Here, I unpick the values of craft, which I have identified as intrinsic and extrinsic, and conclude with a critical analysis of the literature on craft. I explain the triletic of craft - it is a *practice*, involving a *process* that leads to a *product*. Practice, process and product are symbiotic and therefore, I explore the ways in which this has been written about. I describe the ways in which research on craft is often normative and seeks out pre-existing groups, rarely seeking to understand the learning process or the trials that crafters can face. It is important to understand that where a skill is involved, an individual does not necessarily just pick up a tool and practice an activity – there is a learning process involved that can be difficult and challenging. Finally, I demonstrate the ways in which the current literature on craft is highly gendered and can be clearly defined by 'feminine' and 'masculine' crafts. These

crafts are written about in two distinct tones – the former in relation to hobbies, and the latter in relation to skill.

Chapter 6, '*The temporalities of craft practices'*, is the first of the empirical analyses. Using Baraitser's (2017) understanding of time as past, present and future, this chapter outlines the process of practicing and learning craft. Here, I highlight the *motivations to craft* and *the temporal rhythms of the Crafternoons*. With reference to Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis (2004 [1992]), I have quantified the temporal structure of the Crafternoons and identified three distinct paces of crafting (concentrated craft, distracted craft, and non-craft). The second half of this chapter attempts to sew together the reality of the crafting process and the learning process. This begins to highlight some of the difficulties the crafters experienced that are not commonplace in the literature on self-care practices. I complete the chapter with *crafting future plans* which outlines the ways in which crafters embraced the future to encourage present practices.

Chapter 7, '*Craft, space and the body*', describes the value of and problems with space and craft practices. This chapter demonstrates some of the effects of embodied crafts and the challenges that crafters feel throughout their bodies, not just when they are learning, but when they are practicing in different spaces. The impact of doing the craft in the space provided was in some cases quite profound and affected the ability of the participating crafters to complete the activity to the best of their ability. I will discuss the effects of the seating which lacked much needed upper body support and also the effects of the natural and artificial lighting in the building. Within this chapter, I also begin to describe and critique the importance of relational spaces within the university setting, the way in which it was vital to the success of the Crafternoons, and, importantly, to the practitioners' successes.

Finally, in Chapter 8, '*Discussion and conclusion'*, I complete the thesis with a summary of each chapter, explain how I have answered each of the research questions and open the floor to both the limitations of this study and potential for future research. In this final chapter I will suggest that

workshops, particularly craft workshops, and those encouraging newcomers and beginners, should not be bounded spatially or temporally, likewise, the structure of the event should be fluid. This fluidity will allow participants to engage with the activity at their own pace, and without feeling the pressure of 'finishing'. I will also stress the importance of not advertising activities as "mindful", for "self-care", or for "well-being". In an already stressful world, surrounded by the pressures of everyday life, these spaces should not be spaces in which people feel pressure to feel a certain way (for example, to experience what they perceive to be well-being) especially for beginners, this is not always a guarantee.

## Research questions

First, '*How are self-care practices, specifically handcrafts, used to maintain wellbeing*?'. I approach this question, using an interdisciplinary method. Traditionally used by the medical sciences, this scoping review (Chapter 5) offers a unique and under-valued method to the field of geography to gain an in-depth understanding of the ways in which crafts are used to maintain well-being. For reasons that I explain in more detail in Chapter Two, this was the most objective way of understanding how practitioners experience crafts.

The second question '*How do handcrafters articulate different experiences of self-care practices*?' has been answered using both the scoping review, and through the participatory observation and ethnography, which included participant observations and unstructured interviews. This question is an opportunity to provide the practitioners with some autonomy over their experiences. As this research is largely subjective and consists of my own observations, I felt it important to acknowledge and give a voice to the participants.

Thirdly, '*How are handcrafts valued by their practitioners in their everyday life*?'. This question has been developed and answered through observations of handcrafters in the ethnographic aspect of the research project, and also through the scoping review. Understanding the value is important

to demonstrate the motivations behind the craft, but also to recognise *how* the practitioners use the craft to improve their everyday experiences.

Fourth, '*What are the barriers associated with accessing self-care activities? Barriers could be associated with time, cost and opportunity*'. This question was of particular importance to this research project. This question was answered through both the ethnography and the scoping review, but the purpose of this question was to provide some insight into the accessibility of certain activities. Leone (2021, p.5) describes contemporary crafts as those activities that are "uncritically conceived of as being by and large a leisure activity pursued by those who can afford the time, energy, and materials to engage in it". This quote demonstrates just some of the barriers and challenges that practitioners face when attempting to access self-care activities. As such, it was important to acknowledge, understand and find a way to manage these barriers to ensure that as many people have access to these activities as possible.

The fifth and final question is as follows – '*Can certain forms of self-care practices be supported for young people? What is the role of an organisation in facilitating these practices*?'. Using mostly data and analysis from an ethnography located within a university, the answers to this question follow on from question four, to understand the ways in which service providers can assist the service users in a relational, care-ful and compassionate way.

## Concluding statement

This research in interested in how people can implement self-care practices into their routine through the practice of craft. This is no simple task and it will not happen overnight – it requires time, space and a lot of patience. There is increasingly more public and academic interest in the topic of craft and self-care and organisations such as Crafts Council host regular discussions about the benefits of craft on mental health and well-being (see Jeffries, 2020). Performing practices of self-care with the aim and intention of improve and/ or maintaining well-being is not always a guarantee, however creating a space for students and staff to procrastinate, whilst

feeling like they are doing something productive, does reduce the prevalence of feelings of guilt. Furthermore, for universities, creating relational spaces with no pressure to attend, or ‘sign up’ to a society, allows students, and staff if they so wish, to switch off, and be supported in a pressure free environment, without financial, spatial, and temporal obligations.

# Chapter 2: Literature review 1: Understanding well-being

## Introduction

The study of well-being is complex. Well-being is a thing that is widely acknowledged and recognised across societies and has been substantiated and corroborated by government policies and economic activity. As such, well-being has become a significant aspect of everyday popular culture. It is woven into conversations and thoughts and is often the driving force behind people's actions (See Andrews, 2018, p.60). However, the study of well-being presents a number of challenges as a result of the difficulty in defining the term (Cattan, 2009, p9). The terms 'well-being' and 'mental health' are frequently used interchangeably within and between various disciplines which only exacerbates the problem, making it more confusing for all those involved.

This literature review will tell the story of the triadic relationship between well-being, self-care and happiness. Well-being is the goal, the purpose of performing an activity for many people. Self-care is the practice or praxis through which people strive for well-being and finally, happiness is the emotion commonly associated with well-being. Understanding the relationship between well-being, self-care and happiness leads into the following chapter, a second literature review that reviews the relationship between self-care practices through the medium of craft in time and space.

This chapter starts with an investigation and critique of the various constructs and definitions of well-being across disciplines, from clinical and more medicalised definitions (World Health Organisation, 2021) to social scientific approaches, deriving from Aristotelean ideologies of hedonic well-being (Diener *et al,* 2009*;* Ryan and Deci, 2001). From here I will segue into a discussion and more detailed investigation of the ways in which well-being is used as a form of measurement for mental health through subjective well-being approaches used to inform policy by governmental organisations and academia alike. The ways in which this is approached is assessed and critiqued to understand the challenges of subjectivity. An increasing interest in the

measurement of well-being emphasizes the greater need to understand what exactly is being measured and therefore how the data should be interpreted (Dodge *et al*, 2012).

From here, the chapter develops an understanding of well-being as a precursor to happiness, another construct deep rooted in the historical framework developed by Aristotle and more recently unpicked by positive psychologies (Davies, 2015; *see also* Seligman, 2012) and sociologist Sarah Ahmed (2010). To understand how well-being is achieved, I address the topic of self-care. I propose that it is through the practice of self-care that well-being is possible. Self-care practices take two forms – active and passive. It is the active self-care practices, or those that require physical and/or mental stimulation, that I am interested in for this research. I will outline how self-care has been presented and the ways in which the practice of self-care is used to aid well-being. This literature opened questions for this research and later on in this thesis I begin to answer some of those questions and demonstrate in chapters 5, 6 and 7 why but also how self-care practices are performed.

Finally, through the practice of self-care activities, I outline how 'flow' is used to enhance the experience of self-care practices which contribute to well-being and happiness. The positive psychological approach to Flow is briefly detailed, focusing on Csikszentmihalyi's detailed investigation of optimal experience. Once a thorough investigation of well-being has been critiqued, this chapter will finally briefly outline the ways in which well-being is presented across the literature across two key age groups – young adults and older adults. It was important to address these two demographic populations as this research focused heavily on the self-care practices of young people (Chapter 6 and 7) and older adults (Chapter 5). Here, I aim to understand how young people's well-being is interpreted and explore the ways in which young people are developing coping mechanisms for everyday life compared to other stages of life. This transitions into Chapter 2 where I will review the practices of craft, the focus of this research, that are being used to realise well-being.

As a result of the confusion around the term(s) wellbeing and well-being, I have chosen to use the spelling ‘well-being’. The medicalised and traditionally clinical literature on well-being refer to it as ‘wellbeing’, that is, they refer to the term as a noun and as something that a person can have or acquire. However, upon reflection of the various definitions and understandings of well-being, the hyphenated version of the term will be used henceforth, when not using direct quotations. Well-being refers to the term as a noun (‘well’) and adjective (‘being’), and as such I refer to throughout this thesis it is an active state of doing.

## What is well-being?

### Understanding mental health and the relationship to well-being?

To research well-being there must be a clear understanding of what is intended by the term ‘well-being’. ‘Mental health’ and ‘well-being’ are frequently used in research, policy, practice, everyday life and academia across many disciplines, from psychology and medicine to sociology and geography. Despite the frequent use of the terms, producing a clear definition proves challenging (Cattan, 2009, p.9). To make it even more complex, the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, both within and between disciplines.

Well-being is often related to the outcomes and practices of ‘good’ mental health. Whilst the term ‘mental health’ is linked with diagnosable mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Thorley (2017, p.9) explains that ‘mental health’ should be understood as the experiences of symptoms that relate to a clinically diagnosable condition, whilst ‘well-being’ should refer to the extent to which a person is functioning “positively”.

Meanwhile, WHO use ‘well-being’ to construct their widely used definition of mental health is (2021):

> *a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community*

This definition of ‘mental health’ distinguishes subjective happiness and life satisfaction (or hedonic well-being), from positive psychological functioning eudaimonic well-being (*see* Ryan and Deci, 2001). Interestingly, both definitions (Thorley and WHO) include the term “well-being”, demonstrating that well-being is a vital aspect of everyday life and overall health, both mental and physical. WHO also reiterate that health and mental health does not mean to say that there is an absence of ill health or mental illness. Health and well-being are a continuum that have the potential to constantly change – they are fluid (Paffenharger *et al*, 1991 cited in Han and Patterson, 2007, p.330).

More recently, the WHO (2013, p.1) has agreed that

> *Well-being exists in two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises of an individual’s experience of their life as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values*

Whilst mental health and well-being are different entities, Mind (2021) suggest that the two are interconnected. Individuals experiencing longer periods of low mental well-being have the potential to develop mental ill-health. It was also claimed that those already living with mental ill-health are more likely to experience periods of low mental well-being, however, that is not to say that they will not experience periods of relatively improved well-being as well.

Well-being is commonly measured using four factors: happiness, life satisfaction, the feeling that things done in life are worthwhile and low levels of anxiety. From this perspective, well-being is a measurement of the outcome of a person’s mental health, or the balance between positive and negative mental health. Well-being fundamentally means “being well” (Andrews, 2018, p.60) and as such, mental health and well-being are all-encompassing. They relate to a person’s ability to work, socialise, feel and cope with a range of emotions (for example stress and disappointment, or happiness and excitement), and to cope financially and physically in order to function,

demonstrating resilience when facing challenges in personal or social situations and the ability to perform “normal” everyday activities to name a few characteristics (see Mental Health Foundation, 2019).

When adopting a clinical and medicalised approach to mental health and well-being I wish to refer to the definitions approved by the Mental Health Foundation (MHF) (2017).The MHF claim that it is possible to achieve a desired level of ‘good’ well-being in day-to-day life even if an individual has a pre-existing mental illness providing the mental illness is being managed effectively, for example through medication, therapy, or holistic practices. It can be expected that the person can still practice everyday activities such as attend work, school or college and maintain healthy relationships with those around them. Austin (2016, p.129) and Helliwell and Putnam (2006) understand that the social aspects of well-being are frequently discussed as an important characteristic of well-being and as such, well-being is “often conceptualised as a process embedded within a social context” (Austin, 2016, p.129). There is a wealth of research into the effects of a healthy social life and various social activities on a person’s well-being. Gröpel and Kuhl (2011) discuss the importance of a healthy work-life balance in relation to well-being. Fullagar and Brown (2003) stress the importance of young women making time in their day to have some “down time” and engage in leisure activities that are beneficial to the mental health and well-being. Similarly, Nabi *et al* (2013) explored the benefits of a digital social life on social network sites as a way of managing stress and well-being. However, the emphasis of the research is often teleological, that is, it focuses more on the outcomes of performing an activity, than the process of doing. This research aims to begin to understand how the process of doing, through the medium of craft, has an effect on the well-being of its’ practitioners and their everyday lives.

## Well-being in the social sciences

### *Eudaimonic and hedonic approaches to well-being*

The literature proves to be very normative and frequently fails to acknowledge the subjectivity and fluidity of the word well-being. In the social sciences, well-being is frequently described using either eudaimonic foundations or hedonic foundations.

McLeod and Wright (2016) question the lack of critical interrogation of well-being. They rightly question whether it should be seen as a technical concept or an everyday term. With such varied understandings and definitions ranging across many disciplines, it can be challenging for governmental and non-governmental organisations when seeking to develop policies and practices around well-being (Conradson, 2012). The same can be said for this research. It was important to understand what well-being means in the context of the geographies of health and well-being to address the practices of self-care and well-being within relational spaces of care (see pg.64).

Pollard and Rosenberg's (1999) review of the literature of well-being found that it was described and defined in a variety of differing contexts to include physical, social and emotional, cognitive, and economic. Within each of these, well-being was categorised by binary opposites, either in deficit or positive. They concluded that well-being has been branded by individual characteristics, for example, personal happiness, and/or a measurement of self-esteem. Moreover, well-being has been defined by the absence of reduced or no well-being, such as the absence of depression (Pollard and Rosenberg 1999, p.19).

Well-being and mental health are frequently associated with negative psychological states (Ryff and Singer, 1996 cited in Cattan, 2009, p.10). It is important to recognise that research on well-being and mental health has been reactive in its approach to understanding how to reduce instances of mental ill-health in those who are living with pre-existing mental ill-health. This research is aiming to do the opposite and hopes to address how people can be proactive when

practicing self-care. A study of the literature on well-being by Diener *et al* (1999, see also Cattan, 2009) found that for every 17 publications addressing negative psychological states, there was just one that reported on positive psychological states. Likewise, in a study of people aged 50 years and older, 42 percent of people described “mental health and wellbeing” from a negative perspective such as referring to the presence of mental/psychological illnesses (Cattan, 2009, p.10).

McLeod and Wright (2016) describe well-being as a construct that is often associated with physical and mental health, but more importantly, it is an ideal to strive for (2016, p.777). They propose that well-being can be framed by a Foucauldian notion of problematisation whereby well-being is considered as a relational concept with antecedents, which focuses on self-esteem (2016, p.776). More frequent and open discussions about mental health and well-being should not be viewed negatively. In theory, the more mental health is discussed publicly and openly, the less stigmatised it becomes. There is an ever-growing pool of research in this area too (Evans and Wilton 2018; Reavey *et al*, 2017; Tillmann *et al*, 2018) which contributes to the provision of a much-improved understanding of how to deal with ‘poor’ mental health, that is a state in which the psychological and mental self is not functioning at its’ full potential. However, this increased knowledge and understanding also means that we could expect the number of people diagnosed with mental ill-health to increase. One should question whether there is a “mental health crisis” (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2021) or if we are just recognising and diagnosing mental ill-health in the way that physical ill-health has been for decades.

To understand the current interpretations of well-being, we first need to recognise the historical foundations to the study of well-being. Two approaches to understanding well-being have been developed over time – hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being. The former, hedonic well-being was associated with the constructs of happiness, positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with life (Dodge *et al*, 2012, p.223) (*see also* Diener, 1984). When applying to the

theory of hedonic well-being, clinical psychologists emphasize the importance of meaning and purpose that individuals have or create in their life which they believe leads to well-being (Fabian, 2019). Recently, explanations of hedonistic well-being have been articulated using Seligman's PERMA (Positive Emotion, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement) to define well-being (Seligman, 2012, *see also* Fabian, 2019). By contrast, eudaimonic well-being emphasizes the positive functioning and human development (Dodge *et al*, 2012, p.223) and eudaimonic theories of well-being argue for well-being as a process, not an outcome (Fabian, 2019). This theory is something that I follow in this thesis. I discuss the importance of the process of doing, and particularly doing without placing emphasis on the outcome. Eudaimonic well-being has been developed in connection with Aristotle's idea of eudaimonia found in his work, Nicomachean Ethics (1947 cited in Ryff, 1989, p.1070). Aristotle states that "the highest of all goods achievable by human action is happiness" (Ryff, 2017, p.4). It is this term "happiness" that Aristotle translates from the Greek word "eudaimonia"[1]. I address happiness later on in this chapter.

Ryff (1989) adopts a eudaimonic approach to well-being and believes that it derives from psychological well-being whereby it is the culmination of self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, having a sense of purpose in life and ability for personal growth (p.1069). This is a particularly individualistic perspective. By contrast, Diener *et al* (2009) adopts a more subjective perspective, claiming that people can only have well-being when their life is "going well, regardless of whether that life has pleasure, material comforts, a sense of meaning" (pg. 11). The difference between the individualistic and subjective perspective is that the former hedonistic individualistic approach promotes self-reliance and independence from others. Meanwhile eudaimonic subjective approaches promote individual experiences to

[1] It should be noted here, that in recent years this has been debated and some suggest that the translation is closer to "prosperity" (Robinson, 1989)

form opinions which cannot be factually verified by another. Both Ryff (1989) and Diener ( *et al*, 2009) however, claim that well-being is something that people can have, and they treat it as a noun, a thing one can achieve, or own. This is not something that is encouraged by this thesis.

People may seek out activities to improve their well-being (Ryff and Singer, 1998, cited in Carruthers and Hood, 2007, p.285) after a traumatic event or "turning points" (Wethington, 2003 cited in Carruthers and Hood, 2007, p.285) in their life whereby the event provided some context for "achieving deeper life meaning and purpose" – this suggests an eudemonic approach. As such, a person who has the ability to find meaning in their life can benefit from the adversity and this is often associated with greater happiness and personal growth. However, this is a normative and subjective approach to managing well-being. Furthermore, it does not provide a definitive understanding due to the difficulty in empirically measuring a person's well-being. In the experience of a traumatic event, a person does not necessarily find meaning, but in fact, they learn to cope with the traumatic event and have a greater understanding of managing and/or living alongside the grief/trauma throughout their everyday lives (Cruse, 2022).

Following their review of the literature, Pollard and Rosenberg (2003 cited in Carruthers and Hood, 2007, p.280) developed the following definition of well-being:

> *A state of successful, satisfying and productive engagement with one's life and the realization of one's full physical, cognitive, and social-emotional potential.*

They acknowledged that a person's well-being can be influenced by a variety of factors such as the physical geography in which the person is residing, working, and socialising; a person's cultural heritage, traditions and beliefs, the socio-economic status of the individual, the personality, family status and structure (see Carruthers and Hood, 2007, p.280). Diener *et* al (2009) however acknowledge the subjectivity of the term well-being and explain that it is easy to dismiss different interpretations, including their own, as superficial and misguided and therefore,

when discussing the topic of well-being it is particularly important to ensure there is space to recognise that anxiety, depression and anger are experienced by people throughout their lives (pg. 8) and this does not necessarily mean they are not 'well' and are not experiencing elements of positive well-being. It is Diener *et al*'s definition that this research uses for the foundations of well-being. I accept that well-being is "a state of successful, satisfying and productive engagement with one's life" (see Pollard and Rosenberg, 1999), but it is also important to recognise that the term is subjective. Just because someone may feel sadness or depression periodically, it does not mean they are not 'well' or have generally 'good' well-being. Well-being is affected by many different influences including the environment in which the individual is situated. This leads into the next sub-section of this chapter.

### Geographies of health and well-being:

The relationship between geography and well-being has been addressed by a small number of academics in recent years. Kearns and Andrews (2010, p.309) explain that the geographies of well-being are "a state affected by a complex array of factors, most of which we argue are anchored in the environmental and spatial contexts of everyday life". The spatial contexts of well-being are reviewed in detail in Chapter 3 which focusses on therapeutic landscapes and spaces of care. Whilst the geographies of health and well-being are often related to spaces of care, I feel it is important to acknowledge the geographies of well-being here as a comparison to other academic disciplines.

Though the geographies of well-being are an emerging theme within the discipline, it is not, however, widely written about and are engaged with indirectly (Kearns and Andrews, 2010) through the lens of green and/or therapeutic spaces. As such, we can begin to see the geographies of well-being approached through the Geographies of Health literature. Much like other disciplines, geographies of well-being, once limited to the geographical cartography of health and referred to as medical geographies (*see* Gatrell and Elliott, 2015, p.31), health geographies

and geographies of well-being are, today, moving toward thematic concerns such as inequality and therapeutic landscapes (Kearns and Andrews, 2010). The emerging research stream of health geographies, landscapes and place have been given new meaning. Landscapes consider the links to health and well-being, which has moved away from the understanding of spaces as bounded and barriers to health services. There is an enhanced awareness of the cultural importance of place (Kearns and Andrews, 2010) and this thesis maintains this approach by attempting to understand the role of the self in self-care, but also the importance of social connectivity in caring for the self. To achieve well-being, it involves both access to material necessities but also access to and connection with other people.

Contemporary geographies of mental health have materialised since the de-institutionalisation of mental health. Geographers such as Graham Moon, Hester Parr, Geoffry DeVerteuil and Chris Philo (see Power, 2018) have greatly contributed to the positioning of health and well-being in the field of geography post-institutionalisation to understand the ways in which space affects the health and well-being of different populations. This work has predominantly realised the notion that "'place matters' to the contexts, unravelling and experience of well-being" (Andrews, 2018, p.63). Prior to this, however, geographers engaging in research on the geographies of well-being largely focused their attentions on trying to understand and often map the objective well-being of groups of populations. Smith's 1973 welfare geographies, for example, built upon social indicator research in the United States. This produced national measures of social 'progress' by compiling data, such as employment status, education, and income, to map the spatial differentiation characterising national-level economic and social statistics (Conradson, 2012). Smith argued that well-being could be understood as the relationship between individuals and their surrounding environment. Today, however, this objective method of understanding well-being has seen a shift to a more subjective attitude to measure and understand well-being across disciplines (see previous subsection), including geography.

Hamilton and Redmond (2010 cited in Ennis and Tonkim, 2018, p.343) maintain that most definitions of well-being encompass the physical, emotional, social, economic and spiritual aspects of life. However, Fleuret and Atkinson (2007, cited in Ennis and Tonkim, 2018, p.343) draw on classical psychological theory explaining that well-being needs to be understood in relational terms using the hierarchy of needs as a foundation for their work (Andrews, 2018). That is well-being is to be postulated as an effect of "the spaces that we inhabit, the elements and the entities in the spaces, and the relationships between these" (Andrews, 2018).

There is a plethora of research on the benefits and disbenefits of spaces, in the form of green spaces (See Bell *et* al, 2018), and blue spaces (Vert *et* al, 2020; White *et* al, 2020). The spaces of well-being, or "therapeutic landscapes" (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3), use predominantly qualitative research methods. In doing so, it is believed that individuals' felt experiences and narratives clearly demonstrate the positive relationship between well-being and place (See Atkinson *et al*, 2012). In particular, the use of ethnographic methods when researching green spaces, Conradson (2012) claims that there is a greater "capacity to deepen understandings of the relationships between humans, their environments and well-being". The use of ethnographic observations throughout this research has indeed presented an opportunity to do just that and has begun to articulate the ways in which relational spaces of a craft workshop, has the capacity to affect its' users in both positive and negative ways.

Well-being within the discipline of Geography, is also researched in the context of practices and often addresses practices in specific spaces and places. Atkinson and Robson, (2012, p.1349) argue that practicing arts (for example dance, drama, or traditional art (painting/drawing)) can create "traditional spaces within which openness is enable to explore new possibilities for identity and action, spaces in which new resources can be built and mobilised for personal wellbeing". Andrews (2018) comments that these ideals of well-being and practice in geography pay much of their attention to the spatial configurations and constitutions "that are thought to be engaged by

individuals where and when wellbeing arises" (Conradson, 2012). However, he argues that there needs to be a shift in focus from where well-being occurs, to *how* well-being takes place within these spaces. It is this understanding of *how* well-being practices are performed within a relation space that this research focuses its' attentions. The latter empirical chapters (Chapter 6 and 7 in particular) demonstrate the ways in which both time and space effected the process of doing craft practices and how these practices were performed within relational time and space.

## Subjective Well-being

### Understanding Subjective Well-being

Each definition of well-being that has been discussed thus far has been founded on unharmonious ideas on the nature of well-being and, importantly, the way in which this knowledge is gained (WHO, 2013, p.4). The ontological approach of understanding the basic nature of well-being is achieved by adopting a subjective epistemology which has, subsequently, become known as "subjective well-being" (SWB). SWB has been inextricably linked with health, both physical and mental and as such, low SWB is associated with reduced physical and/or mental health.

SWB involves multidimensional evaluations of life which include life satisfaction and affective evaluations of emotions and moods (McGillivray and Clarke, 2006, p.4 *cited by* Conceição and Bandura, (2008, p.8). For others, SWB is a synonym for happiness. Ryan and Sapp (2007) claim that SWB demonstrates an individuals' ability to function at their best. However, it has been suggested that SWB reinforces specific socially constructed social norms and expectations that everyone should aspire to (Dolan and Metcalf, 2013). In this review, SWB and happiness are identified as separate from one another, though there are many overlaps within the literature.

### Measuring Subjective well-being

Suggesting that well-being can and should be measured may be interpreted as a form of utilitarianism (Diener *et al*, 2009, p.19), however, measuring well-being subjectively adopts a more humanistic, or social interactionist approach to well-being – one that has the potential to improve well-being for future generations (Diener, 2009). The measurement of well-being concerns self-

reported well-being associated with the following: life satisfaction, personality, happiness, psychological well-being, relationships. Subjective well-being is increasingly used within and across government organisations on a variety of surveys in an attempt to measure beyond the objective indicators of living standards such as educational attainment, employment or material well-being (ONS, 2010). Furthermore, SWB has been known to be ranked by nations, as has happiness.

It is “surprising” (Diener, 2009, p.15) that more emphasis has been placed on economies and individuals’ income as an indicator of well-being rather than emotional affect. Diener explains that it was not until after the affective revolution in the 1980s that emotions, feeling and experiences of these were important in the context of measuring well-being (2009, p.16). As such, gross domestic product and SWB have long been associated with one another. However, research has shown that people adapt to their living conditions. According to the hedonic treadmill model (Brickman and Campbell, 1971; Diener *et al*, 1999; Diener *et al*, 2006), an event (traumatic, good, bad etc.) will affect the happiness of an individual, temporarily, but people will adapt back to their baseline level of happiness, or “hedonic neutrality” (Diener *et al*, 2006, p.305). Objectively ‘poor’ conditions, such as living with long-term or short-term health conditions, or particular housing situations (for instance overcrowding), do not guarantee low SWB.

Major challenges to the use of SWB measures have been identified, in particular the differing SWB scales used around the world and the effects on expectations in relation to life satisfaction, the precision of measurement (Adler, 2013), and the ethics behind using SWB as a target of public policy (see Fabion, 2018, p.2).

Waldron (2010) claims that in general, the UKs social and economic policies have favored objective measures as they are “easier to measure and observable through behaviour” (p. 7). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) however, believe that “it is possible to collect meaningful and reliable data on subjective as well as objective well-being”

(2009 cited in Waldron, 2010, p.8). Subjective indicators of well-being have been identified as having the ability to augment information provided by objective indicators (Diener *et al*, 2009). It is thought that this data also provides valuable insight into individuals' well-being which can subsequently add to the information available to guide policy decisions.

Within the UK SWB is measured by distinguishing different aspects of it. The questions are split into the following (Waldron, 2010, p.10):

- Global evaluation (satisfaction with life)
- Domain evaluation (satisfaction of particular aspects of life, for example work, health, relationships)
- General affect (measurement of emotion and affect)
- Domain-specific affect (experiences of emotion ad affect associated with particular aspects of life for example Fear of crime)
- Psychological well-being (effects on mental health such as resilience, connectedness)

Further to the above, SWB is also measured using time scales of days, weeks, months or even years. By measuring SWB temporally, surveys can account for the changes that people experience on their affected emotions, (see Diener *et al* 2009) and as such, this somewhat weakens the critique that SWB is too subjective and does not account for fluid emotions, anxieties, and depression. Krueger and Stone (2014) have raised some concerns about measuring well-being using all of the components mentioned by Waldron (2010) and suggest that until a more credible and comprehensive index of SWB is developed, the 5 measured components should be measured and analysed exclusively.

Taylor and Brown (1988 cited by Diener *et al*, 1999) highlight that unrealistically positive self-perceptions and expectations alter SWB results. Those who claim to be happy may have a positive and more optimistic outlook on life, meaning that socially constructed negatives such as

lack of financial wealth, do not resonate with these individuals (Diener *et al*, 1999). Diener *et al* (1999) present some evidence to suggest that there is a correlation with happiness and optimism claiming that individuals who adopt a positive outlook (more good things will happen in life than bad), that their SWB will therefore be higher.

Despite some longstanding concerns about the validity of subjective reports of well-being, evidence is suggesting that these self-reports are showing signs of increased confidence in the validity of such measures (Krueger and Stone, 2014). This validity has only been linked with individual cases of SWB, and scales by larger groups, particularly global ranking of well-being continue to be questioned. Headey and Wearing (1992) use the dynamic equilibrium model (DEM) to explain why SWB is not affected by life events in some situations. The DEM demonstrates how personality, life events, well-being and psychological distress work against one another to balance each other out. Therefore, when a major perceived negative life event occurs, a persons' personality (eg. optimist) and their general well-being at that moment in time, balance out the negative, bringing the persons' distress back to the equilibrium level. Well-being then, is dynamic and in a constant state of flux, much like happiness which is described in the following sub-section.

## Happiness

### Understanding happiness:

Happiness is repeatedly characterised as the ultimate goal of human desire, and it is what we aim for and it is what gives meaning to our everyday life (Ahmed, 2010). This is not only teleological, but a normative rhetoric in the literature on happiness. Ahmed (2010, p. 24) emphasizes a quote by Kant [1788] who stated, "to be happy is necessarily the wish of every finite rational being and this, therefore, is inevitably a determining principle of its faculty of desire". Despite Kant claiming that is it the wish of every finite being, he also recognised that "the notion of happiness is so indeterminate that although every human being wishes to attain it, he can never say definitely and consistently what it is that he really wishes and wills" ([1785] 2005, p.78). This displays similarities with many of the definitions and explanations of well-being that have been discussed throughout

this chapter – it is often difficult to measure and is highly subjective on a variety of environmental and emotional factors in individuals' lives – it is in a state of flux.

Happiness was identified by Bradburn (1969) as an outcome variable for well-being. It has been defined as "a desirable state or goal… ascribed to a subjectivity that is less than authentic" (Duncan, 2007, p.86) which has been linked with Aristotle's eudaimonia as an activity of the soul (Aristotle NE 1999 cited by Fabian, 2019). Happiness has been synonymous with well-being, and particularly SWB (Conceição and Bandura, 2008), however in psychology, happiness is not viewed as a synonym of SWB but more so as an element of it. Conceição and Bandura therefore describe happiness as the result of the balance between positive and negative affect.

In recent years happiness has been realised as a political tool to measure the well-being of a population, which, if it does not see growth, much like the financial markets not improving, there is a sense of injustice and alarm (Duncan, 2007, p.86). Happiness is measured and nations are ranked according to the relative happiness of their populations. Duncan criticises this ideal, claiming it is tautological and claims that happiness should be measured relativistically, that is, happiness is not something that every person has to strive for or agree on. This way of thinking could also be applied to my understanding of well-being.

Happiness can be described as a teleological construct. By this, I mean that it is often treated as a noun and considered to be a goal or a thing in which people can strive to have, own or measure and compare with others' experiences of it. When asked, people define happiness in their own terms, however Easterlin (2002, cited by Conceição and Bandra, 2008) claims that they all mention similar things to make them happy. Happiness is subjective, much like well-being. For example, two people may interpret the same experience different. Person A may find happiness (perceived positive emotion) in an object or place that causes person B feelings of despair or regret (perceived negative emotions). Happiness has historically been loaded with meaning associated with positive emotions over negative, and a general sense of being content and

satisfied with life (Walker and Kavedžija, 2015, p.1) which combined have become a measurement of well-being (Seligman, 2012). In the same way that well-being is seen as an outcome of 'good' mental health, happiness is the emotion associated with 'well-being'.

As already explained in this chapter, happiness is not a new concept within academia. However, the ways in which it is approached have evolved. Ahmed (2010) explains that seeing happiness as an intellectual history demonstrates one important point: "happiness is what gives meaning, purpose and order to human existence" (p.572). Does this, therefore mean that a person who does not experience or feel happiness does not have a meaningful, purposeful, or ordered existence? Some self-help literature sees happiness as a product of thoughts, choices and actions (Duncan, 2007) that involve financial security, successful relationships, and social connections. Seligman (2012), however, is highly critical of happiness and claims to "detest" the word which has become "almost meaningless" (p.9). The apparent insistence that happiness gives meaning and may derive from successful relationships is potentially harmful and demeaning.

### Achieving happiness

One cannot disagree with Duncan's claim that happiness is an ideological and political enterprise (2007, p.90), nor that it is "indeterminate" (Kant, [1785] 2005) and socially constructed (see Headey and Wearing 1992). It is also clear to see that it is teleological – that is, happiness is viewed as the ultimate goal for achieving a fulfilling life. Davies (2015) maintains that happiness is a capitalist enterprise, sold to unsuspecting individuals seeking something more in their life. Ultimately, he believes that the future of a successful capitalist society depends on the communities' ability to reduce stress, sadness and illness and replace them with happiness and well-ness. However, the techniques and technologies that are promoted to achieve this are 'permeating the workplace, the high street, and the human body' (Davies, 2015, p.4). Davies is concerned that with the capitalisation and, ultimately, commodification of happiness, science will

begin to place the blame on individuals for their own misery, whilst simultaneously failing to acknowledge the context that contributed to it.

Taking this into consideration, there is, therefore, the question of how happiness is achieved and if it is in fact achievable. Happiness is, like well-being, in a constant state of flux. Life events such as marriage and divorce, employment and unemployment, birth and death, or personal injury or medical diagnoses can alter the degree of happiness, but questions still remain about the extent to which happiness can be altered (Diener *et al*, 2006). This has been exemplified by a 17-year longitudinal study whereby happiness was measured annually and despite negative circumstances being reported, happiness and well-being scored were still scored above neutral (Diener *et al*, 2006).

Ahmed (2010) begins to attempt to understand how happiness is achieved when it is so indeterminate. She produces a compelling argument stating that happiness is seen as the 'ultimate goal' in life, however, questions whether or not happiness can ever really be achieved. Throughout a person's life, external factors such as big life events, everyday practices, and other people, may enable someone to feel closer to the construction of happiness. Likewise, these external factors may also lead the same person away from happiness, and as such, reduce their perceived psychological well-being. Ahmed strongly maintains that total happiness is never achievable because there is always something, most often external, that is happening within or around someone's life that may create feelings of doubt or sadness. External factors might include a relative or friend who has passed away and/or is no longer present in the individuals' life, a disagreement with a colleague at work, or the car breaking down. There will be events that cause emotions and feelings of happiness to increase (such as meeting a new friend, achieving a goal, getting a dream job) or decrease (death of a loved one, divorce, or being made redundant). As such, complete happiness is an unobtainable and unrealistic entity, but one in which individuals

can move closer towards, and further from throughout their life course. Total and complete happiness is therefore not possible.

Diener *et al* (1999) demonstrates the way in which happiness is a goal, but also recognises that it is not possible to achieve total happiness.

> *The happy person is blessed with a positive temperament, tends to look on the bright side of things, and does not ruminate excessively about bad events, and is living in an economically develop country, has social confidants, and possess adequate resources for making progress toward valued goals*
>
> Diener *et al*, 1999, p.295

It is important to notice the language used. "*Does not ruminate excessively*" could be interpreted to mean that bad events are acknowledged, they do happen, and they may or may not have an effect on happiness, however they do not dramatically deviate from neutral happiness. This interpretation does then support Ahmed's claim that total happiness is not achievable.

Diener *et al* (1999) predominantly refers to happiness as an entity, a thing that can be obtained, however Davies (2015) emphasizes that in doing so, the potential to commodify and capitalise on this has become a reality. One of the key aims of this research is to understand how accessible self-care practices are and as such, the commodification of happiness through self-care practices is relevant here. Whilst the Crafternoons did not encourage the practice of craft for self-care and happiness, they did facilitate the potential for happiness to be achieved, or at least, moved towards. As I explain more in Chapter four, the activities I observed at the Crafternoons were completely free for participating crafters and we attempted to limit as many barriers as possible. In doing so, it was the University who was therefore responsible for facilitating a space of care for the crafters to engage, with support, in an activity that had the potential, not guarantee, to improve

their well-being and happiness. I therefore developed an understanding of *how* happiness is, rather than *what* happiness is.

Throughout this research, well-being and happiness underlying themes. Whilst this research is aiming to understand how practices affect the well-being of its practitioners, unlike most well-being and happiness research, these terms were not used frequently with research participants. During the observation of workshops and the collection of data, I aimed to make note of any language used associated with self-care, well-being and happiness. I made notes on the body language of participants (notably 'positive' body language such as wiggles and dances of celebration, and 'negative' body language such as frowning, signing, and moments of brief rage or frustration) to understand the way in which the activity affected the participants well-being. Well-being and happiness are subjective, and they can be fleeting moments in people's lives. As Diener and Ahmed both mention, it is still possible to be 'well' and 'happy', but complete happiness and complete well-being are just not possible to experience due to the complexity of everyday life. With this in mind, this research highlights the ways in which craft practices can be used to aid well-being and encourage feelings of happiness, whilst emphasising the importance of acknowledging that some practices come with challenges and feelings of happiness and positive well-being are not guaranteed outcomes all or any of the time for practitioners.

## Happiness, well-being and the life course

Happiness is something that we often aim to move towards and achieve (though as I have already described, I do not agree that it should be treated as a something that can be obtained). The direction of this movement may differ during pivotal times throughout the life course. Age is often recognised in the practice of craft and well-being literature, but it is also treated as a status or an identity. Both young people and older adults experience often difficult transitions in their life. Investing in a life course approach addresses the inequalities and challenges individuals face and can identify more appropriate interventions proportionate to need (Public Health England, 2019).

Therefore, to present age within the life course is more useful and situates age in a broader context.

Whilst happiness is something we move towards; it is not something that follows the direction that we follow. We can move towards happiness, though this does not infer that it is processual over time. Indeed, life course is not interpreted as linear – rather, it is unpredictable with transitions reversal. It has been adopted as a way of envisaging the passage of a lifetime. It is less as the mechanical turning of a wheel and more as "the unpredictable flow of river" (Hockey and James, 2003, p.5). There are particular transitional moments (Bailey, 2009) and events in the life course where well-being may improve, for example youth transitions and young people.

The transition into adulthood is a period of increased emotional and hormonal turmoil (Papinczak, 2015, p.1120). Biological changes, the pressure to succeed while conforming to social norms and develop an 'identity' are all factors contributing to young people developing mental health problems. Stoud *et* al (2015, p.127) claim that young adults today (aged between 18 and 26) are the unhealthiest age group. Three quarters of mental disorders begin before the age of 25 (McGorry and Mei, 2018), whilst a quarter of lifetime mental illnesses and disorders develop before 14 years of age (Hagell, Sha, and Coleman, 2017). The UK Royal College of Psychiatrists (2011 cited in Turner, Scott-Young and Holdsworth, 2017, p.708) found that 29% students studying in higher education have reported clinical levels of distress and young people between the ages of 20 and 24 years are less likely than any other age group to report higher levels of wellbeing. It is unsurprising then that 94 percent of universities have reported a surge in the demand for counselling services between 2012 and 2017 with 61 percent of these reporting an increase of more than 25% (Thorley, 2017, p.4).

The term 'well-being' has become a fundamental in youth and social policy (McLeod and Wright, 2016, p.776) and in young people's everyday vocabulary. Young people's well-being is of vital importance to the future and therefore, they should be studied as a distinct subpopulation within

policy, planning, programming and research (see Stroud *et al*, 2015, p.127). As such, young people have somewhat become a focus of this research. The literature and research to date is, however, often normative, focusing efforts on researching young people diagnosed with health conditions; young people under the age of 16-18 (Public Health England, 2018 What About Youth study); young people and their well-being in association with their identity – specifically identities within certain socially constructed 'groups'. Whilst it is necessary to focus upon specific groups of society to ensure careful consideration for the most vulnerable in society, attention should also be paid towards a proactive, forward-thinking, preventative approach to well-being and self-care practices. This, in theory, limits the impacts of everyday life stressors and provides an opportunity to present informed approaches to managing the signs of reduced mental health and well-being of the younger population.

When a person is older than 18, they are often segregated with adults up to the age of 60-65 when people fall under the brackets of "older adult"; however, as I have previously mentioned, the age gap between 18 and 30 is still a developmentally significant period of a person's life. Young people do report lower than average levels of happiness and life satisfaction and higher than average emotional intensity (Headey and Wearing, 1992). However, in more recent years, Hagell, Shah and Coleman (2017) have claimed that three quarters of young people (between age 14 and 25) report their life satisfaction as either "high" or "very high". This, however, does not align with a large proportion of current literature. Stroud *et al* (2015) claim that young people are "surprisingly unhealthy", which may be a result of their lifestyle choices (diet, sexual activity, legal and illegal drug use, and alcohol consumption for example). Young people are at a particularly tumultuous time in their life, where it is not uncommon to experience a great deal of change. The impact of leaving compulsory, full time education, choosing and starting a career, and moving out of the family home to attend university and/or to live alone are all daunting transitional chapters in life which can have a significant impact on a person's well-being. For 25 to 34-year olds', these

eventful life patterns continue, with decisions such buying property, marriage and children are common. Whilst this is an exciting time in life for many young adults, it presents an abundance of opportunities, there are arguably significantly more upheaval than other periods of the life cycle. Headey Wearing (1992) claims that those young people who experience more eventful life patterns are personality driven, however the consequences of the life choices made by young people are not completely controllable and as such, emotional intensity is greater.

There is limited research that aims to understand *how* young adults manage their well-being through the practice of leisure activities, specifically craft, to aid their well-being. This raises questions about what young people are doing to practice self-care, why they do it and how the self-care practice may (or may not) improve well-being. Finally, there is a question of *how* self-care practices benefit the well-being of the younger practitioners and how young people practice well-being. Consequently, this research project proposes to fill this gap and begins to evaluate and illustrate how, young adults, predominantly those in a university setting, learn a new skill and practice craft for self-care.

Both young people and older adults find value and well-being in the practice of craft. At present, these two groups of people are largely studied separately from one another, however this thesis will begin to draw comparisons between the values and practices, notably, students practice as a way of distracting them from the stresses of their everyday life (Chapters Six and Seven), whilst older adults practice as a way of structuring their everyday and finding value in social connectedness (Chapter Five).

## Geographies of self-care

I have reviewed what it means to ‘be well’, or the meaning of well-being, the way in which well-being has been used across the academic sphere, and finally, how well-being has been treated much like something that is achieved and is, therefore, measured. However, the question ‘how is well-being?’ still remains unanswered. Self-care is different for different people, and likewise, self-

care will evolve and change for individuals throughout the life course as their goals, time, wants and needs adapt. I propose that the answer to this is the proactive performance of self-care which is generally a contrast to literature on well-being that commonly adopts a reactive approach. By this, I mean the literature discusses the causes of poor well-being and/or describes actions that have been found to combat poor mental well-being during the times in life that well-being is at its' lowest. This research, however, endeavors to understand the practice of self-care as a proactive approach to maintaining well-being. The practice of self-care throughout this thesis, then, is an active decision by an individual to practice an activity that demonstrates positive outcomes, over an extended period of time, in order to prevent, or at least reduce the opportunity for mental well-being to decrease. I do not wish to produce another normative description of how to be happy, rather, to demonstrate how craft practices are learned and have the potential to be used for self-care. I will also outline the context in which these activities are performed.

## What is self-care?

Throughout the life course we all require, receive and provide forms of care (England, 2010) for, as Tronto (1993, 2005) claims, "care is a fundamental aspect of human life". Forms of care may be individualised (care of the self) or aimed at others. Some forms of care may be for the self but aided by others around us. Conradson (2003, p.451) defines care as "the proactive interest of one person in the well-being of another". This interpretation of care suggests the presence of two people – the carer, and the cared for. Individual care, however, or care of the self, "exists through and with others within networks of care" (England, 2010, p.133), therefore the former interpretation is still relevant. Geographies of care have over the years has been understood as a formal or semi-formal institutional practice which questions access, inequality and governance (Middleton and Samanani, 2021). This thesis, however, moves away from this stance and whilst the research is conducted within an 'institution', the field site (Keele SU) is an organisation that sits within the institution (Keele University). The research is not focused on the institution itself, but how the users of the space are using the space and practicing self-care within it. That being said, it is

important to recognise that the participants of the Crafternoons were both automatically enrolled members of the SU, but also paying students registered at the University. With this in mind, I do not wish to ignore that institutional culture has some relevance to the research.

Self-care has been defined as a multidimensional and multifaceted process that involves the purposeful engagement with specific activities and behaviours to promote the health functioning and enhancement of well-being (Dorociak *et al*, 2017, p.326). This thesis is focused on the aforementioned engagement with activities to understand how performing certain activities affects the practitioner.

Self-care can be as simple as taking time to perform a chosen practice of care on the self. It is the ability to practice doing something that preserves or improves general well-being (see BMI, 2021). The practice itself will be dependent on the practicing individuals' needs, wants, and abilities and it is important to stress that there is no right or wrong way to practice self-care – for some it might mean engaging with passive activities (activities requiring little to no physical and psychological energy (Cho, 2017) such as ensuring that they get a good night's sleep or watching television. For others it may be more active and involve scheduling time each day to go to the gym and engage in some form of exercise, reading a book, or doing some crafts. Research shows that engagement with these more active practices are significant indicators of life satisfaction for adults (Cho, 2017). Taking time each day to implement self-care practices can boost self-esteem, reduce stress and anxiety, protect mental health, and lead to better relationships (BMI, 2021) which all contribute to an increase in subjective well-being and life satisfaction.

## Care of the self

The conceptualisations of geographies of care build on the work of Fisher and Tronto (1990, p.40 cited by Schwiter and Steiner, 2020, p.2) as:

> *…species of activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our 'world' so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves and our environment, all of which seek to interweave in a complete, life-sustaining web.*

This understanding of care can very much be applied to self-care and care of the self. The care of the self demonstrates the importance of a person's ability to engage in activities that benefit their well-being – or so called "finding salvation" (Foucault, 1990). Foucault's interpretation of care of the self originates from the Greek and Roman philosophy, whereby the care of the self is not understood as self-discovery, "but about self-creation… a modified relation to the exterior… the care of the self is about living our lives 'as wholes', or 'living coherently'" (Iftode, 2013, p.78). It is not to been seen as narcissistic or self-indulgent, but to see the self as a self-relationship that is self-cultivated by ongoing processes (White 2014, p.496) in which the life of the self should be seen and experienced as an ongoing piece of art, a work in progress (p.497). This concept suggests that the self-help guides and mindful practices today are less about performing activities to 'find' oneself and more about the ability to develop one's personality and whole self, much like a handcrafter may not choose to seek out a pre-made artefact but go through the process of making the artefact themselves. This may involve finding a pattern and materials, practicing a skill to produce an artefact, and finally completing the artefact (though for many handcrafters, the artefact is never truly complete).

Caring for the self is not selfish. The investment of time for the self should involve discovering, developing and adopting self-care practices and thought processes. It should not be interpreted that the care of the self is of greater priority than the care of others, but that it is the precondition for the care of other people – friends, family, and others (White, 2014). To care for the self, Foucault (1988) suggests the implementation of a technology. Townley (1998) describes technology as "that which enables the production, transformation and manipulation of things" (p.18). These technologies "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality" (Foucault, 1988:

18). That is, people must try activities and methods to discover their “thing” or “technology” that encourages and facilitates good well-being. The operations that Foucault describe can be attributed to various leisure activities such as reading, walking, and crafting. Technologies are required “for self-reflection, self-knowledge, self-examination, for the deciphering of the self by oneself” (Foucault, 1988 in Townley, 1998, p.200). This is an approach to well-being and does not acknowledge the benefits of community in skilled practices and it therefore relies entirely on the self, the person, to realise the need to find a technology (or practice), with the aim of improving well-being. This tautological perspective is less focused on living in the present and more about the ability to allow oneself to look forward and develop without a set goal or understanding of a final ‘destination’ such as happiness. The idea of self-creation suggests that one is open to change, development and allowing the self to engage “as wholes” and not with one goal. However, there is a question of how this is to be done. The self and our identities are crafted to accommodate external identities.

For Butler, social constructions of gender, class and race should be seen as externally created ideals. The self is created by performing a series of acts that are renewed, revised and consolidated through time (Butler, 1988, p.523). Feminist ethics of care, moves to see care beyond the patriarchy and the association of care with woman, rather than people in general. By contrast to Foucault’s individualisistic care of the self, Gilligan coined the term ethics of care to form a “resistance to the injustices inherent in patriarchy”, of which frequently associates care and caring with women rather than all people (Gilligan, 2011). Care should be seen as a necessity for all, rather than a burden for some that should be managed efficiently (see Holdsworth, 2022, p.17).

Care is not an individual process but requires the support from and/or for others, by all people. Crafting is much the same – it can be performed for the self as a practice of self-care; however, it is often influenced by external factors such as the space in which they have to craft, or the person who will receive the product of the activity. The performance for the self benefits others and what should be an act of care for the self, becomes an act of care for others. Those individuals who identify as hand crafters perform and practice their chosen craft over time – they start as a beginner, they learn, make

errors, revise their practice, then may even stop practicing their chosen activity. The practice of the craft is for the self, but the product can be and if often influenced by external factors.

Jones and Whittle (2021) use a similar ideal to those above, but they propose that self-care is less an individual process, and the "self" should be developed as a 'networked site' (p. 385) in which systems and communities are able to affect and be affected by the "self". This relates somewhat to the communities of practice (Wenger, 1991) that I will discuss in the next chapter. The self and self-care are not necessarily completely independent processes, but a web of connections, communities and communications that are imposed on the self. Rabinow (1997, p.287 cited in Kelly, 2013) claimed that the care of the self was not always so individual. It could and does involve others, even if it is directed towards the self. A person is shaped by their community as well as by themselves and therefore it may take other people to lead the individual to certain technologies or the benefits of the technologies are the result of community. Waskul (2003, p.74) states that the self is created through meanings that can only emerge "through communication and interaction with others in the context of particular social situations, roles, and encounters". Self-care is, then, about internalising external practices (*see* Butler, 1988), including practices that are performed with or for others and as such, through these interactions with and between others self-care is never complete. It is a continual process.

## Flow and "Optimal Experience"

To recap, well-being is not something that can be obtained. It is a state that an individual can work towards, though it is subjective to each individual. It can be and can mean different things to different people, however, different people can see commonalities in how well-being is for their peers and fellow practitioners. Some individuals perform self-care in the hope to move towards a feeling of (or reach a state of) well-being (though I have presented arguments for why I argue against this). Self-care is the practice of a series of actions and the practice of a skill, both passive and active, that have a positive effect on someone's emotional and psychological state and can contribute to SWB. Happiness may be an emotion felt during or after these actions take place. Likewise, whilst performing certain self-care practices, a state of 'flow' may be experienced.

Flow, then, is a potential outcome (for some) of a practice that is possible under specific conditions. The following section of this chapter outlines the theory of 'flow', traditionally used in positive psychology. Flow has not been widely used within the field of geography and I therefore use this subjection to explore what 'flow' is and how it can be applied in the context of geography and more specifically, this research.

## What is flow? Where did it come from?

Activities that are performed without motive or purpose rather than to postulated cause are understood as telic activities – these are activities that are not performed with a specific outcome in mind (for example well-being). People may practice activities that they deem "self-care" activities because they believe that practicing them will improve their well-being. By contrast, a non-teleological approach to practicing self-care activities is to perform them for no reason other than a person wants to. In doing this, Csikszentmihalyi (1990, cited in Calleja 2010, p.347) explains that the practitioner allows themselves to stimulate an experience of flow.

> *"The concept of flow is defined as a positive and gratifying state of consciousness with the perception of high challenges in the task at hand and sufficient personal skills to face those challenges"*
>
> Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, cited in Ishimura and Kodama, 2009, p.47

The experience of "flow", or as it is sometimes known, "optimal experience", was first developed by the Hungarian Sociologist Csikszentmihalyi in the 1970s. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p.34) describe it as a "sense" or an experience in which humans have developed to recognise pattern of actions that are worth persevering and practicing over time. The body, or the self, functions with little to no awareness of itself doing it. Some people report experiencing a transcendence of the self. This experience is best described using the metaphor of a mountain climber (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p.33). A climber will concentrate on their progress and where they will move next – this concentration is all

encompassing and the activity forces concentration on one field of stimuli, the mountain/ rock face. Any level of awareness that does exist is focussed around said stimuli, logically coherent and purposeful. The flow experience of this activity is intrinsic, or autotelic – the goal for the climber is not to reach to top but reaches the top in order to climb.

No activity can guarantee the experience of flow due to the challenges that the practitioner will face. However, if they do accept and/or overcome the challenge, the success of the activity also depends on the skill required Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p.30). Flow will occur in clearly structured activities such as ritual events, games, sports or artistic performances. The actions are practiced effortlessly and automatically (Ullén *et al*, 2012, p.168) and it is often reported that the complete immersion in an activity can give the feeling that time stands still (Bakker *et al*, 2011, p.443). Moreover, the experience of flow will occur under specific circumstances as follows: Challenge, potential, gratification, concentration (Turino, 2008, p.4).

The activity must pose a substantial amount of challenge for the practitioner to want to engage in the activity in order for it to not be too boring, however, the challenge must not be too great that the practitioner does not possess or know how to engage with the level of skill required. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p.33) found that people report an experience of transcendence of self, which was caused by the unusually high involvement in actions that are more complex than what one may encounter during everyday life. Therefore, an activity, such as learning a musical instrument, has the potential for gradual skill development which is a vital component of a “flow activity”.

An activity that possesses this gradual improvement/attainment of a certain skill must provide the practitioner with some degree of gratification so that people are willing to continue practicing the activity for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008 cited in Turnio, 2008, p.4) and not because they feel they have to else it will become mundane. Concentration is arguably one of the most important aspects of flow. The activity should be engaging enough, challenging enough and enjoyable

enough that the practitioner becomes engulfed by the activity and their concentration does not waiver or their mind does not wander. The user should be able to tune out “anything irrelevant or to worry about problems”, such as family, housework etc. (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008 cited in Turino, 2008, p.4). Jackson (1996, p.77) explains that such deep involvement and engagement in an activity can lead to automaticity and spontaneity and a sense that control is exercised without actively trying to be in control.

Inghilleri (1986, cited in Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p.34) believes that understanding the experience of flow is important, as it is a key factor when trying to appreciate the strivings of the self and the quality of a person’s well-being. There is a vast amount of evidence to show that certain activities inhibit the experience of flow more than others for example elite sports (Bakker *et al*, 2011; Jackson, 1996); music (Freer, 2009; Wrigley and Emmerson, 2011); and education (Asakawa, 2004; Beard, 2015; Ermis and Bayraktar, 2014).

This theory of optimal experience, or flow, can therefore be linked back to the ‘goals’ of happiness and well-being. Much like the metaphor of climbing, individuals often strive for the top of the mountain, or happiness, however they do not fully acknowledge or appreciate the journey to reach this goal. The *doing*, and the practice of activities, such as craft, is just as important as the goal, if not more so. In terms of this thesis, the research focuses heavily on how people practice craft and how they experience craft – the focus is on the process of doing craft, not the beautifully crafted blanket or Christmas decoration that may or may not be produced. As such experiences of flow are observed and identified, but so too are the challenges of not achieving flow.

## Concluding remarks

Well-being and happiness are the outcomes of actions – they are not physical entities that can be possessed or, for that matter, objectively measured. To measure them is to rely on individuals fully understanding what is meant by the ambiguous term, which is inevitably going to be particularly challenging, especially when considering the lack of consistency within and between

disciplines. Diener (1984*, see also* Diener *et al*, 2006; Diener *et al,* 2008), a key author and academic in the field of subjective well-being, clearly demonstrates the paradox between well-being and subjective experiences. I wish to re-emphasize that well-being is subjective and it is important to acknowledge that periodical feelings of sadness, depression, low mood, or disappointment, does not mean that someone cannot be well or experience well-being. Well-being cannot be possessed, bought or measured objectively. Going forward, when I refer to well-being, I am referring to the subjective understanding of well-being whereby well-being is a potential outcome from the performance and practice of some activities for some people in everyday life.

Like well-being, happiness, too, is subjective and complete happiness is not necessarily possible. We may move closer to this ideal, or further away depending on where we are in the life course, and our lived experiences. Happiness is dependent on external factors, and the way that an individual processes them. Both happiness and well-being are, therefore, in a state of flux.

This thesis draws on the interpretations of well-being to understand how people engage with self-care leisure practices. I begin to unpick some of the assumptions about practicing activities for well-being is tautological and teleological. To practice something with a specific goal (to achieve well-being, for example), does not recognise the challenges that the individual may face along the way. To achieve, or move closer to well-being and happiness, leisure and self-care practices should be encouraged. I have outlined the varied interpretations of 'self-care' and as such, throughout this thesis self-care practices are pro-active activities that are performed by the practitioner with consideration to time and space (see Chapter Three for more detail).

It is through the practice of some self-care activities, that some people experience 'flow' or 'optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). Flow theory has been linked with feelings of well-being through practice. Many activities associated with well-being such as crochet, sports, playing a musical instrument, and even education and learning, all have the capacity to incite the experience of flow and increase well-being. Experiences of 'flow' are explored throughout this thesis,

particularly in Chapter Five whereby many of the participants either mentioned it directly or described the characteristics of flow.

Butler refers to the development of the self through acts that are practiced through time. The next chapter begins to consider the way in which temporalities of practice coexist with spaces of practice and spaces of care. The next chapter will outline the spaces of care that have emerged in the field of geography, before describing and reviewing specific practices of self-care through the medium of textile crafts.

# Chapter 3 – Literature 2: Space, time and practices of well-being through craft

## Introduction

Well-being and place are inextricably connected. Following on from last chapter's definitions of well-being and the review of the ways in which well-being literature is applied across disciplines, this chapter will expand on the geographies of health and well-being, reviewing the spaces and time in which self-care and well-being are practiced. This chapter will review the ways in which space and place has an effect on its' user(s) and the users' experiences of doing within said space.

The practice of doing for the purposes of well-being is often referred to as self-care. In response to Chapter 2's review of self-care and self-care practices, this chapter begins by tying together the understanding of self-care within space. I will outline and describe geographies and spaces of care and self-care that are depicted within the literature in the form of "therapeutic landscapes", first identified by Gesler in the 1980s and 1990s. In more recent years, therapeutic landscapes have been developed to incorporate the practice of doing and the subsequent evolution of therapeutic landscapes into "therapeutic taskscapes" (Smith, 2019). The latter, taskscapes, are those spaces in which self-care practices are performed. They are spaces of doing care and as such, taskscapes can be used to bridge the gap between space and practice. Smith (2019) unpicks the ways in which seemingly non-therapeutic spaces, become therapeutic as a result of the activities performed in such a space. The Crafternoons that were observed for some six months can be described as therapeutic landscapes.

Whilst considering therapeutic landscapes, I begin to unpick how space and care are connected by drawing on Andrews' (2018) interpretation of relational space. In doing so, I also draw upon Doreen Massey's conceptualisation of space (2005, *see also* Anderson, 2008), relational approach to space and the connections with time. This leads into the next section, Making Space to Craft in Time. This section outlines the temporal framework that I have drawn influence from to

structure Chapter 6 (past, present and future). This sub-section of the chapter also outlines the connections between care and time whereby procrastination is used as a tool of productivity.

From here, the chapter outlines the way in which 'practice' has been interpreted and will be used throughout this thesis. I refer to Schatzki's interpretation of practice that refers to practice as an embodied and habitual entity and Chapter 5, 6 and 7, begins to unravel the embodied and habitual nature of craft practices. Practice forms one of the three Ps that I refer to throughout the analysis (practice, process and product) and as such, it is important for me to outline what I mean by practice and how it has been used previously. I will begin to draw more specifically on the practice of craft to understand how people use self-care activities for their health and well-being. It is here that the practice of craft is unpacked, and the differing experiences of craft are explored, both the benefits of craft – for example increased cognitive function (Brooks *et al*, 2019), increased sense of purpose (Kenning, 2015; Genoe and Leichty, 2017), and increased life satisfaction (Adams-Price and Morse, 2018; Pöllannen, 2015). However, with any practice it is possible that a practitioner will experience failure in some shape of form and as such, I have created space to explore the ways in which failure is experienced and interpreted throughout the literature compared to the apparent benefits, specifically the failures and difficulties faced during the learning process.

Finally, this chapter will explore Wenger's 'communities of practice' with reference specifically to crafts. Practice alludes to doing. To do something, particularly when making, suggests that there will be an end product and this end product is often made with and/or for others. It is this involvement with others that is connects communities and practice to become communities *of* practice. It is here, that the gendered nature of craft as a practice and the way in which it is written about is explored.

## Spaces of care

In chapter 2, I described how well-being has been defined. However, what I did not mention was that well-being suggests "being some*where" (*Kearns and Andrews, 2010). If well-being means to 'be well' (Andrews, 2018), then the body and the self must be in space. Likewise, to perform self-care we must first create a protected space around the self, or community within which the demands of everyday life cannot penetrate (Jones and Whittle, 2021). Therefore, to fully understand the geographies of care, we must first understand the environment in which care is performed. The following section outlines the genealogy of these spaces from therapeutic landscapes to therapeutic taskscapes, and spaces of doing.

### *Therapeutic landscapes*

Therapeutic landscapes are "extraordinary" places of healing (Gesler, 1992) which draw on the perceived crisis in cultural ecology, structuralism and humanism (Bell *et al*, 2018, p.123). Landscapes can underpin a sense of coherence in a person's life (Townsend *et al* 2018, p.57). There is an assumption that certain spaces and landscapes are intrinsically therapeutic such as green spaces (Barton and Rogerson, 2018; Bell *et al,* 2018, p.123; Finlay *et al*, 2015) whilst other spaces, such as busy urban centers are spaces of busyness and increased instances of stress. Restorative 'places of healing' are used by individuals to escape from the pressures of their everyday lives and are employed as spaces of rest for the mind. However, the 'places of healing' and restoration are very dependent upon the individual's inclinations (Townsend, 2018, p.57). Increasingly urbanised ways of living, technological developments and dependence, economic changes, and an evolving work-life balance are all factors that people consider when selecting and recognising the need for therapeutic landscapes (Townsend, 2018, p.57).

The removal of oneself from the stresses of everyday life to rest and recuperate within spas, sacred sites and on pilgrimages spans hundreds, even thousands of years. There are however specific places that have "achieved lasting reputations for healing" (Gesler, 2003, p.2 cited in Lea, 2008, p.90). Gesler has distinguished aspects of space that come together to make up 'healing

place': the natural, the built environment, the symbolic and the social (see Lea, 2008, p.90). 'The social' aspect of therapeutic space is addressed later in the chapter in relation to Wenger's Communities of Practice. Retreats have offered a loose holiday-based escape from the stresses of everyday life but important benefits to physical and mental well-being. It was recognised early on during the industrial revolution that retreating to the mountains and countryside, away from urban centres, was beneficial for those suffering with breathing difficulties and many were shipped off to the coast to recuperate after illnesses such as tuberculosis (Murray *et* al, 2015) and psychosis (Historic England, 2022).

In more recent years, there has been an "unprecedented intensification in the pursuit of wellness in the history of tourism" (Shorter, 1992, p.35 cited in Lea 2008, p.90). This has, however, become a popular and lucrative industry and can be very costly with many weekend retreats costing hundreds of pounds making these events unreachable to those living on a reduced income. For example, a two-day yoga retreat in Yorkshire can cost around £500 (see Yorkshire Centre for Wellbeing). The appropriation of leisure by the economy (Carr, 2017) means that leisure, and therefore self-care practices, are reproduced through cycles of capitalist consumption. The spaces of leisure that are available to be consumed, are socially constructed as spaces of freedom, but they employ a workforce that subsequently require refreshment and relaxation of leisure spaces.

Contemporary research has identified the determinants of special inequalities in health (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, p.106). Geographers' contribution of health to the expanding field of well-being is to study the production of spaces that may or may not "favour health as an important component of wellbeing" (Fleuret and Atkinson, 2007, p.113). Fleuret and Atkinson (2007) value social spaces for well-being however this does not explain how or why individuals' practice their self-care activities and why they still benefit from these activities when performed individually. That is not to deny the value of the social, but to recognise the importance of the individuals

chosen space as a therapeutic landscape. This relational perspective “approaches the individual, objects and the milieu of place as open, connected and mutually constitutive” Lea (2008, p.91). Likewise, Rishbeth and Rogaly (2017) address the temporalities to therapeutic spaces and through observations of people’s use of benches in urban green spaces, they acknowledge that well-being effects are temporally bound and may be short in duration (see also Crang, 2001).

The current agenda within the academic sphere is that green space, and increasingly blue space (for example coasts, lakes, and rivers), is of particular value to the well-being of its users (Bell *et al*, 2014; Douglas *et al*, 2017; Schwanen and Wang, 2014). When considering well-being and self-care, a significant aspect of how self-care is performed should consider space. The appropriate space is vital for an individual to thrive in their chosen self-care practice, however the space that the individual deems appropriate is subjective to that person. Practicing mindfulness and meditation may not be appropriate within a busy café on a high street, whereas crochet or knitting could be practiced in these spaces as they do not require vast amounts of space and require relatively compact and affordable tools.

Alongside social spaces, green spaces are a particularly prominent aspect of space that is widely researched and documented within health and well-being geographies. This research on green space over the last three decades does clearly demonstrate the significant correlation between access to green space and an increase in subjective well-being (Barton *et al*, 2009; Douglas *et al*, 2017). Exposure to green spaces improves self-reported health, reduces morbidity, stress, obesity and cardiovascular and respiratory disease (see Bell *et al*, 2014, p.287). However, to experience any of these health improvements, individuals need to acknowledge their own agency and understanding of “role of orientations to nature in shaping how green space wellbeing opportunities are perceived and experienced” (p.287). The heavy gaze on green spaces has arguably led to a lack of recognition for the brown and grey spaces of the more built up and urban

green spaces (see WHO, 2017) such as allotments, community gardens, that can also be "valuable interstitial micro-spaces for restoration and wellbeing" (Bell *et al*, 2018, p.124).

Therapeutic spaces have become more diverse and subjective since the deinstitutionalisation of mental health and well-being. The asylum was once deemed an important therapeutic landscape for those individuals who were believed to be the most physically and/ or psychologically vulnerable in society. The deinstitutionalisation of mental illness in the UK in the 1980s (The Kings Fund, 2021) has led to the care and treatment of the most vulnerable in society being transferred from the institution to the community and as such, they were housed in either temporary psychiatric wards for those deemed most at risk to themselves and/or society or to the wider community. With the close of the asylum, many were left searching for "work" spaces in which they could "express themselves without judgement" (Bell *et al,* 2018, p.125). This is to some extent still an issue today. For the most vulnerable in society the therapeutic landscape of the institution was vital to their self-worth, self-belief and ability to maintain their own well-being in everyday life. Consequently, the encouragement of self-care can be criticised for excluding those with the most severe mental illness and wellbeing. It actively seeks people to look after themselves in order to limit the demands on the health and social services (Gatrell, 2013, p.99).

### *Therapeutic taskscapes*

The asylum was not a space of healing for many. Whilst many of the asylums in the latter half on the 19th century began to adopt a holistic approach to treatment (teaching life skills such as baking and gardening (Historic England, 2022)) the medical treatments of the patients was not conducive with recovery. Whilst many health geographers acknowledge specific spaces and places as a contributor to health and wellbeing, Gatrell (2011, cited in Gatrell, 2013, p.100) begins to make a connection between leisure activities and therapeutic landscapes. Smith (2019) begins to refer to these spaces as therapeutic taskscapes. Taskscapes are spaces of doing that bridge the gap between spaces of well-being and practices of well-being.

Walking and cycling are popular activities performed by those seeking to improve their wellbeing and engage with green spaces and nature, or simply enjoy some fresh air. Furthermore, walking and cycling have many positive impacts on physical and mental health which can be significant contributors to the maintenance of wellbeing over extended periods of time (Barton *et al*, 2019; Barton and Robinson, 2017; Cooley *et al*, 2021). The benefits that are experienced when using these therapeutic spaces, will differ depending on individualised interactions with the environment (Cooley *et* al, 2021). Walking for some people can be very personal, they may have a particular route and/or rhythmic pace and if altered or broken may disrupt the mindfulness of the activity within a particular space. Likewise, Lea (2008) uses the example of yoga and health retreats (specifically mental wellbeing health retreats) within 'green' therapeutic landscapes. Therapeutic landscapes become taskscapes when the space is being used to perform an activity or skill, such as yoga, that is of benefit to the user.

The biggest critique with these summaries of therapeutic landscapes and taskscapes is that on the whole, the literature is very normative. As already mentioned in Literature Review 1 on well-being, the general consensus is that people should perform self-care and achieve happiness in a space, doing something that makes them happy. Lea's (2009) study of Thai yoga massage uncovers how spaces help people to connect to their surrounding environment and focuses largely on the success of achieving a more positive experience of well-being and happiness through the praxis of a specific activity. It is the doing within space that has an effect on the individual, as well as the space itself.

Space and practice are ultimately reliant on synergies between the properties of space in which the practice is being performed. If space and practice do not synergise there is a possibility that the activity cannot be performed in a way that is beneficial for the practitioner which can potentially have an effect on the well-being on the practitioner. Physical activities, such as martial arts, are bounded in specific spaces; some craft activities, such as pottery or wood and metal work require

fixed infrastructure. Other activities are more portable and can be brought into different spaces. Crochet, which is the practice that I use in my empirical study, is a portable activity that is particularly accessible to most people. It does not have to be an expensive activity, skill, or self-care practice and it can be easily transported in a small bag, on a train, bus or plane. The portability of some female textile crafts (e.g. embroidery, knitting and crochet) has been garnered by women to integrate these practices into everyday life. This is not to say that the significance of taskspace is not relevant for portable crafts, it does though open up a more fluid interpretation of the production of space through activities.

### *Relational space*

Relational spaces of health and care place an emphasis on the temporality and consider the fluidity of spaces that can develop and change over time Andrews (2018). Andrews has described relational spaces as spaces of fluidity, networks, change and co-dependency (2018, p.40). Moon (1990) meanwhile has identified it as “space that is shaped by human agency and structural forces” (*see* Andrews, 2018, p.42). Space and place are often conceptualised as stable and parochial centers of meaning that result from social inscriptions (Andrews, 2018), however there is little emphasis or discussion placed on the relationships that exist beyond these ‘stable centers’. By contrast to this, Massey’s theory of space does not subscribe to the argument that space is stable. She claims that space is always under construction (2005, p.9). Whilst Massey uses the term “under construction” I refer to it as fluid. In *For Space,* Massey alludes to social inscriptions effects on space as mentioned by Andrews and commented that space is the product of interrelations. She claims that space is “as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (Massey, 2005, p.9).

We cannot assume that we can create therapeutic space through practice alone and we must also consider the users’ impacts on the space as well as the practice within space. Therapeutic spaces are multi-faceted and subjective, and there are multiple factors that influence the space,

including the users' life experiences. Massey explains that space is constituted through relations (Anderson, 2008) and interrelations (Massey, 2005). Therefore, approaching therapeutic space as relational, fluid spaces that are affected by and affectual upon its' users reiterates Andrews' argument that 'people make places and 'places make people' (2018). Places influence the feelings of those inhabiting it, and as such, it is vital to understand how space and place influenced the crafters that are observed throughout this study. The space in which a person crafts can affect their experience, though this is not to ignore there are other factors – social and political to name two.

Health geographies are increasingly using the concept of relational spaces to help identify the meanings that people find from space when practicing care. Therefore, this research also uses relational spaces to help identify the ways in which spaces of care can be used productively to support and ultimately attempt to improve the well-being of its' users. This thesis emphasizes the importance of fluid spaces in relation to the Crafternoons. I will describe the networks and the importance of the community created throughout chapter 7. I also highlight the co-dependency of the practice of craft within time and space and emphasise the importance of the fluidity of time, the stability in the space, and the co-dependency on others, particularly during the learning process. Later in this chapter I will bring in the importance of Communities of Practice, and it is the combination of 'relational space' and 'communities of practice' that I develop an understanding of temporal and spatial fluidity when developing spaces of care and craft.

## Making space to craft in time

Geographical writing on space necessarily conceptualises this more fully as 'space-time'. As Massey writes "what we conceptualise… is not just time but space-time" (2005, p.27). The practices of craft are not only produced in and by space; these also are experienced in and through time. To represent spaces as relational is to see them as both spatially *and* temporally relational.

## Crafting and time

The temporality of craft often assumes that time is an external entity that can be used for us. For many crafters, time (or lack thereof) is repeatedly given as the reason to justify to themselves, and/or others, why they can or cannot practice their self-care activity of choice (see Stalp, 2007, p.95-110). Ancona (2002) claims that time and timing are everywhere (cited by Holt and Johnsen, 2019). Time is both subjective and objective and in practice studies, time becomes a piece of equipment. It gives structure to practice, whilst also organising it – events are often time-based (Holt and Johnsen, 2019) and therefore bound. The perception that we are all so busy with everyday life – balancing families, work, housework, and social lives – means that people seek to use their time productively. Finding time for self-care has been deemed difficult within a number of publications, despite the wealth of evidence to suggest that making time to care for the self is as important as caring for others.

However, this notion that time is something that people use falls short of how time scholars interpret temporality. We should seek to understand time not by what time is, but by understanding how time is (Holt and Johnsen, 2019). Temporal frameworks can be identified using three common temporal juxtapositions – past, present, and future (Adam, 2004). In relation to practices, the past relates to the practitioner's motivations and decisions to learn or practice an activity – something happened in the past to make them want to do something in the present (Mead, 1932, cited in Adam, 2004). The present refers to the doing in the here and now – it is the experiences and the practices of the craft in a moment. The future denotes the plans an individual has to make time to practice their chosen activity. This model of time is used to structure chapter 6 of this thesis to begin to understand the rhythms of practice.

Rhythm is inevitable where time, place and energy intersect, and especially in textile crafts that usually involve the repetitions and patterns of movement. Holdsworth (2022) uses Lefebvre (2004) to develop her understanding of rhythms in making. Holdsworth (2022) introduces a non-

teleological presentation of rhythms that opens up the time of making beyond the performance of practice in the present and towards a relational conceptualisation of temporality. In doing so, the time becomes more fluid and the practitioners shift moves between a focus of doing and an intention of moving towards an intended outcome (Holdsworth and Hall, 2022). Methodologically, the rhythms of practice and time can and has been explained using Lefebvre's 'rhythmanalysis' described as a method offering the direction for researching (with) rhythm (Dawn, 2019) and I will explore this idea more in the next chapter (Chapter 4 – Methods and Methodology).

Rhythmanalysis will be explored as a method, but I wish to acknowledge the theoretical implications here. As a practice, craft should not be defined solely as pure repetition (Blue, 2017), though it does, in some cases become part of a routine. Blue (2017) asserts that a reconceptualisation of practice using a rhythmic ontology will enable a deeper analysis of the ways in which practices are affected by one another. Thinking ahead to Schatzki's practice theory (see next subsection, p.73), this has much in common with Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis. Lefebvre comments

> *but there is no identical repetition, indefinitely. Whence the relation between repetition and difference. When it concerns the everyday, rites, ceremonies, fetes, rules, and laws, there I always something new and unforeseen that introduces itself into the repetitive: difference*
>
> [1992] 2004, p.6

So, the practice of craft, and specifically, making time to practice craft does not require habitual repetition *per se*. Making time to craft may be challenging, as Lefebvre acknowledges, and there will be unforeseen factors to consider which I will begin to unravel next.

### *Making time to craft*

The disparities between the use of time for men and women has been portrayed differently, as I have already alluded to earlier in this chapter. Through the practice of quilting for example,

participants can remain busy, learn new skills, whilst also producing something that is purposeful and has a function (Burt and Atkinson, 2011, p.56-57). This assumption that the feminine craft of quilting *should* be practiced and practiced purposefully causes many problems for the expectations of women's chosen self-care activities. Meanwhile, masculine crafts, often performed by men, do not always involve purpose or practicality.

For women especially, many craft activities are performed (un)consciously with multiple intentions such as self-care, but also, as I will evaluate further in Chapters five, six, and seven, with the purpose of making things for family and friends, or to mend something with a function and a purpose such as clothing (Burt and Atkinson, 2011). It is perceived that women's time should be purposefully used with intention and practicalities in mind. There must, so often, be a *purpose* beyond simply caring for the self (see Foucault, 1990). Performing an activity autotelically, 'just because' someone wants to do it is not selfish, and is in fact, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, important for individuals' well-being.

### *Crafting procrastination productively*

One subtle way of deconstructing the assumption that time is an entity to be used, is through the subaltern practices that resist this idea such as the possibility that the use of time may be resisted by actively seeking out practices of procrastination. However, practices of procrastination can facilitate feelings of un-productivity. By dis-associating procrastination from the negative connotations of un-productivity and detaching ourselves from the view that time should be used or how time is, then we open the door to facilitate procrastination as a way of encountering time for what it is.

Chu and Choi (2005, p.245) identify two forms of procrastination. The first, active procrastination, refers to an action performed with indecision leading to the practitioners being unable to complete the task. By contrast, passive procrastination is purposeful, and actions are performed to make deliberate decisions to make time to procrastinate. Non-procrastinators have been associated

with increased efficiency, organisation and motivation (see Ellis and Knaus, 1977). This understanding of procrastination relies on the assumption that time is a thing that can be used, however, I mention above, I wish to pursue the idea that time is an encounter.

Procrastination, and making time to 'do nothing' can be beneficial, and can reduce stress, leading to improved emotion regulation and task performance (Chu and Choi, 2005, p.246; Tice and Baumeister, 1997). The Crafternoons were encounters of procrastination for a number of the participants and I will argue that this use of time is valuable, if not underestimated by the crafters in attendance.

## Crafting self-care practices

### Practice theory

A "practice" is "fundamentally processual" (Nicolini, 2012, p.3) and a routinised type of behaviour which consists of different elements that are interconnected (Reckwitz, 2002, p.249). The elements are bodily and mental actions, or states of emotional and motivational knowledge. Schatzki (2005, p.11) defines practices as:

> *Embodied materially mediated arrays of human activity, centrally organized [sic] around shared practical understanding.*

That is, practice involves the body knowingly doing in the performance of a particular activity (Schatzki, 2005, p.11). This is very true of textile craft practices. When craft is practiced, there is a reliance on the embodied knowledge of skillfully transforming materials into objects (Bell and Vachhari, 2020, p.682). Kelly (2011) expands on this to explain that these practices, or actions, are remembered in our muscles and senses, without a need to specifically think about doing them. Crafts are knowingly performed both individually or in a group, alongside or with others.

Schatski's definition of practice claims that the activity must be embodied in human activity. Crafts involve the embodied knowledge of doing and the performance of repetitive movements to create an object. They are also centrally organised around "shared practical understanding" whereby the

embodied knowledge and practice of crafts are passed from generation to generation (Torell and Palmsköld, 2020). Throughout this thesis, I aim to try to understand how these practices are valued by practitioners and understand the importance of the practice to everyday life.

Practices are non-individualist phenomena (Schatzki, 2005, p.480) whereby the individual performs a combination or pattern of action which, in turn, produces a practice. The regular performance of these practices become habits and are therefore tied to an interest in the everyday and life worlds (Reckwitz, 2002, p.244). Sennett (2009) sees skills as “trained practice” (p.37) whereby there is a process, or series of processes, and pattern(s) of action which are central to the development of experienced craft practices (Kelly, 2011, p.561).

Activity theory has been developed from practice theory. Diener (1984, p.564) believes that it is the behavior, or the physical doing of an activity that contributes to the production happiness and the feeling of well-being. A simple example of this is climbing a mountain or running a marathon – in general, many people find the practice of climbing or running is more satisfying than reaching the summit or crossing the finish line. One can only feel the sense of elation of the end goal if they have done the action to get there. Reckwitz (2017, p.20) asserts that it is not the individual that must be motivated to practice, but the activity itself must be motivating and engaging in order for someone to want to practice it in the first place which links back to the concept of flow described in Chapter 2 where flow is about orienting the self towards the practice or the activity, not the practice itself (Holdsworth, 2022; see also Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi 1988).

In relation to craft, processes are a recurring theme. Many textile crafts rely on repeated habitual processes to gradually build up layers of stitches, or weaves, which subsequently create the end goal or final product. Many craft practices are embodied, socially embedded and distributed skills (Kelly, 2011, p.565), whereby the practitioner, the hand crafter, has an intimate connection with the practice, the doing, and thinking which often involves repetitive, and rhythmic practices that

become habit. Sennett claims that “repetition and practice help convert ideas and embodiments into the instinctive, tacit knowledge accompanied by awareness and rationalisation in craft expertise” (Kelly, 2011, p.565). This notion of repetitiveness and rhythm is a theme throughout the empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7). The practice of craft, specifically the practice of learning crafts, relies on the repetition of doing, in order to overcome the challenges that learning may pose. With reference to crochet, the knowledge of practice is as Kelly states, socially embedded and distributed to others. This notion of repetitiveness and rhythm is a theme throughout the empirical chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

## Skilled practices of craft

The word ‘craft’ is relatively new (Gauntlett, 2018), at least contemporary crafts as we know it today. The practice of craft, that is the manipulation of materials with the hands to produce something useful, has been around for centuries. Today, handcrafts are seen as skilled practices that involve temporal and spatial practice. They are activities that support the practitioner’s ability to process thoughts and feelings towards everyday life, whilst also maintaining cultural heritage (Torell and Pamlsköld, 2020). Craftsmanship is a “basic human impulse” and a “desire to do a job well for its’ own sake” according to Sennett (2008, p.9). The foundations of creativity and therefore craft, are underpinned by what Richards (2019) calls “the four P’s… product (the outcome) and then process, person and finally Press of the environment” (p.2). Craft as a process only exists in the doing that is “an active, relational concept” (Adamson, 2007, p.3-4) embodied by the skill it requires (Marchand, 2016). Craft as a skill involves both thinking, feeling, and doing. It is a unity between the body and the mind (Sennett, 2011; *see also,* Ingold 2018).

Ingold strongly insists that skills require conscious action, often in the form of concentration. He emphasizes how craft-skills increase in temporal and spatial extent by means of differences within repetition (Patchett, 2016). Ingold’s theory debunked the view that skill is the application of knowledge but instead suggests that “[skills] are the ground from which all knowledge grows”

(2018, p.159). He affirms that the practitioner, through active engagement with their surroundings (or the space in which it is performed), is able to learn the skill. Through the guise of learning, craft as a skill is therefore not acquired but rather grown or developed – that is, it is a process that is achieved through practice across time and space: "incorporated into the human organism through practice and training in an environment" (Ingold, 2000, p.292). Practical learning is, therefore, "relational and situated process that arises throughout the course of practical activity and within ecologies of practice" (Patchett, 2016). I demonstrate this further throughout chapters 6 and 7, whereby I demonstrate and consider the way in which students and staff learned the practice craft in time and space. Further to this, I outline the way in which the learning process was affected by the practitioners' experience of and in the space that the Crafternoons inhabited.

Textile crafts, for many practitioners, is a skilled practice that is advanced through rhythm and repetition and therefore takes time. This does not imply that learning and doing are separate stages of practice, but that the repetition of skill requires subtle recalibrations. Skills emerge when the practitioner mobilises flexible forms of knowledge production rather than simply adhering to strict rules (Lea, 2009, p.467). In Chapter 5 I explore some of the effects of craft on practitioners' well-being, whilst Chapter 6 and 7 unravel the temporal and spatial effects of learning and practicing hand crafts. For some, learning a new skill is challenging and causes a great deal of frustration, whilst for others, developing the skill comes easy to the practitioner and proves to be a therapeutic practice.

The therapeutic practice of craft is, for many, therapeutic and is regularly used as a therapeutic tool to manage and maintain well-being. Craft practices have been used to treat psychological ill-health for decades whether this is the historical treatment of female neurosis (Price and Hawkins, 2018, p.14) or as a method of occupational therapy for shell-shocked male soldiers of World War 1 (Davidson, 2018). Craft is, for many (in the global north at least), no longer an everyday activity that is a necessity for an everyday item such as clothing, however many people still have an "inner

desire" to handcraft things as a leisure practice (Pöllannen *et al*, 2020, p.384). Each persons' experience of craft will inevitably differ depending on the space in which they are practicing, their skill and knowledge of the practice, and their own personal investment in the activity. Some people choose to craft for their own well-being (Pöllannen *et al*, 2020), because it is something they enjoy and/or because they respect and appreciate the community that craft is so often situated within. For some crafters, craft is a form of escapism or distraction from the stresses of everyday life, whether that is work, families or the responsibility of caring for a loved one (Pöllannen, 2015b). Visual arts and crafts are described as a "refuge" from intense emotions that are often associated with illness (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010) – both illness of the self or loved ones. Not only can it be used as a release to visualise emotions or embody them as an object, but also to connect with others who may be experiencing similar emotions. This concept of crafting communities is explored later on in this chapter.

Research on knitting demonstrates how it can be a distraction from life, enhances mood, encourages relaxation, reduces stress and anxiety and improves dexterity, particularly for those who live with arthritis and muscular disorders (Yair, 2011; Corkhill *et al* 2014; Corkhill 2012). Knitting "offers a route to happiness" (Adey, 2018, p.95; see also Brooks *et al*, 2019) and provides the "mental challenge [I] need" (Brooks *et al*, p.119). Further to this, the rhythmic qualities of knitting has been celebrated for its therapeutic potential (Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Greer, 2008; Price, 2015) which allegedly leads to increased happiness and a sense of well-being. Collier (2011, 2012), a clinical psychologist, discovered that many of her clients engaged with textile crafts for psychological reasons. These textile crafts were able to calm the clients and "centre themselves" and "gain control over their lives" (cited in Leone, 2021, p.6). Likewise, Home (2015) has described the treatment of traumatic experiences using textiles to create collages. They noted the sensory and rhythmic experiences of the practice soothed and nurtured the practitioner. In Christchurch, New Zealand, after the Earthquake that resulted in 185 deaths, craft became a

coping mechanism to process trauma in the weeks and months after the event. Knitting was a "relief and an aid for regaining cognitive capacity" which anchored residents, gave them something to do and helped to recreate a sense of continuity in an environment that drastically changed in a matter of moments. The sensory benefits of touching and working with different materials allowed practitioners time to work through "difficult or deep emotions" (Garlock, 2016, p.58). Textile crafts in general, such as knitting, sewing, quilting, and crochet, can provide practitioners with both mental and physical stimulation, social interactions with others and as such can promote healthy ageing and positive well-being throughout the life course (Kenning, 2015). Particularly in older adults, there is a significant positive correlation between crafting, more specifically textile crafts, and cognitive function (Park *et al*, 2019). Basket weavers in Scotland experienced the benefits of the practice as a result of their gestural movements and spatial understanding of their basketwork which aided healing, well-being and recovery from head injuries and strokes (Bunn, 2020, p.45). Bunn further explains the ways in which the "practice and action of the net-mending… brought memories back to mind" for one participant after they had suffered a brain injury.

Meanwhile, the counting of stitches in knitting and crochet, and the calculations and measuring needed in dressmaking and quilting improves mathematical function in everyday life activities and aided practitioners with their memory retention (Brooks *et al*, 2019, p.119; Burns and Van der Meer, 2020; Bunn, 2020), which in itself also supports older participants who may not have the psychological stimulation of work/employment and may be at risk of developing dementia and memory loss. Nemirovsky (cited in Bunn, 2020, p.42) made the connection between actions and movements in craft sills and the production of mathematical concepts in action. They explain that intelligence depends upon an active body and by performing skilled crafts, such as basket weaving, the hand-eye or mind-body coordination, therefore supported practitioners' psychological development and well-being.

In addition to cognitive development and/or maintenance, routine activities such as counting stitches and repetitive rhythms of sawing wood stimulates experiences of flow which help practitioners to escape from their thoughts and worries of everyday life for a period of time. Makers have described their immersion in making as “the feeling of being lost in the ‘flow’ of things, as the mind and the body work in repetitive coordination” (Yair, 2011). In Corkhill’s “knit yourself calm” she guides the reader to focus in on the rhythmic movements to allow the mind to enter a state of total concentration of the practice (Corkhill, 2017).

For example, quilting is a popular textile craft that is frequently used as a means for community craft projects for example the Quarantine Quilt Project (AHSW, 2020) and the Camden Community Quilt (Age UK, 2020). These quilts serve a number of purposes – narrating the stories of the crafter’s experiences of a life event (such as the recent and ongoing Covid-19 pandemic), often related to trauma; and aiding the crafts to process their emotions through the sensory experience of making (see Stalp, 2007). Likewise, other textile crafts such as embroidery have been used for many years to tell stories, however, more recently research has acknowledged the psychological benefits of the making process (see Homer, 2021). By embracing the narration of stories through a creative medium, practitioners have been able to process emotions relating to gender-based trauma, or simply explore their own voice and life story.

For most, experiences of craft are beneficial to the care of the self and most practitioners of craft experience a number of benefits to include improved cognitive function and an increased sense of happiness. The rhythms of the practice often initiate flow experiences craft (Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pöllannen 2015b; Pöllannen *et al*, 2020). Like many leisure activities such as climbing, playing musical instruments and dancing, knitting in particular, among other handcrafts share characteristics that inhibit optimal experience, or flow (Fave *et al*, 2011).

Gauntlett (2011, p.106) observed the ways in which making is explicitly to feel “happy”. Likewise, to quote Sennett, “making is thinking” (2009, ix). By making the practitioner experience a sense

of empowerment and connectivity with the craft, with the materials, and with others. The embodied nature of crafting process has a wealth of benefits for the practitioner. Some crafters reap the benefits of making through the practice of doing. The therapeutic experiences and haptic nature of craft engages most senses – the textures of the materials, the sound of the needles "click-clacking", the smell of wood shavings or acrylic paints, the colours of the yarn, quilts, and paint. All of this is suggested to balance and unify the needs of both mind and body (MacEachren, 2004, p.142).

Whether crafters seek happiness, distractions from everyday life or just enjoy the rhythms and repetitive flow experiences, the underlying argument for crafting is largely teleological and normative - to be happy, one must do what makes them happy; people should practice their activity of choice for a specific purpose and with a goal in mind. However, happiness and well-being are subjective, it cannot be measured intuitively (as mentioned in Literature Review 1) and therefore this should not be the reason for practicing. Someone trying to complete something a technical as crochet, or glass blowing (O'Connor, 2006) when they are experiencing increased feelings of stress is not going to produce a beautiful artefact, but they are more likely to make mistakes and become frustrated with themselves (Hawkins, 2018). I do not seek to deny that these practices can make people happy, but I emphasise here the importance of recognising that specific environmental and emotional conditions are a pre-requisite for the practice. It is not as simple of "knitting yourself calm".

### *Failure and frustration*

The manipulation of materials activates emotions connected to embodied experiences (Huotilainen *et al*, 2018, p.8). With these embodied experiences, comes a wide range of emotions. Having already touched upon the positive emotions, I will begin to unpack the experiences of those emotions that can and do post challenging for practitioners.

There is limited research or publications on the value of failure during the learning process. Torell and Palmsköld (2020) acknowledge that crafting can be both creative and frustrating but do not provide any insight into the latter. Hannigan (2018) present their publication to address some of the failures that are taught within creative artistic practices and suggest that “moments of failure occur in the artistic-creative process itself”. They claim that by breaking away from the norms of plans or designs, “exciting things emerge” and failures are of great importance to the many artists within creative artistic practices (see NEA Arts 2014 cited by Hannigan, 2018). However, Hannigan does not provide any detail on the effects of failure on the practitioners’ experience.

Csikszentmihalyi (1988) does begin to touch on this concept of challenge and failure and explains that in order for an individual to consistently experience flow in an activity, it should be difficult enough to challenge the self, but not too difficult that it affects the practitioner’s confidence and/or they get bored and give up. The challenges put the self at risk of failure, which for many reasons is often depicted as a negative, when in fact, it is an integral aspect of innovation and open-mindedness. A fixed mindset will view failure as a sign of permanent inability to function and complete a task. Within ceramics for example, potters adopt a non-teleological attitude to their craft. There are many elements to the process that can ‘go wrong’ or ‘fail’, however for many potters, these challenges are opportunities to express creativity, try new things and focus less of the final product (Genoe and Leichty, 2017). It is an opportunity to try another method and to appreciate the process of doing. It is the aforementioned non-teleological appreciation of simply ‘doing’ something that I am keen to explore throughout this research.

Whilst failure and frustration may discourage some crafters from the practice, the participants in Brooks *et al*’s study (2019, p.119) found that the mental challenges of knitting, and the frustration that they experienced when crafting contributed to the enjoyment they gained from the practice. They found themselves leaving the frustrating project to attempt an easier one and returning to the harder project later. The challenges were seen as “mentally stimulating” and the crafters

thrived off the opportunities to constantly learn new processes. Likewise, Marchand (2016) claims that mistakes are the starting point in the learning process. They are a critical opportunity to learn and improve – the practitioner is learning when they realise the mistake, and when figuring out how to correct said mistake (Merchand, 2016). The process of learning does not always happen in the moment of the mistake, but in the moment, or moments, after (Kirsh, 2008, p.268). In making the mistake, the practitioner knows, at the very least, what *not* to do, or how something does not work. This is still learning and a step closer to developing a skill.

Frustration, then, has not been thoroughly explored from the perspective of the learner within the crafts literature. A small number of publications have acknowledged that frustration is inevitable in the craft process and outline the ways that with a positive mindset frustration and mistakes can be used to improve the practice of craft, but none go into great detail on how frustration and mistakes affect the practitioner or their learning process. This thesis is therefore an opportunity to understand how frustration materialises itself, literally and metaphorically, and I will present the craft that is frustration in the wake of the learning process.

## Communities of practicing craft

### Communities of practice

"Creative practices have the potential to make places and build communities" (Hawkins, 2017). It is important, then, to consider the role of communities of practice. Craft practices are frequently practiced within and by groups, or communities. Ultimately, they are spaces of practice, spaces of learning and spaces of care. Visual skills are learned within communities of practice through the process of enskilment (Ingold, 2000). Communities of practice then are spaces in which learning is experienced as a "process of social participation" (Wenger, 1999). However, these communities take different forms. Whilst products of craft are generally materialised, relationships, friendships, and comradeships become entwined in the practice and for some crafters, it is these relationships, this community that contributes to the joy of the practice. It becomes a community of practice.

Before I delve into the learning process and learning within a community, I will first asses what is meant communities of practice. For this, I use Wenger (1999) who states, “practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life” (p.52). That is, meaning and value is gained through doing something and participating in an activity. The way in which we are able to experience the rhythms and patterns within a practice help us to find meaning and value. Wenger-Tryner and Wenger-Trayner (2015) explicitly state that communities of practice are “groups of people who share a concern or a passion about something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (cited in McDonald and Cater-Steel, 2017, p.xi). Communities of practice then, are a specific type of community in which a group of people practice an activity collectively in time and/ or space – there is a degree of mutual engagement in an activity which can result in mutual relationships. These mutual relationships have the potential to create greater meaning and value for the practitioners and as such, have the potential to positively affect well-being.

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a passion about a topic and work together in time and/or space to expand their knowledge and experience in this area through regular and ongoing interactions (Wenger *et al*, 2002). Communities of practice have been recognised as spaces of learning, in which individuals can collectively share their skills and learn from one another (Wenger *et al*, 2002; Genoe and Leichty, 2017) and through the performance of these actions, individuals can often find value in their practice.

Wenger explains that this is a temporal process, and therefore it should be understood that communities of practice may develop over short (weeks or months), medium (years), or longer periods of time (decades or even centuries). Communities of practice are not linear, and they often face discontinuities. For example, when a new crafter joins the community, previously “new” members become relative “old” members and they may begin to assist the “new” new members. In their earlier discussions of communities of practice, Lave and Wenger (1991) highlighted the “mastery of knowledge and skills requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the

sociocultural practices of community" (p.29). The new apprentices learn to replicate the mastery of the knowledge and the skills acquired through practiced based learning to ensure the continuation of not just the practice but the community (Amin and Roberts, 2008). This is something that is addressed in more detail within chapters 5, 6 and 7. This temporal progression demonstrates the progress and learning that a practitioner has achieved and as such, the practitioner may find meaning in this, they may feel pressure to suddenly know more than they think they do (Wenger, 1999, p.90).

Whilst Wenger focuses his energy on the temporal processes of CoPs, it is not possible to practice an activity without consideration to space. For Massey says space is the product of interrelations, of multiplicity – it is co-constitutive (Massey, 2005). Communities of practice do not exist outside of space. These spaces are affected by and effectual on those who inhabit it. Therefore, communities of practice are both temporal and spatial processes. The empirical chapters in this thesis mirror this, focusing on the temporalities of practice and the effects and importance of space on the practice of craft.

It has been claimed that group interactions of craft with like-minded individuals' aids well-being (Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Pöllannen *et al*, 2020; Pienaar and Reynolds, 2015), affords individuals with a sense of identity (Burt and Atkinson, 2011) and gives meaning to everyday life (Riley *et al*, 2013; Pöllannen *et al*, 2020). Artisanal and craft guilds lost their influence in the Industrial Revolution (Wenger *et al*, 2002), however textile craft guilds are witnessing a resurgence in the last 20-30 years. With their resurgence, comes the possibilities for CoPs.

The learning process can be complex and not linear, and there are many social theories of learning, however when referring to communities of practice and learning, I have used Wenger's theory of learning and communities of practice as a foundation and reference point. Wenger draws on the importance of human connection and group support. Human connection and group support contributed to the success of the Crafternoons and is a theme throughout the analysis of this

research. Learning is a social phenomenon, and participation in an activity with and alongside others aids the knowledge transfer. Wenger characterises the learning process in four components – meaning, practice, community, and identity (Wenger, 1998). Each of these four characteristics are present throughout my analysis of the Crafternoons. I will discuss the meaning and experiences of learning, I describe the process of learning through doing, I explain the importance and demonstrate the ways in which community shapes the experiences and successes of the practitioners, and finally, and I describe the ways in which the crafters create and find value and purpose in the activity.

Communities of practice are relevant for crafting, though these necessarily are constituted over time and space and do not have to conform to the idea of a bounded group. Creative spaces of craft provide an opportunity for communities to build, make and shape social relations (*see* Hawkins, 2017, p.160). Many of these crafts are learned from others, passed down from generation to generation. Gauntlett (2011, p.2) claimed that “making is connecting because you have to connect things together and make something new” and as such, “acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with new people”. Therefore, through encounters with the yarn fibres, hooks, needles and the creative process of making, people become entangled in the negotiation of social relations (Price, 2015, p.86).

Through the communities of maker’s, it is clear that ‘making is connecting’ (Gauntlett, 2018) people to things, but also to other people (Price 2015, p.82). These connections can be formed in physical and virtual space. Crafting communities present in multiple forms, whether they are tacit *in-situ* communities formed of one or two individuals or a large group. Craft communities are also increasingly available virtually. These communities might meet together using a video platform, or through social media. . There are countless crafting groups across the UK today, and even more crafting communities and virtual groups online and across social media – especially since March 2020 when the outbreak of Covid-19 forced people to practice in their own home spaces

and/or online with others on a screen. Crafts Council (2020) estimate that 31.6 million people were buying crafts in the UK in 2020, which was more than double compared to the previous decade. Crafts Council attribute some of the increase in popularity to media such as television (Great British Sewing Bee and Great Pottery Throw Down). In person, or online, these crafting communities are vital to helping reduce feelings of isolation (Crafts Council, n.d.) and can increase individuals' sense of purpose. Many craft groups provide a space of learning, but also a space of teaching and skill sharing. Crafters are able to share their knowledge and expertise which can increase their self-esteem. The common interest of crafts for group attendees encourages the early stages of friendships (Burt and Atkinson, 2011, p.57) and being around others who could provide praise and reassurance improves crafters sense of satisfaction with their practice, but this is also reflected in over life satisfaction too.

Communities are formed in different constellations of space and time. Price (2015) discusses in detail, the differing forms of knitting communities of whom each occupy different spaces. There are local knitting groups which take place in smaller, localised spaces such as cafes and libraries. Second, there are knitting communities that develop around specific shops, and finally, there are craft communities that are developed to unify communities, such as the Stoke Newington knitters who produced 'Knitted Stoke Newington' and 'yarn-bombed[2] the town, displaying their community of practice to the wider locality.

[2]'https://ukc-word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordeditorframe.aspx?new=1&ui=en%2DUS&rs=en%2DUS&wdenableroaming=1&mscc=1&wdodb=1&hid=6D530DA0-5015-3000-74F5-B3AFE73FB76D&wopisrc=https%3A%2F%2Fkeeleacuk-my.sharepoint.com%2Fpersonal%2Ft_e_fisher_keele_ac_uk%2F_vti_bin%2Fwopi.ashx%2Ffiles%2Fc2d6395574e14cdc80f72502ba781e5e&wdorigin=DocLib&wdhostclicktime=1639654753301&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newsession=1&corrid=fffd4576-93c0-4ce8-b3eb-92de00e6f4d2&usid=fffd4576-93c0-4ce8-b3eb-92de00e6f4d2&sftc=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_SingleFlush&rct=Medium&ctp=LeastProtected - _ftn1

### *Crafting communities of learning*

Craft groups provide practitioners with opportunities to meet like-minded practitioners, work independently, or with others. Community quilts are often made in squares, allowing participants autonomy to choose whether they work alone or collaboratively with others (See Moxley *et al*, 2011). Furthermore, Leone (2021) explains that textile crafts performed in a group setting, particularly knitting or quilting, are often held close to the body during the making process, creating an intimacy, whilst also providing the benefits of group support.

The common theme throughout the literature here, is that none of the studies describe in detail the processes of learning within these group settings in much detail. There is value in the diversity of crafting communities, including the diversity of skills and abilities. There is a shared assumption that each of the crafters have the knowledge to perform these activities and therefore, the use of the activity as a self-care activity will produce similar results, however, this is not the case. Many experienced crafters are continually learning, be that learning a whole new craft, or developing their skills in a craft they already practice. Crafters learn from one another, despite their experience. Deleuze commented “do with me” not “do as I do” (1994, p.23). Experienced crafters still attend workshops and/ or guilds to not only share their skills, but to also learn, develop and hone their skills with their fellow crafters. By studying Crafternoons, I wanted to look at the process of learning within a crafting community. The research begins to understand, therefore, the ways in which crafting groups are set up in a way that can support both experienced, but also beginners to a skilled craft. This opens the door to understand how, using Wenger’s theory of the learning process (1999), people learn these skills that are subsequently used for self-care and assess whether these activities are wholly beneficial for the well-being of the practitioners.

In an interview with Farnsworth, Wenger stated that learning can be understood as “a socially constituted experience of meaning making” (*see* Farnsworth *et al*, 2016, p.142). The learning process, for Wenger, does not rest with an individual for it is a social process. It is through

participation in various social practices that learning can occur (Farnsworth *et al*, 2016). This was reflected throughout the Crafternoons – learning became social and the social and the community supported the learning of practitioners, whilst also contributing to making meaning and adding value to the practice. The community supported one another and aided each individuals learning process in some way.

### *Crafting for the self or others?*

Many of the publications will insinuate that the craft is performed for the self, however many of the publications of craft will at some point recognise the importance of making for others and the self. In doing so, I propose that crafting for the self *and* others can be linked back to the communities of practice (Wenger, 1999). There is a limit to the number of blankets or scarves one person can make for themselves and as such, often the practice of textile crafts is as much for the practitioner as it is for others. However, I also begin to suggest here, that it is the practice, or the process of doing that positively affects the practitioner, or crafter, however the product, the final entity, is for the "other" more than it is for the crafter. This relational potential of crafting is overlooked in research on therapeutic craft. For example, Rowe and Corkhill's suggestion that one should practice knitting mindfully fails to recognise this (2017). That is not to deny the meditative experiences of knitting, but to recognise that to pick a colour or texture that is "mindful" for the self, does not acknowledge the aforementioned argument that an individual can only mindfully produce so many items of clothing, before they need or desire to make for others. When another individual is the recipient, the material, the texture and the colour, must all be selected for that persons' preference, and not for the self. Therefore, this begins to raise the question, who is craft actually for and how is this interwoven into therapeutic orientations?

By crafting for others, many crafters felt that their practice had more purpose and was therefore justified. Those crafters who have retired use their crafting practices as an opportunity to give back to their local communities (eg. Hospitals and charities) by donating their crafts, often

blankets, children's' clothes and quilts either for free, or to raise money. When an individual begins to find meaning in their practice and feel that they are contributing to something bigger than themselves, this type of happiness and purpose is known as eudaimonic happiness which was described in greater detail in the previous chapter.

## Gendered craft practices and the implications of (sub)consciously gendered craft research

Historically textile craft has been practiced and viewed as a feminised trade which reinforces the devalued nature of this work (Hall and Jayne, 2016). Other crafts such as woodwork (Smith, 2019), brickwork (Cannell, 2019) or metalwork (Thomas, 2018) were, and still are to some degree, seen as masculine. Some textile crafts (for example knitting or weaving) were predominantly seen as feminine craft that was often very poorly paid, or simply expected free labor to produce objects for the family home (for example blankets or clothes). This was justified by the gendered identity roles of the 'mother' or 'woman' in the home. Not all textile crafts were feminsed in this way. Textiles that required working with 'harder' materials, such as leather or upholstery, were 'masculine' crafts.

Feminine crafts can be associated with the narrative of the 'hysterical' women or female neurosis (Price and Hawkins, 2018, p.14) in which a 'fragile' minded woman performed textile crafts such as sewing, embroidery, or knitting to calm the self, whilst also being expected to produce textiles for the family by means of 'free' labor. We can see this duality in modern day textile crafting; the pursuit and practice of textile crafts by women as a 'leisure' activity is still associated with the ideology that it will sustain women's 'happiness', but also, the assumption that the activity will be practiced with purpose. The intention of the practice is still loaded with gender biases of 'women's work' as a care giver (Leone, 2021; Stalp, 2007; Torell and Palmsköld, 2020).

Beyond the genealogy of gendered crafts, the language used throughout the academic literature is also, at times, gendered. Sennett's "The Craftsman" is not only referring to masculinity within

the title, but throughout the text. Many of the masculine crafts are spoken of using the term “skill”. The crafts require time, effort and practice and are therefore “skilled practices”. Meanwhile, feminine crafts are often referred to as ‘hobbies’, low-skilled or mundane (Hall and Jayne, 2016, p.222). In her description of women’s practices of quilting, Stalp explains the way in which the practice is traditionally labelled “women’s work”. This work is not considered in the same way as a man’s practice of woodwork because they enjoy the practice or for its benefits to the well-being of the practitioner (for example Smith, 2019). Quilting is not celebrated for what it confers to the women who practice it, but because it fulfils her socially constructed role as a caregiver, the quilts are produced as a gift, or to preserve family memories (Stalp, 2007).

Gendering of craft is reproduced through practice. For example, Warren’s (2016) study of the craft practices of Australian surfboard workshops reveals how spaces of craft are not only gendered through the interactions of those in the workshops. They observe how makers frequently use inherently, and explicitly sexist language and utterances aimed towards both fellow makers – who were few and far between – and their clients, who spent considerable money for their personalised and one-of-a-kind products. The women working in these craft spaces were mostly subjected to ‘feminised’ work such as administration, retail, and paying bills, whilst the men were tasked with “’hard’, ‘tiring’, ‘physical’, ‘messy’ and ‘dirty’” work (Warren, 2016, p.43). The examples from craftsman, quilters and surfboard makers demonstrates the problematic language used in craft publications that reinforces socially constructed gender roles inside the home, in the workplace and beyond.

Corkhill (2012), Riley *et al* (2013), Price and Hawkins (2018) and Hawkins (2018, 2019, 2021) discuss the effects of textile crafts on the well-being of predominantly women. The participants are frequently living with illness or have been diagnosed with a mental health condition. The research often seeks out those who ‘need’ self-care for their own well-being, and thus, are not able to provide an unbiased narrative around well-being. The literature is therefore frequently

normative. As mentioned above, to be happy, these women do what makes them happy. However, I challenge this. By contributing to the discussion that women perform crafts because it makes them happy, further amplifies the historical narrative of the 'hysterical woman' and the alleged need or desire to find a practice to calm their nerves. I do not wish to dismiss the research – it is clear that crafts do improve well-being and people comment that they feel what they believe to be 'happiness'. Happiness, as discussed in the previous chapter, is multi-faceted. Complete happiness cannot be achieved, for happiness is subjective (*see* Ahmed, 2010). Therefore I aim to redirect the conversation away from the focus on who is performing the activity, and towards the conversation on why and how particular activities affect well-being and happiness.

Furthermore, many of the studies on craft are situated within pre-existing craft groups, populated predominantly by white, middleclass, middle-aged and older, women – this is clearly demonstrated in the publications selected in Chapter 5's scoping review. There is not only a gender bias, but class and race as well. There is little to no recognition of the time and, importantly, money required to practice such crafts as quilting or dressmaking. Whilst I do not go into great detail about the costs of the Crafternoons, I will acknowledge in Chapter 4 (methodology) that the Crafternoons were completely free for participants to access and some materials were offered to participants to practice, which made them very accessible. Pöllannen (2013, 2015a, 2015b) has begun to bridge the gap here, recruiting younger women, many of them working mothers, however there is still a class and racial divide in the recruitment of her participants.

Unfortunately, in the UK, textile crafts are often still predominantly white, middle-class practices. The Craft Council's *Market for Craft* report found that since 2016, BAME crafters made up just 4% of the crafters (Crafts Council, 2020, p.8). Patel (2020; 2021) presents some of the evidence that challenged makers of colour including racism and microaggressions within craft spaces and the difficulties they faced when getting their expertise adequately recognised. The more "masculine" crafts speak less of the "well-being" of the participants and direct the focus towards the practice

of the activity itself. Smith (2019)'s study on therapeutic taskscapes of woodworkers in Edinburgh does begin to demonstrate the positive effects of woodwork classes for predominantly men. In stark contrast to this, the 'feminine', textile-based crafts are often associated with the positive effects of the practice on the mental well-being of its practitioners, further emphasising and embedding the narrative of the "stiff upper lip" of the gentleman and the "hysterical woman" respectively. Men in shed's groups are becoming increasingly popular across the country and across the world (McGrath *et al*, 2022). These groups are aimed specifically at older men to reduce loneliness (*see* Men's Shed Association, 2022). The research into these groups is, unlike many other crafts, beginning to break down some of the barriers around mental well-being in men, though there is still a long way to go. Crafting narratives are generally continuing to embed gender roles, which, ironically, continues to have potentially limiting effects on the lives and well-being of those practitioners.

The practice of craft with and by refugees is a pertinent example of how craft is not only gendered, but also marginalises 'others' and excludes BAME communities (see Patel, 2020, 2021). Love Welcomes (n.d.) is a group that works with refugees in a camp, outside of Athens, Greece. The group encourages the refugees to join in the crafting activities that uses recycled materials such as life jackets, worn by the refugees, to make soft furnishings. There are benefits of using creative methods to support individuals living with and attempting to process trauma, the practice of craft is frequently not valued in the same way as white practitioners (Patel, 2020). Whilst manufacturing and some handcrafts may once have been perceived as the sphere of "the uneducated lower classes" (Miller, 2015, p.3), contemporary crafts are attracting more educated, often white, middle-class individuals (Luckman, 2015). The contemporary craftivism frequently aims to draw attention to oppression, exploitation and other social issues (Leone, 2021, p.5). To some degree, the ability to produce crafts as a hobby requires temporal, spatial, and financial capital (Dawkins, 2011) and as such, the practice of craft is often a lifestyle, not a livelihood. Many discussions on craft fail to

acknowledge and address these class and racial disparities. It is inherently assumed that the utilisation of craft practices are accessible for all. Leone (2021) stresses the practice of craft for many non-white women is not a luxury of leisure, but a means for survival, thus leisure practices, especially craft, are practices of privilege. Through the fourth and fifth research questions I will attempt to address the barriers that people may face, and as such, suggest a proposal of action for organisations such as universities to allow as many individuals to practice in leisure activities as possible.

## Concluding remarks

Spaces of care have evolved and will continue to evolve – from the asylum to deinstitutionalisation. Today, we have moved beyond the traditional views of the institution, and towards gentle geographies and the encouragement of "self-care" and therapeutic landscapes. More recently the discussion has opened to therapeutic taskscapes (Smith, 2019) and understanding the role of communities within these spaces of doing. To further understand the role of others in craft, Wenger's Communities of Practice outlines the importance of knowledge sharing and support. Well-being and practices of craft are often associated with the craft itself, but it is important to acknowledge the materialisation of not just products, but relationships and communities too. Communities of practice (Wenger 1999), specifically communities of craft practices, are vital spaces throughout communities today, as they have been throughout history. The emergence of *in-situ* craft communities can provide dynamic and relational spaces of connection for individuals who are lonely, or simply want to meet likeminded individuals to learn and practice different activities.

Opening up the study of craft to include the spaces that craft practices co-constitute is equally relevant to thinking about time and self-care practices. They are spatially and temporally connected. Both the time to perform self-care and the space in which this is done, will have affectual capacities on the practitioner. But in addition to this, we need to think about how time is

experienced through practice. To understand self-care practices, it is important to address the temporalities of everyday life. The empirical chapters demonstrate how the temporalities of the Crafternoons naturally developed their own rhythm and through practice, the experiences shifted throughout the two-hour event.

Practicing any leisure activity with the ultimate goal of achieving or reaching happiness is a principally teleological way of thinking. In particular, it does not acknowledge the lack of enjoyment individuals may experience during the learning process if and when they experience periodical frustration (*see* Straughan, 2018). Temporal encounters are emotional, and crafting has the ability to weave together different emotions. To expect or aim for happiness and well-being when performing leisure activities is naïve in the sense that this is not guaranteed, especially if someone is attempting an activity for the first time.

The gendering practices of crafts is still ever present today throughout the literature. The narrative that feminine crafts are hobbies, low skilled and should be performed in a way that is purposeful and uses time productively whilst masculine crafts are skilled and require more time and space (such as the workshop (Smith, 2019) or an allotment), only reiterates the centuries old argument that a woman's place is in the home (see Hall and Jayne, 2016; Leone, 2021). Gendering practices of craft limits the potential for people to engage with an activity that they particularly enjoy and has the potential to positively affect their well-being, self-confidence or general health.

This literature review demonstrates the normative language and research currently conducted on craft practices. The recurring theme is that to be happy, one has to do what makes them happy. Whilst I do not seek to deny this, it is clear that more work is required to understand just *how* these activities a make people happy. This thesis will investigate how happiness and well-being can be experienced through the practice of craft using time and space as a framework. This second literature review has demonstrated the ways in which happiness is highly subjective and as such, this review has demonstrated the lack of evidence to portray the lack of happiness that can be

experienced through some leisure activities, especially during the learning process. The empirical chapters will begin to unpick how craft is performed for well-being. It is clear to see that the literature focuses far less on the practice and process of doing the craft that it initially leads us to believe. Using the four P's (Richards, 2019) I have outlined the value and importance of the *process* of craft, as much as the *product*, and the *press* of the environment (or space) in which the *practice* is conducted. There is no doubt that leisure activities, including craft, benefit the well-being of individuals throughout the life course, from school aged children to retired and older adults, those living with health conditions and those caring for others. However, there has been little to address just *how* these activities come to be in a person's life and *how* the individuals learn their skill.

# Chapter 4 – Methodology and Methods

## Introduction

In this chapter I describe the study setting, my epistemological approach and the design of my research project. I provide an overview of post-structural epistemologies and highlight some of the founding users of post structuralism that I have drawn inspiration from. Much of the current literature presents the use of post-structural subjective experiences of time and space in relation to self-care practices, particularly through the medium of craft. Therefore, I endeavour to develop a post-structural research design that centres on exploring self and subjective experience using methodologies that can capture this data (ethnography).

Within this chapter I will begin by reflecting on my position as a researcher and what this means for the research and analysis. Next, I outline the data collection methods, including a brief overview of a pilot study conducted in May 2019 prior to the main observations taking place between September 2019 and March 2020. I also discuss the use of a scoping review as a method of data collection and the way in which the data was repurposed to help answer my own research questions. It is within this subsection that I will outline my process of analysis. Finally, I discuss the ethnographic component of the research.

I end this chapter by illustrating some of the primary strengths and limitations of each method. I summarise and describe the field site and how I came to gain access to the space. I finalise the chapter by describing the process of analysis, the ethical considerations of the research and highlight some of the methodological learnings that became apparent throughout the research process.

To provide some background, I will briefly outline how this project came to fruition. A pilot study was undertaken in 2018 as part of my Master of Research (MRes) dissertation to understand what young people are doing to switch off from everyday life. By this I mean to describe the types of activities that individuals engaged in on a regular basis (not necessarily every single day, but a

few times a week). This used two research methods, 8 semi-structured biographical narrative interviews and the analysis of 37 responses to a short questionnaire. This research found that overall, young people practice “passive” leisure activities – those that do not require substantial brainpower, and often limited physical input. These activities generally took the form of “chilling” with friends, listening to music and most popularly, watching television – notably the popular streaming service, Netflix. Young people did practice active leisure “activities” – those activities that do require some cognitive and/or physical input (*see* Cho *et al*, 2018). These activities included playing musical instruments, physical exercise such as running or going to the gym, and one of the most popular mediums of leisure activities was computer gaming. Whilst this information was valuable, it opened up many more gaps and questions to be answered. One of the most influential questions that the MRes raised was *how* these activities effected the health and well-being of young people. The interviews and surveys alone were not suitable to answer this vital question. Moreover, they could not provide the depth of knowledge of the activities. As such, this research has carefully developed methods that opened up an opportunity to begin to develop an in-depth experience of how self-care activities improve and/ or maintain well-being.

Two smaller pilot workshops took place in May 2019 in an attempt to gauge student and staff interest in two particular activities – mindfulness and craft. After organising two structured workshops I decided that the research questions of how craft can be therapeutic would be more appropriately addressed through conducting regular craft drop-in workshops; so, I started to explore ways of developing these. In September 2019 Keele University Students’ Union (Keele SU) announced that it would be holding a craft-based event for two hours each Friday afternoon, that was aptly named ‘Crafternoons’. After speaking with the activities coordinator who was organising the events and confirming a collaboration, six months of participatory observations were conducted over 20 sessions. Almost 100 participants attended the 20 free sessions which provided a space for students to practice and learn predominantly textile crafts. It is important to

note here that none of these Crafternoons were ever advertised for the purposes of well-being or self-care, for reasons that are discussed in much more detail in the empirical chapters of this thesis (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7).

It was hoped that through the Crafternoons 10-15 participants would be recruited to participate in a follow-up interview to understand the role of crafts and the Crafternoons in their everyday life and the ways in which craft practices affected their well-being. I had also planned to carry out drop-in workshops with a craft group outside of the university to diversify the participants in the research and consider different constellations of space and time. However, my participatory research had to be halted in March 2020 in the first COVID-19 lockdown. Not only could I no longer organise and attend workshops, I also found that participants were no longer motivated to take part in interviews. I therefore developed another dimension to my research through carrying out a scoping review to repurpose existing data, including interviews with crafters. By thoroughly analysing 14 papers, the scoping review proved to be a valuable exercise in repurposing pre-existing data and interviews which were able to answer the same research questions as first-hand interviews would have.

## Reflections on research positions

The following section of this chapter contextualises my role as a researcher and my social position in and on this study. The role I played in this research is an important methodological consideration, as it had an effect on the approaches and choices in both the design and analysis of this research.

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Keele and I also completed my Bachelors and Masters degrees at Keele. I had been teaching at the university across 3 schools for 2 years at the time of data collection and I had therefore been embedded in a position holding some degree of power within the university. I recognised some of the participants from classes that I had either taught in or assisted teaching as a demonstrator. As a member of the teaching faculty, I was an

insider at the university and was a familiar face for some of the participating crafters. However, I must also acknowledge that this role also meant there was some degree of power imbalance.

The Crafternoons that I was observing were a new event run by a new activities' coordinator, and as such I was as much of an outsider to the activity as my fellow crafters that I was researching. To those participants who I did not have any teaching contact with, I was very much just another student at the university conducting some research for my thesis.

In order to account for my various roles within the university, and the potential for biases that I had, and my participants may have had of me, I made every effort to write detailed notes of my interactions with each participant, particularly those I had taught before and was now learning alongside, but also researching. I made sure to make notes after each observation of my thoughts and considered how my role was being reflected in the interactions.

I am a white woman, and in attending the Crafternoons I was somewhat reaffirming some of the pre-existing narratives of white craft in UK craft groups. However, in contrast to many publications mentioned throughout this thesis, I come from a working-class family, not middle class. The Crafternoons were a relational space within a university which presents itself as an inclusive organisation. I am aware that had this research taken place within a non-university community setting, my position would have been very different. I cannot therefore fully assess the extent to which my ethnicity and class had an effect on the power dynamics in the group. I do, however recognise that I was in a small position of power in comparison to some participating crafters.

## Methodology

As a feminist post-structuralist scholar, Katz (1994) believes that ethnographers are always in the field and as such, they should consistently reflect on their own identity and the way in which it is established and evolved within the field and the subsequent telling of ethnography (see also Cairns, 2013). Attention that is paid to positionality raises questions of power and subjectivity

within the research process with subsequently encourages ethnographers to “situate their own practices within systems of gender, class, race, sexuality, and disability” (Cairns, 2013, p.324).

Much like other social scientists, including health researchers in the social sciences (including geography) (Gatrell and Elliott 2015), the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis is framed within the post-structuralist approach. Gatrell and Elliott (2015) believe ‘post-structuralism’ to be a “catch-all term” (p.54) however, it is an approach to research that presents the perspective that knowledge and experience are constructed through power relations.

I am not using the term power to infer repression, but with reference to Foucault, power should be understood as “the creation of expert knowledges about human beings and societies, which serve to channel or constrain thinking and action” (Peterson and Lupton, 1996, xii). For many of those choosing to participate in the Crafternoons, it was just that – a choice – and as such, self-governance (Gatrell and Elliott 2015, p.54). The participants were learning and as such, expert knowledges were being shared to channel thinking and action.

This research was, for the most part, an ethnography. The post-structuralist approach “enables the researcher to hold a continual critical reflection the premises and assumptions of the research gaze” (Popoviciu *et al*, 2006, p.405) and is said to “foreground the impossibility of unmediated representation by reflexivity” which “analyses the discursive forces in which researcher, researched and research process are entwined” (Pomerantz, 2008, p.25). Post structuralism has been described as a subject that is constituted within discourse and cultural practice (Pierre and Pillow, 2000). The post structural position is appropriate for ethnographic research because it acknowledges the importance of reflexivity of the researcher and participants.

Poststructuralist theories bring to light “critical concerns about what it is that structures meanings, practices, and bodies” (Britzman, 2000, p.30). For many post-structural writers, representation is in crisis. In her ethnography on learning to teach, Britzman aimed to consider her narratives in a

way that “moved beyond the impulse to represent ‘the real story of learning to teach’ and attempt to get at how ‘the real’ of teaching is produced as ‘the real story’” (2000, p.31). Likewise, using a similar post-structural ethnographic approach, this research aims to move beyond the impulse to represent ‘the real story’ of self-care practices, and begin to understand and depict *how* the learning process produces ‘the real story’ of the challenges of self-care.

Ethnography has been influenced by post-structuralism and post-modernism, the most influential figures being that of Derrida and his work on ‘deconstruction’ but more importantly for this research, the work of Foucault (see Gutting 2001). In rejecting realism, Foucault favours “the ‘regimes of truth’ by which they are constituted and how they have structured institutional practices during the development of Western society” (Hammersley, 2007, p.12). Foucault believes that regimes of truth differ depending on the context in which they were established. He reflects on the role of “diverse sources of power and resistance” and therefore “what is treated as true and false… through the exercise of power” (Hammersley 2007, p.13).

Post-structuralism has “profoundly affected” human geography (Murdoch, 2006, p.1) and as such, post-structuralism has affected both what and how geographer’s study. In using post-structuralist theories, geographers are able to investigate spatially situated interactions that recognise the differing relations through and within spatial locations. Post-structural geographical theories often understand that the performance of social practices go hand in hand with the performance of space (Murdoch, 2006, p.18). Cairns (2013) claims that insights from cultural geography reveal “how the ethnographic ‘field’ is constituted through power-infused practices of knowledge production that are relationally negotiated and contested” (p.327). Again, the analysis chapters demonstrate how performance and practice of knowledge production of craft practices are negotiated by participants who are learning a new skill and facing the challenge of overcoming frustrations. I begin to understand the interactions of people and materials of craft or “things” (Murdoch (2006) within time and space.

## Research design

For the reasons described above, the research design for this project has been built around exclusively qualitative research methods. There were two key methods in this research which were carefully selected to answer the research questions – a qualitative scoping review, and participant observation. The observations aimed to answer research questions 3, 4 and 5, whilst the scoping review aimed to answer research questions 1, 2 and 3. I provide a brief description and overview of a pilot study that was conducted in May 2019. I describe the process of participant observations that took place over six months with Keele SU before identifying the characteristics of the participants that joined the Crafternoons. Finally, in this section of the chapter, I summarize the process of conducting a scoping review. Here, I also draw attention to the justification for using an increasingly popular, but alternative method of data collection.

### *Pilot study*

Before collaborating with Keele SU, I ran two pilot studies – one crochet and one mindfulness. The pilot studies were conducted with the aim of developing the structure of the workshops and to understand how they would be run, consider which spaces might work the best for the activities and finally, scope out how much interest there would be in the activity. Four people attended a pilot study in May 2019 (see Table 1), and I received positive feedback. Three of the four participants were, however, in their final semester at the university and therefore, despite showing interest, could not return for the sessions I was planning in the new academic year. When I began to conduct research observations in October 2019, only one participant joined out of three sessions, despite interest via email. This participant was in her final week at the University as she was an exchange student so much like three participants in May, she could not return for more sessions. I decided not to continue with the mindfulness workshops as they were very poorly attended and for financial reasons. I was paying a psychotherapeutic practitioner, trained in mindfulness, and accredited by the Mindfulness Association. This was expensive, and it was felt that after three sessions and only one attendee, the small amount of money could have been

spent more effectively elsewhere. As such, I chose to invest more money in the Crafternoons as this was proving to be very well attended and increasingly popular.

I conducted one crochet pilot workshop in May 2019 which I deliberately and strategically coincided with the university's exams week. Student services advertised the event on their social media and through their online schedules. As an experienced crafter, my lead supervisor, Clare, offered her time and skills to teach crochet within the workshop. I both participated and observed in the workshop however, I spent most of the workshop making notes. The pilot study was also an opportunity for myself to understand my position as an actively participating researcher, whilst also trialing the structure of a workshop. This session attracted five participants with varying experience (see Table 1).

The crochet workshop took place in a mid-size meeting room with large windows on two walls. The room seated up to 10 people so there was enough space for each of the participants to spread out their materials. Working with Clare, I laid out the table with instructions for the activity, a leaflet on crochet with links to useful websites, a hook and some yarn (see Figure 3). It was clear within an hour of the workshop that Deleuze's theory of learning "do with me" not "do as I do" (1994, p.23) would have been a much more appropriate and successful way of structuring the workshops. The detailed instructions and tightly structured workshop unfortunately did not help the participants but created additional stress for them and Clare who was help five participants who learned at very different paces. Participants[3] Diane and Hattie had prior experience and required much less assistance, whilst Marie, Grace and Shannon had no experience at all. This meant that the support provided was very uneven. A debriefing after the pilot study resulted in myself and Clare rethinking the structure and location of the event which ultimately led to us collaborating with Keele SU, who were planning an almost identical series of events.

[3] All participant names used are pseudonyms

| Workshop | Date | Name | Age | Gender |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mindfulness | 13th May 2019 | Jessica | 18-30 | F |
| Mindfulness | 13th May 2019 | Megan | 18-30 | F |
| Mindfulness | 13th May 2019 | Emilie | 18-30 | F |
| Mindfulness | 13th May 2019 | Rebecca | 31+ | F |
| Crochet | 21st May 2019 | Marie | 31+ | F |
| Crochet | 21st May 2019 | Diane | 31+ | F |
| Crochet | 21st May 2019 | Grace | 18-30 | F |
| Crochet | 21st May 2019 | Shannon | 18-30 | F |
| Crochet | 21st May 2019 | Hattie | 18-30 | F |

*Table 1: Pilot study participant information*

As a result of the challenges that were faced within the pilot studies, I have chosen not to include any data from them within this thesis. It was felt that this was not appropriate to include data from an event that was flawed.

## Data collection

### Scoping review

A scoping review was not originally included in the plan for this research. Data collection was interrupted by restrictions implemented in March 2020 relating to the global pandemic, COVID-19. After three recruitment calls via social media, emails, and personal and professional networks, it was decided with the support of my supervisory team that a scoping review could provide valuable insights into topics planned for the interviews and community-based ethnographies mentioned on page 121 involving older adults. The scoping review highlighted that the current literature is primarily concerned with older adults and there is therefore a gap around youth geographies. This gap is addressed through my own in-person research (participant observation). The focus on older adults in the scoping review therefore develops a comparative argument for the use of crafts for health and well-being across two age groups (young adults and older adults) and within different spaces.

Whilst very common in health sciences, scoping reviews are more marginal in social science methodology. That is not to say that they are entirely unique to the field of Geography. Scoping reviews have been used by some social scientists in recent years (*See* Bell *et al*, 2018; Mossabir *et al* 2021). I am therefore contributing to the emerging and increasing use of qualitative scoping reviews in Social Science more broadly, but importantly to Human Geography. I used the scoping review to identify publications and data that I could repurpose to answer my research questions that could not be answered by the interviews that I could not conduct due to the limitations of data collection in March 2023. The method of using literature as data and providing a formalised approach to this is a novel and emerging use of data and method of data collection to the field of geography and Health Geographies. I begin to bridge the gap between Geography and the Health Sciences and contribute a valuable tool to methodologies used in the Geography of Health and Well-being. Whilst not as detailed as a systematic review, scoping reviews are an increasingly popular methods of literature retrieval to identify key characteristics of a topic and the gaps in the existing literature. A scoping review is a relatively new approach to synthesising evidence (Munn *et al*, 2018). They require "rigorous and transparent methods" to ensure that the results are honest (Munn *et al*, 2018, p.1). As the name says, a scoping review demonstrates the scope and depth of a body of literature on a specific topic. Arksey and O'Malley (2002) address the for main aims of a scoping review – to examine the range and extent of research activity, to determine the value of undertaking a full systematic review; to summarise and disseminate research findings, to identify gaps in the existing literature.

Scoping reviews are not without their limitations. Drawing comparisons to systematics reviews, scoping reviews address broader topics, whilst a systematic review has a specific question or questions that it aims to answer. Furthermore, a systematic study addresses the quality of the included studies, whilst a scoping review will not be quite as detailed (Arksey and O'Malley, 2002). Scoping studies do not appraise the quality of the research publications that are identified, yet the quantity of data can be considerable. Having worked through hundreds of papers for this research

study, this was particularly time-consuming aspect of the method. Finally, systematic reviews generally produce a narrative or descriptive account of the research that is available.

Despite these limitations, conducting a scoping review was of particular value to this research project. Whilst scoping reviews are traditionally descriptive by nature, this research project repurposed the data in the publications identified by the review to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which handcraft practices effected the well-being of the practitioners. In doing so, this alternative method of data collection helped to answer the research questions one, two and three of this study.

As mentioned above, scoping reviews are common practice in the health sciences. This thesis does, to some degree, focus on well-being and self-care and therefore in conducting a scoping review, this study was able to embrace interdisciplinarity, bridging the gap between health geography and health sciences. At the time of writing the thesis, there was no published record of any such scoping review on the topic of craft and well-being, using only qualitative methodologies, and there were limited scoping reviews in the discipline of geography, specifically health geographies. These mostly address the topic of therapeutic landscapes and taskscapes (see Bell *et al*, 2018), or mapping specific medical conditions and illnesses, but nothing that addresses practice, or more specifically, the practice of craft, thus presenting a gap that I could investigate.

Throughout the research process I have engaged with countless publications and texts written by academics on the topic of craft for both the literature review and the scoping review. In doing so, it became clear that craft researchers often conduct the research having drawn on an auto-ethnographical experience of a craft practice. That is the academics were embedded in the practice they were researching either as a long-standing practitioner, or as a newcomer (Collins, 2020). The academics in question were often more-than-academics in the majority of the publications. As such, the scoping review was a new way of bringing praxis to the forefront by

bringing together stories of academic practice by repurposing pre-existing data. Whilst it could be argued I could have continued research online, like many researchers have done in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, my study focused on the observation of practice. This meant that I was specifically observing just *how* participants engaged with the practice. First, it was first not possible to activate the Crafternoons online in the first six months of the pandemic, and second, it would not have been possible to understand the effects of space on the practitioner in the same way that I had been doing. Therefore, I turned to Arksey and O'Malley's five stage process (see table 2) to conduct a scoping review of craft practices and well-being.

| Stage | Activity |
|---|---|
| 1 | Identifying the research question |
| 2 | Identifying relevant studies |
| 3 | Study selection |
| 4 | Charting the data |
| 5 | Collating, summarising and reporting the results |

*Table 2: Arksey and O'Malley (2002) five stages to producing a scoping review*

### *The process*

After defining the research question(s) for the review (see p.137), the papers were identified through three academic search engines – PubMed, Web of Science, and Ebsco Host. The search was refined to only show papers published between January 2010 and July 2020. Two of the search engines allowed 'duplicated' papers to be excluded. From an initial 1032 unique records, 849 publications were identified and screened after duplicated papers were excluded (see Figure 1). All search engines were filtered to include peer reviewed papers only. In each of the three search engines the following searches were made: 'craft' AND 'well-being OR wellbeing OR; 'craft' AND 'self-care'; 'craft' AND 'well-being OR well being' AND 'learning'; 'craft' AND 'self-care' AND

'learning'; 'craft' AND 'well-being OR wellbeing' AND 'self-care. The first screening process involved reviewing just the title, abstract and key words for the inclusion of the words 'craft', 'hand craft' or the name of a specific hand craft (for example 'knitting'), and 'well-being', 'wellbeing', 'well being', or 'self-care'. It was in this stage of the process that the 849 papers were whittled down to 62 papers that would then be read in detail and reviewed in much greater detail as per the inclusion and exclusion criteria (table 3). The final list of publications and the details of each paper can be found in Appendix 3.

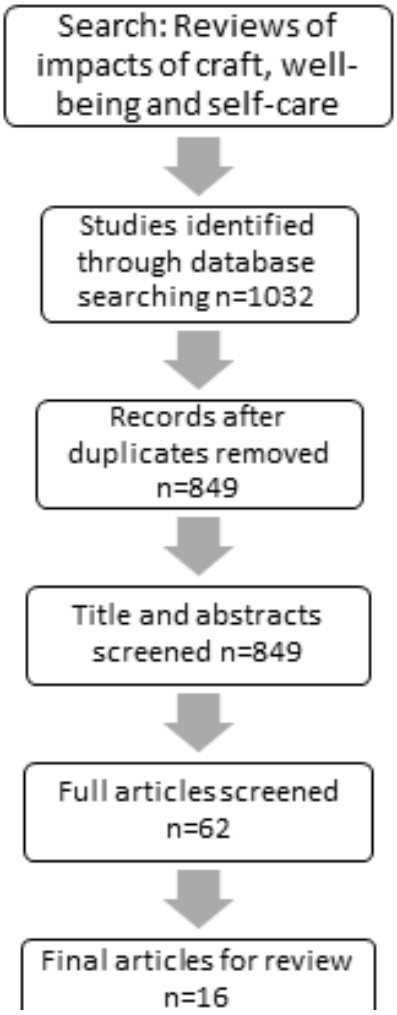


*Figure 1: process of data synthesis*

### *Inclusion and exclusion criteria*

The inclusion and exclusion criteria involved a thorough review process. Each of the search engines had various selection criteria. I ensured that for each of them, this remained as similar as possible. This next subsection will explain how I came to formulate an inclusion and exclusion criteria for this scoping review.

| **Inclusion criteria** | **Exclusion criteria** |
|---|---|
| Peer reviewed academic publication | Children (under the age of 18) |
| January 2010 to July 2020 | Adults living in nursing and/ or therapeutic settings (eg. Nursing home or supported living) |
| Qualitative research (may include some quantitative, but qualitative is the dominant research method) | Quantitative research only |
| Craft practiced as a hobby | Craft practiced for financial gain (eg. Permanent employment and/or main source of income) |
| Primary research | Secondary research or review papers |
| Mention of at least one handcraft | |
| Inclusion of words 'craft', 'hand craft' or the name of a specific hand craft (for example 'knitting'), and 'well-being', 'wellbeing', 'well being', or 'self-care' in the title, abstract and/or key words | |

*Table 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for scoping review*

As mentioned previously, each search engine had advanced features that allowed only peer reviewed academic publications to be included in the search. Only peer reviewed publications were included as the review process encourages authors to "meet the accepted high standards of their discipline and to control the dissemination of research data to ensure that unwarranted

claims, unacceptable interpretations or personal views are not published without prior expert review" (Kelly *et al*, 2014). It was important for this thesis that all publications were of the highest standard due to the popularity of crafting practices both inside and outside of academia.

Two of the search engines allowed searches of dates using a [month/year] format, whilst the third enabled a [date/month/year] format. In this case, I chose the 1st January 2010 as the start date, and the 31st July 2020 as the end date. The 31st of July 2020 was selected as I began the scoping process in the August and September of 2020. This meant that I was accessing papers as up to date as possible, but not missing papers from August, when completing the final scoping exercise in September. After discussions with my second reviewer (CH), it was jointly decided that 10 years was sufficient to retrieve enough publications for review and therefore the first day of the first month was deemed most appropriate.

Publications using (predominantly) qualitative research were included whilst publications collecting quantitative data were excluded as I am not sufficiently trained to interpret quantitative data accurately enough to produce a detailed analysis in the context of this research.

The inclusion of the practice of crafts for hobbies only and not as the sole or main income for a family emphasised the importance of the practice as an aid for well-being. That is not to discount the value that 'professional' handcrafters experience from their paid work, but to recognise the use of this particular practice for self-care, aside from everyday life. In the case of this research, everyday life includes paid work, alongside familial responsibilities (for example children and/or unpaid care work) and household responsibilities (for example essential housework and cooking).

The inclusion of only primary research, and not secondary research and review publications (for example scoping reviews and systematic reviews) was deemed an important criterion for a couple of reasons. First, review publications were not suitable as this dataset was itself a review, and therefore, to review a review seemed counter-intuitive. Many of the reviews did not include enough

of the first-hand data to analyse myself. Similarly, publications using secondary papers did not necessarily include the original data or enough of the original data for me to analyse and review. It was felt that using primary data only allowed the original data to be used without secondary interpretations, allowing for my own analysis to dominate, and not additional. In doing this, I do not dismiss the secondary analyses, but as this thesis is an original piece of work, it was important for me that I presented my own analysis. Many of the excluded papers have since been used within the literature reviews.

Publications whose research focused on children under the age of 18 were excluded from this scoping review as the data collected in this research project does not include data on children, and as such, there would be no way of providing any critical comparison with my own research.

Adults living in nursing and/or therapeutic settings such as supported living or care homes were excluded as during the analysis process. Each paper acknowledged the craft organiser to be either a nurse, care home activities coordinator, or an occupational therapist. As such, the purpose of practicing craft in these situations was deemed for medical purposes, not an autonomous decision by the craft practitioner.

At least one handcraft was mentioned and studies throughout the research of the publication. As this was focusing on the practice of craft, it was very important that the research process involved the direct study of a handcraft. Some of the participants used a form of machine, such as a sewing machine, or a firing kiln, however these are still considered handcrafts as the crafts still predominantly require the use of the hands to operate. Furthermore, the machines were not used to produce industrial quantities of the artefact being produced.

### *Scoping review analysis*

The analysis of the scoping review involved a different approach to the analysis of the field notes. As the data was not my own, I decided to use a grounded theory approach to the analysis. Grounded theory, founded by Glaser and Strauss (see Glaser and Strauss 1967), is a structured,

but flexible method of analysis that aims to produce an explanatory theory to uncover information in an inquiry (Tie *et al*, 2019). Ultimately, grounded theory "aims to generate theory that is grounded in the data" (Tie *et al*, 2019, p.2). Grounded theory challenged and continues to challenge the view that quantitative methodologies were the only, unbiased, way to determine the so-called 'truth', and that qualitative research lacked rigour (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

As grounded theory to be encompassed by the data itself (Tie *et al*, 2019), I felt that this was the most appropriate method of analysis for the scoping review as I was repurposing pre-existing data. As such, I wanted to emphasize the importance and value of this data. Using a structured method of analysis ensured that the data was the focus of the review, whilst also allowing the flexibility to conduct a thorough analysis of the data to be interpreted in my own way.

Thus, the process of grounded theory for this research involved a strict reading plan. The final 14 papers were read thoroughly three times. The first time I read through the papers to gain an understanding of the study, the methods used, and the key findings. It was not long before concepts and ideas emerged from the publications. I had four main codes – 'emotion/ well-being, 'time/everyday life', 'space (social and personal)', and 'practice'. Additional and more specific categories were also formed to identify limitations of the study, specific methods and important participant information such as age, gender, class, and race. The papers were then read through twice more. The second read was used to organise and initially code the information, and the third read through allowed me to ensure I had not missed anything. A second reviewer, my lead supervisor, (CH), finally read through each paper to confirm that I had not missed any important coding before the data was then written up into the chapter in this thesis. Second reviewers are standard practice for all reviews – both scoping and systematic.

## Ethnography and participant observation

### Ethnography

One of the key debates in ethnography is understanding and defining what 'ethnography' actually means (Hammersley, 2006). It is undoubtedly a form of qualitative inquiry that can be compared and contrasted with other qualitative methods; however, ethnography does sometimes include the use of quantitative data and analysis (Hammersley, 2006). Being a field-based method, which encompasses a researcher's embodied participation in a group of people's everyday life, ethnography is a method in which researchers are able to perceive, understand and write about the social world (Beran-Arevalo, 2021). Atkinson (2014, p.4) writes that ethnography aligns with "contemporary cultural sensitivities" whereby the "ethnographic gaze captures and calls into question the tensions between the self and the other" (Atkinson, 2014, p.5).

An increasing concern of ethnographic methods is the development of observation and interview as the "key devices of qualitative researchers" (Popoviviu *et al* 2006, p.406). Ethnography as a method is undoubtedly subjective and as such it is therefore imperative for the researcher to perform their research reflexively to the best of their ability, recognising their own power and social identity compared to their research participants. This also means that the researcher must, to the best of their ability, not influence their participants' values or beliefs. Moreover, post-structural ethnographers are encouraged to consider ethics. Ethical codes are founded though knowledge and understanding of modernity, that is, they should operate as mechanisms that authorise appropriate and correct behaviour (Popoviviu *et al*, 2006, p.407).

Qualitative methods still face some criticism relating the rigour of reporting. The reflexivity involved, particularly in ethnography has been criticised for the presumptuousness that some believe implies a goal of complete truth and knowledge of a social situation, whilst also claiming the difference in social positioning, which can be seen as contradictory. Rose (1997) challenges the reflexiveness of some research claiming that it is difficult to achieve reflexivity when some people do not fully understand or know their own motives for their actions. Herbert (2000) claimed

that although the relatively small percentage of ethnographic studies at the time of writing his publication in 2000, he praised the use of ethnographic research for its ability to “address the non-discursive and study what people do as well as what they say” (quoted in Crang, 2002, p.650). It is this flexibility of the method that allows the researcher to speak the stories of the observed in such a way that no other method is able. These things considered and despite the challenges and critique that ethnography has faced, as a method it is seeing increased use across disciplines and proved a suitable method for this research project.

A considerable part of the ethnographic method of research is the field diary in which the research records their observations. The field diary was the key tool for this research, and as such taking a variety of notes (both structured and semi-structured) and micro interviews (conversations with and among participants), as well as pictures and artefacts, was a crucial aspect of the data collection and the process of participant observation. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) once stated that ethnographic research “does not rely solely on what people say about their lives in an interview or on what is reported in documents – rather such data are treated with caution” (p.55). Ethnographic methods are unique in that they have the ability to shed light on “bodies of thought, assemblages of infrastructures and institutions, new ecologies, the rhythms of daily living, and strangely connective tissue produce by handheld devices and social media” (Stewart, 2017, p.192). More simply, ethnographies present the opportunity to see and record the social world beyond the verbalised word of interviewees or through quantified statistical analysis.

Experience is a complex concept (Smith, Flowers and Larkin 2009), however, to answer the research questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 it is of value to use a method to assess experience. Laurier and Philo advocated for investigations that “seek to learn from the investigation” (2006, p.353). This type of research requires the research to immerse themselves in being studied to the point of “becoming the phenomena” (Laurier and Philo, 2004, p.433; see also Patchett, 2016). Patchett

proposes that “witnessing the reproduction of a craft practice demands more than observation” and the researcher should therefore become an “observant [participant]” (2016, p.404).

## Participant observation

Adopting an ethnographic approach and through participant observation, I felt that as the researcher, I could experience the emotions and learning processes that participants were also experiencing on a first-hand basis. Participant observation is a “way of knowing *from the inside”* (Ingold, 2013, p.5) in which participation and observation are not separate entities, but co-dependent. By placing the researcher, in this case myself, as a participant, or researcher-participant, within the social field site, it was possible to allow for a greater sensitivity when having conversations with the observed parties and when interpreting their actions and behaviours. In adopting a more immersive position in the Crafternoons, I was in “a space of both conceptual and practice remove from the field site and/or practice at hand” (Patchett, 2016, p.404). I recognise that participant observation has a degree of subjectivity and as a researcher, it was neither ethical nor appropriate to make assumptions about how the other participants were feeling about the activity and therefore another layer of data was necessary to understand how other young people experienced the self-care activity. Therefore, I would class myself as an active participant observer.

Participant observations rely upon “the fully human self of the analyst to explore the social processes of which he or she is a part” (Smith, 1984, p.307, cited in Herbert, 2000). The observer spends considerable time with a social group, interacting and observing actions, behaviours and conversations with and between the group. It is the role of the observer to allow themselves to feel and record any discomfort, confusion, conversations, and actions of their own and the observed. In turn, the record of this, allows the ethnographer to understand how a group functions and/or develops “a skein of relations and cultural constructions that tie it together” (Herbert, 2000,

p. 552). The ethnographer is concerned here with making sense of the events and opportunities that are confronting the everyday.

There are varying degrees of participant observation (see table 4). In this project I consider myself a participating observer. I was actively participating in the activities for most of the session, though I made an active decision to write notes of observations and conversations and take photographs throughout the two-hour Crafternoons. I attended the Crafternoon for the full two hours each Friday, completing the same craft tasks alongside the other crafters. However, I was also taking notes and some photographs of my own work along the way.

| Participation | Description of participation |
|---|---|
| Passive participator, active observer | Mostly observation and note taking, present in the room but minimal participation in the activity or conversations being had |
| Participating observer | Equal parts participation and observation. Notes are made throughout the observation, and between periods of participation in the activity and conversations. |
| Active participator, passive observer | Mostly participation in the activity and conversations with other participants and therefore limited notetaking. Observations made throughout with mental notes and limited physical notetaking. Most notes are made immediately after the observation. |

*Table 4: Degrees of participation for participatory observation*

Part of the observations included speaking with the participants. This involved a form of unstructured interview which is a type of interview that replicates an informal conversation (Jamshed, 2014) whereby the participants may not know that they are being interviewed (Patton, 2002). Unstructured interviews do not necessarily rely on predetermined questions that structured and semi-structured interviews do (Sanchez, 2014). When using unstructured interviews within observation and long-term field work, participants have the opportunity to express themselves in their own way, at their own pace and with "minimal hold on respondents' responses" (Jamshed, 2014). For my own interviews, I ensured that each crafter was aware of who I was, what I was

doing at the Crafternoons and asked for verbal confirmation that they were happy for me to take notes. I explained that I would not include any personal information such as where they live, who they live with, names, or any other identifying characteristics of their Craft experiences. I also always carried with me and provided an information sheet for the crafters to read and take away with them if they so wished. No participants took the information sheets home with them.

I used a basic list of questions to ask the participating students and staff when I had the opportunity to chat. They were as follows:

- What experience do you have with the craft?
- How long have you practiced the activity?
- When did you first learn? Who taught you?
- Why do you like practicing this particular activity?
- How often do you practice the activity?
- Where do you like to practice the activity?

These questions were a basic guideline to understand how the crafters experienced craft and to what extent they used to craft for their self-care, though I never intentionally asked these questions word-for-word, or in this order, as I would have done within a more structured and formal setting. More formal interviews were planned between April and June of 2020, but these were halted after the national lockdown and three attempts at online recruitment.

The observations of the Crafternoons took place between Freshers' Week (September 2019) to March 2020 when the university was closed as a result of Covid-19. A Facebook group was set up in May 2020 for participants to share their crafts and online Crafternoon sessions were organised for the academic year 2020/2021, however no research was conducted on these.

### *Selecting a field site*

Selecting a field site requires careful thought and consideration. Having completed some background research into the activities that young people were engaging in for self-care as part of the MRes, the activities were whittled down, eventually settling on mindfulness (which was later cancelled) and crafts. Craft was an activity that was used by half of the participants surveyed. It was also one of the only activities that was mentioned by participants that could have been observed closely by myself to understand how people performed the activity. Other activities included walking, running, going to the gym and cooking, none of which require a high level of skill to perform. Internet-based research began to identify possible local groups and potential study sites. It was felt, however, that to understand how implement self-care activities into everyday life, that it would be useful to observe a group from initial conception, allowing the observation of participants from the start of a programme to the end. At the time of organising said groups, Keele's SU began advertising for their newly formed "Crafternoons".

It was felt that the conveniently located organisation fitted the inclusion criteria for the group:

- Accessibility for as many as possible
- Independent and/or Non-profit organisation

The SU is free for staff and students to access and enter the building and there is no obligation to buy anything from within the facility if they choose to stay in the building and the Crafternoons were free for everyone to attend. The building itself is fully adapted for wheelchair users.

Keele University is a campus university, situated in the West Midlands, United Kingdom. It has a student population of between 10,000 and 15,000 students (the complete university guide, 2023). Just over three quarters of the students are undergraduate students and just under a quarter of

students are postgraduates. International students[4] make up about 7% of the student population at Keele.

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to the SU as an organisation rather than an institution. Institutional geographies are complex and troublesome (Disney and Schliehe, 2019). I have chosen to refer to the SU as an organisation, having taken influence from Vincent Del Casino *et al* (cited by Parr and Philo, 2000) who situates organisations as social spaces, for society, that can reveal a wider social field.

Meanwhile, institutional spaces are more politically and economically driven and are, traditionally, spaces in which control is exercised to "produce particular and supposedly improved versions of human minds and bodies" (Philo and Parr, 2000, p.513; see also Disney, 2019; Foucault 1991). Some of the earliest definitions of institutions state that they are patterns of social organisation that both meets the basic needs of humans; and the control of the activities people throughout society (Weick, 1979 *cited by* Rageth *et al*, 2021). Put simply, they are governed by customs and values and deliver learning. Universities run day-to-day as a business/ an organisation and often refer to their organisational cultures and values. Collectively, however, universities can be broadly described as institutions. Within this research, was not bounded within university organizational practice as the Crafternoons were run by the SU and complied with their standards and practices; however, the institutional status of the university cannot be ignored as the Crafternoons were delivering a learning experience. The SU has charitable status and refers to itself as a "membership-led organisation" (Keele SU, 2023). The SU sits within the institution that is Keele University and whilst the SU work alongside the University Senate on issues and abide by University guideline. It is run by democratically elected officers who represent the student community. All students are automatically members of the SU and have the right to vote for

[4] Students who reside outside of the UK

officers and suggest how the SU is run. In turn, the elected officers speak with members of the University (the institution). The SU works with the institution to advocate for and support student needs suggestions.

In addition to Keele SU, two further local craft non-profit organisations were approached in the neighboring town to Keele, and gatekeepers were contacted. Early-stage observations were made at both sites on 3 separate occasions each, however, the data has not been included as the fieldwork was halted early (due to Covid-19 lockdowns) and it was not appropriate to include a limited and unfinished data set.

### *Crafternoons*

This new “Crafternoon” took place within the SU for two hours each Friday afternoon within the student’s union in the corner of a downstairs cafeteria known as “The Lounge” (see Figure 2). It took place on a large wooden table with bench seats either side and occurred on a Friday afternoon between 1400hrs and 1600hrs, though the times did vary on a couple of weeks due to the activity being run needing more time, or students choosing to stay later.


*Figure 2: An image of the downstairs SU space, known as "The Lounge" which include the craft table and benches that were used for the Crafternoons*

The Crafternoons were run by the SU activities coordinator, Charlotte Burke, however they were not run as a society but as an open, fluid and relational space for young people to participate in free and accessible crafting activities (see table 5 for activities), guided by fellow crafters. Charlotte and Clare Holdsworth were predominantly on hand to teach the activities to participating crafters, though guest teachers were invited for certain activities such as origami. The Crafternoons were open to all students and staff at the university. There was no specific structure to the sessions and people could come and go as they wished. There was no obligation to stay for the full 2 hours, nor was there an obligation to arrive at a specific time. As the workshops were free to all participants, materials were provided through funding from the ESRC Collaborative

Innovation Grant (CIG), donations from various people and organisations and a sum of money from the SU. These materials included, but are not limited to, balls of yarn, knitting needles, singer sewing machines (borrowed for a one off event), crochet hooks, scissors, fabric and sewing kits. Each week, Charlotte provided printed copies of patterns for the craft of the week for students to practice and learn (see Figure 3), and also recommended websites for participants to access.

*Figure 3: An example of craft supplies provided in the Crafternoons to include yarn, hook, needle, instructions, pre-made models*

The recruitment of participant crafters to the Crafternoons was organised by the SU. Posters were advertised around the campus (see Figure 4 for examples) in windows and on noticeboards, and online on university related social media (to include Facebook, Instagram and Twitter); emails were also sent out to all students on any society mailing list. Many participants, however, did not learn about the Crafternoons from advertising, but from either word-of-mouth or when passing through the SU building.


*Figure 4: Crafternoon advertisement posters which demonstrate the variety of themed crafts that took place over six months (Credit Keele SU, 2020)*

Whilst the Crafternoons provided students with 'organised' crafts, they were also a space for students and staff to bring their own projects with them. The organised crafts were set up so that students could complete the activity independently or with support if they felt that they needed it. Many of the participants were beginners of the craft activities and as such often needed 1:1 support. Most of the participants only required 1:1 support in the weeks involving crochet. In doing so, Clare and Charlotte naturally adopted a routine when teaching beginners crochet.

| Date | Activity | Number of participants* | Code[5] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11th October 2019 | Crochet | 3 | A |
| 18th October 2019 | Sewing | 6 | B |
| 25th October 2019 | Crochet | 7 | C |
| 1st November 2019 | Dorset Buttons | 8 | D |
| 8th November 2019 | Crochet | 5 | E |
| 15th November 2019 | Morsbags (Sewing) | 22 | F |
| 22nd November 2019 | Crochet | 9 | G |

[5] Code is associated with graph on page 180

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 29th November 2019 | Pom-pom Hedgehogs | 14 | H |
| 6th December 2019 | Crochet | 8 | I |
| 17th January 2020 | Crochet | 5 | J |
| 24th January 2020 | Origami | 3 | K |
| 31st January 2020 | Crochet | 8 | L |
| 7th February 2020 | Dorset Buttons | 3 | M |
| 14th February 2020 | Crochet | 4 | N |
| 21st February 2020 | Crochet | 1 | O |
| 6th March 2020 | Crochet | 6 | P |
| 13th March 2020 | Crochet | 6 | Q |

*Table 5: Crafternoon activities and number of attendees*

**not including myself, Charlotte, or Clare*

The Crafternoons were themed each week, demonstrated in Figure 4. These themes were often seasonal. For example, on Halloween, we made amigurumi pumpkins, the Christmas themed week, crafters had the opportunity to make amigurumi snowmen or Christmas themed crochet coasters, and on Valentine's Day, we made heart shaped amigurumi. Some weeks coincided with university wide events such as National Hedgehog Day[6], in which the Wildlife Society joined us to make pom-pom hedgehogs (see Figure 12). Other events included the universities Green Festival[7] where we learned how to make face cleansing pads. Moreover, the Crafternoons were set up with the aim of providing a space for students to "give it a go", whereby there is no expectation, pressure, or commitment for students to return or join a society. It was also set up as a space and group that did not promote alcohol, unlike many more traditional university societies.

[6] https://www.countryfile.com/wildlife/mammals/our-guide-to-hedgehogs-where-to-see-and-how-to-help-hedgehogs-in-your-garden/

[7] "Green Festival" is an event that the university's sustainability champions and others promote and explore Keele's "Journey to Zero Carbon" (Keele University, 2021). See the link for more details: https://www.keele.ac.uk/discover/sustainability/newsandevents/events/2021/march/keelegreenfestival2021/eventtitle,307958,en.php

### *Participants*

Over 6 months, the Crafternoons attracted almost 100 participants – within the Crafternoons that I observed I counted 78 participants. These participants were both undergraduate and post-graduate students, and also staff, professional services and academic. The participants ranged in ages, though most participants were under the age of 30. The participants were predominantly undergraduate students aged 18-30, however there were some "mature" students aged 31+, post-graduate students (18-30 and 31+) and some staff in attendance at the Crafternoons.

Whilst the observations did not focus on or collect data of the specific demographics of the participants, the Crafternoons attracted a racially and ethnically diverse group of crafters. The Crafternoons confounded expectations set from existing research that handcraft groups in the UK are a predominantly white practice (see the literature review and scoping review for more detail). Likewise, the Crafternoons were a relational space in which many students felt safe to attend and in attending, some students began to open up about their gender and sexuality. One participant shared their story of coming out as a trans-female, and another two spoke openly of their non-binary gender identity. A further two students spoke openly of their sexuality and their happiness of seeing the University's Pride Flag which was raised over Keele Hall for Pride month. Despite the diversity that the Crafternoons attracted, I cannot ignore the fact that universities do attract a diverse group of people and as such, I am not naïve to think that a craft group in the local community would attract such a diverse group of individuals.

With regards to participation, 17 of the participants attended two or more sessions which is almost 20% of the participants who attended multiple sessions. Six of the participants attended four or more sessions and became familiar and regular attendees (see appendix 2). Three of the participants and myself reached a level of crochet experience by January 2020 that we were able to support Charlotte and Clare in teaching newcomers how to learn the basics in crochet (magic circles, chain stitches, double and treble stitches (see Appendix 1 pictorial glossary)).

### *Participant observation data analysis*

Using Nvivo, observations were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis is a widely used analytic method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is a method of "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clare, 2006, p.79). Qualitative approaches to research are complex and nuanced (Holloway and Todres, 2003, in Braun and Clarke, 2006), and as such thematic analysis should be used as "a foundational method for qualitative analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.78). Thematic analysis is a particularly flexible tool of analysis and as such it can provide rich, detailed and complex records of qualitative data. It involves systematically processing data to identify codes and develop themes (Braun and Clarke, 2022).

A theme represents a degree of patterned response or meaning within the data, and it is labelled with a word or a couple of words that broadly describe the pattern in question. The researcher may also identify sub-themes that relate to the broader theme, but a more and more specialised. Within NVivo these are referred to as codes, and nodes. In doing this, I highlighted 15 different codes, 50 parent nodes and 15 grandparent nodes. These nodes were separated into themes that have been replicated throughout this thesis, such as "environment" and the spaces of crochet, "learning processes", "giving up", "therapeutic" practice, and "time".

I read through the transcripts three times to thematically code the data. The first round was to familiarise myself with the transcripts and identify the key themes. The second round of thematic analysis included identifying more specific codes, for example I broke "time" into seven further codes which included procrastination, finishing, making time to craft, taking a break, busyness, future plans and the fluidity of the workshops. The third and final round of analysis was to ensure that I had not missed any coding.

Whilst the data was all qualitative, I did attempt to quantify the use of time to understand the ways in which practitioners used the allocated time in the workshop to learn and practice the activity.

This was basic analysis using graphs to create a visual description of the time spent performing craft over the weeks observed.

In the previous chapter, I very briefly mentioned rhythmanalysis. Rhythmanalysis is a way of understanding how people do, how people practice and how they practice in time. When describing practice, theorists have drawn on theories of time and addressed temporal rhythm to explain the ways in which time is organised in everyday life (Blue, 2019). Lefebvre wanted to identify a method of scientifically understanding the everyday through rhythms. Lefebvre claims that "[e]verywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is a rhythm." (2004 [1992], p.15). By connecting and combining practice theory (discussed in Chapter 3) with rhythmanalysis demonstrates how practices are linked with time. Blue (2017) make the claim that practices are so inherently temporal because they return in time and space and are therefore rhythmic, though appear different upon each return.

The Crafternoons involved multiple interactions between people and place within time and subsequently, multiple rhythms evolved and weaved themselves into the weekly meetings (see Chapter 6). Adams used a triadic approach to this, past, present and future. I too have used this triadic approach to understand the motivations of crafters, their experience of craft in the moment, and their future goals. I will identify the macro scale rhythms. I will also, however, identify the micro rhythms – that is the rhythms that occurred each week during the Crafternoons. I will attempt to quantify time and will outline the way in which the fluidity of the Crafternoons created its' own loose structure according to the workflows of the practitioners (see Chapter 6).

## Ethics

This research was relatively low risk. Ethics were approved by Keele University [Reference NS-190005 and abided by both Keele University and ESRC protocols and was granted favorable ethical opinion by Keele University ethics. All participants were over the age of 18 and therefore able to consent to taking part in the study. All participants joined the group of their own free will

and participated as much or as little as they liked and were free to leave when they wished. Spending time with the crafters on a regular basis, it was possible to build rapport with regular attendees and many crafters were happy to talk and help with my research when I asked questions about their experiences with craft and how they were finding the Crafternoon activity. Being university staff and students, most people understood my presence and understood, to some degree, what my research entailed and why I was present and often asked questions about my research studies. On-the-whole, discussions remained on the topic of craft, specifically the craft of the week, however there were occasions in which conversations diverted to personal topics such as family and personal identity. It was at these moments that informed decisions were made on what was to be recorded (notes only) and what was to be excluded. The identities of the participants have, for the most part, been made anonymous where possible (*see* Saunders *et al*, 2015).

Obtaining access to the Crafternoons was in no way problematic and having been awarded some funding to help towards the cost of materials, I was welcomed. The Crafternoons were, then, of mutual benefit for both parties. The union were also interested to hear some of the findings of the research.

In order to remain reflexive, I tried to consistently ask myself questions. How would my presence as a researcher influence others' actions and behaviours? I tried not to speak of how I was feeling frustration or celebrating my own success so as not to influence others. Though, this was difficult at times due to my position as an active participant observer. Would my position as a teaching assistant affect the power dynamics amongst undergraduate students, specifically the couple that I did teach? Would my presence alter the group dynamics in any way? It is not possible to answer these questions, however they were questions I tried to ask myself regularly.

Obtaining informed ethical consent, a frequent discussion in the study of ethnography, was something that played on my mind. I had permission to access the field site from the SU, however,

taking place in the main SU building, the space was often busy. It is the central hub of the university and a frequent meeting and passing place for the university community. It was not, therefore, possible to inform each person that passed the craft bench or those sitting in the lounge next to us of my presence. I ensured to inform each participant as they arrived of my presence, why I was there, what I was doing, and the types of notes that I would be taking.

## Methodological learnings and considerations

Having discussed the methodological framework and methods of data collection used in this research, I begin now to reflect on the research process and highlight some of the limitations, the strengths and the approach to the research. Using a post-structural ethnographic approach, reflexivity is something that I have learned to use regularly and as such, the following represents some of the reflections I have made conducting the project.

The majority of the empirical data collected was relatively 'unstructured'. I attended the group each week, I took notes whilst I was there (inc. but not limited to conversations with participants; basic details of participants such as where they were sitting, gender, age; progress of participants; descriptions and diagrams of what was happening in the SU) and I typed them up, reflected and expanded on them when I returned home. I had a set of themes and questions to use as a rough framework of inspiration that I used to make notes, drawing on the research questions and from the gaps in the literature. Taking notes throughout the session supported the analysis process, as the notes were detailed and included relatively accurate depictions of conversations that I am sure I would have forgotten about had I written up the conversation three or four hours later. The presence of my writing did, however, spark some conversations and have some degree of influence on the group when I was attempting to make my 'researcher' presence as unobtrusive as possible. This is something that I had to be aware of. To mitigate this as much as I could, I made sure to inform participants upon their arrival of what I was doing, the purpose of my notes and the types of notes I was taking. This also formed part of my consent process.

Throughout the Crafternoons I took photographs and made rough sketches to aid my notes and to help visualise the progress and experiences of my self and the participants. However, I regret not recording more visual notes (for example more photographs, videos and diagrams). Some weeks I have no images at all, and my field notes would have benefitted greatly from the support of more visual representations. I often asked crafters to send me images of their projects when they had completed them, or throughout the week as they worked in them alone, but these images very rarely materialised. I realise now that I should have been more confident and assertive in following this up with crafters.

Due to the pandemic, the research was cut short and the comparative aspect of the research with community groups was not possible. However, I recognise the fortunate position that I was able to obtain 6 months' worth of data. The length and depth of ethnographic research can vary – more traditional anthropological fieldwork often involves researchers embedded in the field site on a more permanent basis for months or even years at a time. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, I did embark upon a scoping review to repurpose existing data that I feel has contributed both methodologically and theoretically to this research.

With reference to the scoping review, methodologically this was something that I was not initially prepared or trained for as I had for the ethnography, and therefore I was consistently learning in practice. However, the scoping review proved incredibly valuable. By adopting the 14 publications' data and repurposing their own interviews, ethnographies, and surveys, the results were invaluable to this project and have, I hope, provided some interesting, and novel conclusions that will be of some value to the field of well-being and self-care practices through the practice of crafts.

## Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have described the epistemological underpinnings of my research design – post structuralism. This epistemological framework suited the methods and characteristics of ethnography, specifically the reflexivity.

I have described the ways in which ethnography and scoping reviews have been challenged. With relation to ethnography, I have described how this method has been seen by some as an ambiguous method that can prove to present a number of challenges, one of the most important and widely critiqued being the subjectivity of the researchers' truth. With regards to the scoping review, I have described the way in which I collated the data in a way to overcome some of the normative practices of observing crafts as an embedded researcher. In performing a scoping review, I have been able to objectively understand and critique the participants' experiences of crafts.

I have made clear my own position as a participant observer and researcher in my field site, considering the power dynamics amongst my observed participants and the truth that I have written in chapters 6 and 7 of this thesis. Taking inspiration from Patchett's observations (2016) of the practice of taxidermy, I too, aim to experience and describe the production of textile crafts as a skill. Furthermore, I have addressed the challenge of setting spatial and temporal boundaries that some ethnographies struggle to do. This particular challenge was something that has been explored in greater detail within the empirical chapters of this thesis. This was not particularly challenging for this research as Crafternoons were, on-the-whole, spatially and temporally bounded. However, it has been important to recognise that the Crafternoons are a unique group of crafters, and as such beyond the boundaries of the Crafternoons and by comparison with community craft groups, the participants and potentially the results of the study may greatly differ. This is made clearer within the scoping review in Chapter 5.

As an ethnographer, it is important to learn about and begin to understand the perspectives, values and beliefs of those being studied if the researcher is to accurately portray and write about the activities in which participants are engaging with. As such, I adopted the position of not only researcher and observer, but also of practitioner and chose to learn the process of crochet and

other crafts alongside the participants I was working with. In doing so, it was possible to gain a much deeper understanding of the process itself and the emotions that participants were feeling.

Using a two-stage research process, it is felt that this was the most objective and reliable way of investigating how activities affects well-being and how people learn new skills. A scoping review was an opportunity to begin to understand what research was already being conducted in the field, and to repurpose valuable data that had already been analysed. The scoping review has provided in-depth understandings of research question (RQ) 2 and RQ 3. Meanwhile, the participant observation enabled the research to investigate a first-hand and embodied experience of the selected leisure activities.

# Chapter 5: A scoping review of the impacts and value of crafting practices on well-being

## Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the ways in which crafting for well-being has been presented within the existing literature. A scoping review has been conducted, using the 5-step framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) to analyse 16 papers, identified as fitting a specific criterion (see Chapter 4 – Methods for more information), after a thorough scoping exercise of more than 1000 papers across three databases.

The results have been presented to demonstrate the two key themes that appeared during the analysis process: the value of intrinsic craft and the value of extrinsic craft. The former, intrinsic craft, outlines the ways in which craft has impacted the handcrafters emotionally and physically, drawing on their personal experiences of craft. Intrinsic values include overall well-being, embodied craft practices, rhythms of craft, time and controlled life. The latter, extrinsic craft, outlines the ways in which craft provided value to the handcrafter in ways that were external to themselves. Here I draw on the social connectedness that organised craft groups provide, whilst also acknowledging the importance of family and friends within the crafting process; spaces of social connectedness, belonging and identity, and pride and self-confidence

The chapter ends with a detailed discussion on the ways in which craft is presented. Many publications present the product of crafts as extrinsically valuable to the practitioner, however, few discuss the influence and importance of the process of doing the craft. The process of doing the craft, particularly when practicing the craft as a self-care practice, is often internalising external practices. That is, the product is made for another, but the process is of most benefit to the individual practicing the activity.

## Background

A so-called 'Mental Health Crisis' has enlightened both public and governmental concern for mental and physical well-being in recent years which has led to an emphasis on finding ways to

manage and improve well-being through self-care. Within adult education, “lifelong learning” (Pearce, 2017, p.43) is being encouraged to gain new skills and improve well-being (*see* NHS 5 ways to well-being). Ulrich (1992) claims that creative arts effectively reduce stress, promote mutual understanding and create awareness of individual differences and therefore identity (cited by Lecky, 2011, p.502). Arts Council England have an ever-growing pool of research to support and encourage the use of creative arts in mental health care (Arts Council England, 2020). Most recently, Public Health England (PHE) set up the ‘Every Mind Matters’ campaign in October 2019 (PHE, 2020). There is a plethora of academic empirical data, both qualitative and quantitative to evidence the benefits of learning and doing craft upon mental well-being and increasingly on physical well-being, including the publications in this review.

Previous systematic and scoping reviews on crafts, arts and well-being have been limited to those with pre-existing mental and/ or physical health conditions and specific groups of the population such a “working age adults” (Tomlinson *et al*, 2018), or in a medical capacity (*see* Fancourt and Finn, 2019; Stuckey and Nobel, 2010; Vaartio-Jajalin *et al*, 2020). Therefore, this scoping review aims to understand how people not specifically identifying themselves as living with a mental or physical health condition experience craft practices in their everyday life, either independently or through group activities, and to understand if and how the practice of craft affects their mental well-being. This review will demonstrate that the value of craft in relation to well-being can and will be explained in two ways; intrinsically and extrinsically.

## Research aim

As described in chapter three the scoping review was needed to answer some of the main research questions that could not be addressed through participatory data collection during Covid-19 lockdowns.

The main aim of this scoping review is “to understand the role of craft in relation to the health and well-being of handcrafters”. I identified 4 specific research questions to address this aim:

## Research questions addressed in scoping study

The research questions were carefully selected to reflect the main research questions. Below, I have listed the research questions and follow up with further explanation.

1. How do crafting practices impact the well-being of the handcrafters?
2. What role does an organised crafting group play in the production of craft and the well-being of the attendees?
3. What is the importance of space and social connectedness within craft?
4. How do craft practices affect the everyday lives of craft practitioners?

It is well documented that the practice of craft is said to improve well-being (see Crafts Council, 2020; Disability Giants, 2021; Luckman, 2018; Welleset-Smith, 2021), however there is less analysis on just *how* the crafts affect well-being. Therefore, the first research question is 'how do crafting practices impact the well-being of the handcrafters?'. This question also aims to help answer research question 1 of the thesis.

A vast amount of the research on craft practices, studies the practice through an organised group of crafters. Hence, the second research question is 'what role does an organised crafting group play in the production of craft and the well-being of the attendees?'. Most of the publications within this scoping review also research organised crafting groups, however there are a couple of publications that collected data from individual home crafters. This provides a critically comparative insight into the effects of craft groups and well-being. Finally, this question contributes to answering the third research question on the value of crafts and also to research question five which assesses the role of organisations.

Geographies of craft frequently investigate the role of space and place when studying a particular craft through the guise of taskscapes of craft (Smith, 2019). This research is, being in the field of Geography, aiming to understand how space impacted the practice of the craft and as such, the third research question was 'what is the importance of space and social connectedness within

craft?'. This question attempts to make a connection to, the first and third research questions outlined for this thesis, in an attempt to understand the value of groups and the role of others in the performance and practice of craft.

Finally, there is a plethora of literature to state the benefits of craft on the well-being of practitioners (Devlin, 2010; Windsor, 2005), but I wanted to understand the value of craft in everyday life. Therefore, the final research question is 'how do craft practices affect the everyday lives of craft practitioners?'. This question directly relates to the third research question of this thesis.

## Data extraction and synthesis

The data from each review was extracted into a form by one reviewer (TF) and checked for accuracy by a second reviewer (CH). The data extracted included the studies aims, primary study design, location, participant data, reported outcomes (divided into four themes – 'emotions and well-being', 'time', 'space and the social', 'practice', and finally, author specified conclusions.

All key findings from the studies were tabulated and narratively synthesised. Gaps and limitations within the selected studies were highlighted where possible.

## Results

### Characteristics of included reviews

This scoping review includes published findings based on data from approximately 4382 participants[8] across six countries – United Kingdom (n=4), United States of America (n=1), Canada (n=2), Australia (n=2), Finland (n=4), and Greece (n=1). Two studies were conducted online with a global audience. All papers were published within the last 10 years. 11 out of the 16 articles included female only participants. One of the studies did not state the gender(s) of the participants. Of these 11 articles that focussed on only women, 10 were textile crafts, reinforcing the social constructions of crafts as a gendered practice (see Price and Hawkins, 2018). This will

[8] Some of the studies did not include exact numbers, only approximations – see appendix 3 for more information.

be explored further in the latter part of the review. Smith's paper (2019), which included both male and female participants, was the only paper which was associated with a "masculine" craft – woodwork.

Pearce (2017) included 58 male and 79 female participants and involved the practice of craft classes, creative writing and singing. Whilst most of the studies included just handcrafts, this paper was not excluded as it still fitted the inclusion criteria (Table 3).

There was evidence of a class and ethnic disparities among many of the studies' participants. Many of the publications reviewed mentioned that the participants were educated. Likewise, most of the included publications participants were white women who were skilled workers or, more commonly, were retired but were skilled workers prior retirement. The age ranges in most of the studies varied across the life course. The participants' ages ranged from 17 to 90 across all of the 16 papers, though within all the published findings, most participants were over the age of 45. The largest proportion of participants in each study were retired women. This is indicative of the time and space required to perform many of the crafts (sewing, quilting, and woodwork for example each need potentially large spaces to store large machinery, quantities of materials etc).

## Intrinsic values of craft

### Emotional well-being, physical well-being and cognitive function

#### *Direct benefits*

The benefits of crafting were mostly indirect benefits, however there were some direct benefits on the health of craft practitioners. The physical and mental dexterity required of crafting was highlighted as a motivator for some of the crafters (Dickie, 2011; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2017).

> *I have problems with my hips… when I start doing my [traditional] decorations I have forgotten all about my hip pain. I mean I don't feel any pain at all (Victoria)*
>
> *Tzanidaki and Reynolds (2017, p.380)*

Victoria explains how her physical and metaphorical pain of everyday life was reduced through the practice of the craft for both sets of participants here. Craft has the potential to become a distraction tool, and in doing so, it also encourages the participants to continue practicing for their own well-being as they see and, importantly, feel the benefits.

The quilting process helped some to maintain and improve their fine motor skills and cognitive function. (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Nevay *et al*, 2019; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen 2015b; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020).

> *Quilt makers spoke of the benefits of the bodily aspects of quilting such as the use of fine motor skills and repetitive movements and of "needing to keep my hands busy."*
>
> *Dickie (2011, p.212)*

> *Participants conceptualized [sic] knitting as similar to crossword puzzles, having heard reports that puzzles stimulate the brain and form neural connections. "If you don't use it you lose it" was often expressed when explaining how cognitive tasks, like "deciphering patterns" and the "mental ability needed to do that," is "helpful as we get older" (P14, F, 70s).*
>
> *Brooks et al (2019, p.119)*

This was an important maintenance exercise, particularly for the older participants who were conscious of the potential for them to develop Alzheimer's disease. There was a fear for P14 (Brooks *et al,* 2019) that not continuing with the practice might lead to the participant 'losing it' which refers to their cognitive ability. It was suggested by some knitters that the mathematical calculations required in knitting design improved cognitive function in everyday life and helped them improve their everyday household budgeting skills (Corkhill *et al*, 2014), whilst quilting was found to reduce the rate of cognitive decline in older crafters (Burt and Atkinson, 2011). Many of

these observations and concerns are in line with existing empirical data investigating the rate of cognitive decline in older adults (Geda *et al*, 2011).

### *Indirect benefits*

Ill-health for participants in 13 of the reviewed papers was a part of everyday life, either their own(Brooks *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen 2015a; Pöllannen, 2015b; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013), or others (Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pöllannen, 2013; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013).

> *Of those respondents who said they suffered chronic pain, 88% felt that knitting gave them a sense of accomplishment and a means of coping with their pain. Others described how knitting helped them cope with emotional stress, for example when caring for a seriously ill relative.*
>
> *Corkhill et al* (*2014, p.39)*

Here, it is clear to see that, like Victoria (Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013, p.380), chronic pain was a hindrance to the practitioner, however, practicing the craft was a distraction if not a cure for their own pain. Likewise, if not a cure for their loved ones' pain, it was a distraction from and 'coping mechanism' for the practitioners' role as a caregiver. Others found that the rhythmic stitching was "meditative" and effective to ward off both physical pain and anxiety (Corkhill *et al*, 2014, p. 40).

Kenning (2015) called the craft a "catalyst" for some handcrafter's recovery, encouraging some to leave the house and begin the socialising process after a bereavement. Quilters in North Carolina suggested that they enjoyed crafting because it helped manage their emotions and enabled them to solve family problems through group discussions (Dickie, 2011). It was, therefore, not entirely the process of doing craft that impacted the well-being, but the social connectedness that the craft

brought to the lives of the handcrafters. The social connectedness will be discussed in much greater detail later on in this chapter.

There were exceptions to the rule was, one woman who claimed that she crocheted so often that she had to strap her fingers (Pöllannen, 2015a), whilst a quilter spoke of cramp in her fingers from gripping her needle so tightly (Dickie, 2011, p.211). These examples of the ways in which craft can sometimes make aches and pains worse, or even lead to new pain, were also observed in the Crafternoons discussed in the following two empirical chapters.

### Embodied craft and well-being

Eight of the studies alluded to the importance of crafting as an embodied practice (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pöllannen, 2015b; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Smith, 2019). Pöllannen and Hanski (2020, p. 348) for example, state very early on that “there seems to be a need for embodied interaction with the material world and to make things by hand”.

Genoe and Leichty (2017, p.100) explain the effect of touch in the practice of pottery and the value and need to engage with the clay at various points of the process. When using their hands to manipulate the clay, the potters suggested that they could not think of anything else – they were focused p.99). The focus and concentration mentioned here describes the experience of flow which, as already mentioned, has been found to be a significant contributor to well-being and finding happiness (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

The process of making triggered all the senses. Not only could the crafters feel their craft growing, they witnessed it “unfold before their eyes” (Brookes *et al*, 2019, p.118). Quilters in NC mentioned the “pleasant warm feeling” of the quilt on their laps during the making process (Dickie, 2011, p.212). Meanwhile, another crafter recalled her crafting experiences whilst she was sick. She claimed that touching the materials and looking at the “strong coloured cloth especially seemed to give [me] strength” (Pöllannen, 2015b, p.65). Smith (2019, p.9) claims that “the noise, and smell

of activity and production" contributed to a sense of belonging which, in turn, benefits well-being. These embodied experiences of craft are common and thoroughly research in and of themselves. The ability to stimulate all the senses, to feel, see, smell, hear and even taste a craft helped the participants to value their craft as it had the potential to be all encompassing.

### Rhythms of craft

The materiality of craft and the significance of touch was often associated with the rhythms of craft. These rhythms were mentioned in 11 of the reviewed papers (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Kenning, 2015; Mayne, 2016; Nevay *et al*, 2019; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Smith, 2019).

Pöllannen (2013) and Pöllannen and Hanski (2020) commented on the rhythmic benefits of crafting in two contexts – the rhythm of performing the practice itself (for example, the way knitting needles repeatedly move in the same way when following a patter) and of the organisation a rhythm craft brings to everyday life. One participant, Rose, was retired and valued the daily rhythm that practicing handicrafts gave (*ibid,* p.355). Likewise, Smith (2019) referred to the temporal rhythm of craft workshops, claiming that regular rhythms and structures were beneficial to the Grassmarket attendee's well-being. "The rhythms of sanding, sawing, or chiseling, the noise and smell of activity and production" (p.159) indirectly supporting the well-being of the crafters by helping them feel part of something and provide a sense of belonging. This sense of belonging and identity is discussed further towards the latter half of the analysis.

The rhythms of craft benefitted crafters well-being in different ways. With reference to the (in)direct benefits mentioned at the start of this subsection, the rhythm of knitting directly impacted the practitioner. It was said to be "stress-relieving" (Brooks *et al*, 2019, p.118). Likewise, Dickie (2011) 146mphasized the importance of rhythm and repetitive movements of quilting for maintaining fine motor skills, whilst also being 'therapeutic'. By contrast, some participants mentioned indirect benefits of rhythms, claim that they felt that time allocated to craft aided the rhythms of their

everyday life and broke up the monotony of everyday living (Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020).

### A therapeutic practice and "optimal experience"

For some of the participants, the craft practices were a solace from the stresses of everyday life. 14 of the studies participants used phrases or referred to their craft as "therapy", "therapeutic", "a distraction" from everyday life, "meditative", or "relaxing" (*see* Table 6).

| Key term | Reference |
|---|---|
| "Therapeutic" or "therapy" | Dickie (2011)<br>Pöllannen (2015a)<br>Corkhill *et al* (2014)<br>Nevay *et al* (2019)<br>Smith (2019)<br>Pöllannen and Hanski (2020)<br>Mayne (2016)<br>Tzanidaki and Reynolds (2011) |
| "Distraction" or escapism | Pearce (2017)[9]<br>Burt and Atkinson (2011)<br>Genoe and Leichty (2017)<br>Pöllannen (2015a)<br>Pöllannen (2015b)<br>Smith (2019) |
| "Relaxing" | Pöllannen (2015a)<br>Pöllannen (2013)<br>Nevay *et al* (2019)<br>Genoe and Leichty (2017)<br>Kenning (2015) |

[9] This was mentioned in relation to singing only, not craft.

| | |
|---|---|
| "Meditative"[10] | Mayne (2016) |

*Table 6: Use of "therapeutic" or "therapy", "distraction", "relaxing", and "meditative"*

The lace makers explained that the practice provided them with mental and physical stimulation, and all spoke of their "need to make" (Kenning, 2015, p.62). The need that they spoke of arose from the fear and emotion that they felt at the thought of not being physically or mentally able to craft. The benefits of knitting enabled relaxation for the knitters in the study orchestrated Corkhill *et al* (2014), which, in turn, enabled people "to feel and 'be' successful at a task from their armchair" (p.39). The practice of knitting became accessible to craft practitioners who otherwise may not be able to engage in physical activities that improve well-being, as it was a relatively static activity. As such, the practice had become an essential coping mechanism for everyday life in many ways for different people, and was, therefore, perceived crucially important for their well-being.

Smith's title directly refers to "therapeutic taskscapes" and the "cultivation of well-being", referring to well-being as something that can be made, if the practices, conversations and support provided in a space are formed to fit the title "therapeutic". Whilst it was the space and the environment that was deemed therapeutically beneficial for Smith's study, the participants in Nevay *et al*'s research focused their attentions to the practice itself. The use of a fabric dye pencil was described as a therapeutic technique (2019, p.494) and the process was "relaxing".

> *Participants focused on the therapeutic aspects of textile crafting. Some make for '*sanity purposes' *and '*escapism' *[formatting] helping them focus on something else.*
>
> *Nevay et al (2019, p.496)*

[10] "Meditative" should be identified as a separate term from "relaxing". In this context, "meditative" is a state in which the mind is almost, if not completely, focused on the practice in hand, with little or no thoughts on other topics. "Relaxing" should be understood to mean a state of calm, but a state in which the mind may still be thinking about topics outside of the practice in hand.

The practice of craft as a form of distraction and/or escapism was also repeated in other publications. I have already mentioned the use of distraction from physical pain mentioned by Victoria earlier on in this chapter (see page 140). Likewise, some of the potters in Genoe and Leichty's study placed meaning

> *…on the* process *[formatting] of creating rather than on producing art… this was due in large part to the focus required to shape and mould the clay that demanded focus and allowed for escape from other aspects of life.*
>
> *Genoe and Leichty (2012, p.101)*

> *"doing something with my hands… You can't think about anything else when you're doing clay, so it really gives you that relaxation" (Hailey)*
>
> *Genoe and Leichty (2012, p.99)*

Here, the participants emphasize the value they placed on doing the craft, and the benefits that they could reap from the focus, which allowed their mind to wander away from the stressors of everyday life and focus on the clay and the clay alone. This somewhat describes a key characteristic of flow experiences. Genoe and Leichty did not directly allude to this, however the descriptions above, clearly demonstrate they were experiencing flow. By contrast, Burt and Atkinson do outwardly recognise and mention the captivating process as 'flow'.

> *The majority of participants reported that the creative process captivated them, distracted them, and they described an experience analogous to 'flow'.*
>
> *Burt and Atkinson (2011, p.56)*

Whilst the participants did not directly mention flow, the excerpt above demonstrates that Burt and Atkinson do recognise the experiences as being comparable to flow. Flow was mentioned or acknowledged within 12 of the papers reviewed, both directly and indirectly by either the author,

participant or both (Brookes *et al*, 2019; Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Mayne, 2016; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen 2015b; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013).

Much like Genoe and Leichty, many of the articles did not explicitly cite or refer to flow, though they alluded to and/ or described the characteristics associated with flow. Flow is described as a "sense" or an experience in which humans develop a recognised pattern of actions (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p.30) that when practiced over a period of time, provide the practitioner with the feeling that time stands still (Bakker *et al*, 2011, p.443). Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi refer to this as the "optimal experience" (1988). The movements involved in knitting were described as "bilateral, rhythmic, repetitive and automatic" (Corkhill *et al*, 2014, p.40) which aides and facilitates meditative experiences for knitters and crocheters (Mayne, 2016, p.18; Brooks *et al*, 2019). These meditative experiences are likened to the experience of flow and the distraction it can provide to everyday life. Furthermore, the challenges presented when learning a new skill were manageable for most of the participants, and enabled the crafters to remain engaged, but not too simple that they lost interest. Kenning (2015) also reiterates the importance of challenging practices, that can also be relaxing.

> *"Mavis" suggested that crafting can be "very relaxing" to do, but you don't have to concentrate… you can forget about all of the other things, the worries in the world, and just concentrate on the piece.*
>
> *Kenning (2015, p.57)*

Here, it is clear that, whilst Kenning do not refer to flow directly, Mavis is describing it in detail, referring to the concentration and the focus on the craft means she can zone out all of her worries. Likewise, the quilters in Dickie's study were able to experience flow in some shape or form

*"Quilt making can be mentally engaging or relatively mindless, repetitive, and mechanistic"*

*Dickie (2011, p.213)*

*I became aware that occupation as therapy most often was ordinary and routine, something people felt they needed to do… these quilters' experiences were sometimes like Csikszentmihalyi's concept of flow (1990), with high levels of challenge and skill.*

*Dickie (2011, p.211)*

These two extracts from Dickie, demonstrate that the quilters were experiencing flow. The former, describes some of the characteristics of flow, outlined by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Csikszentmihalyi and Lefebvre (1989). The latter clearly demonstrates that the skills and challenges were far more likely to actualize flow compared with the crafters' other pass-times such as walking (See Dickie, 2011, p.211). This ability to allow the mind to become enveloped in the practice of craft, described by these publications, demonstrates "the relationship between creativity and health and well-being" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996 cited by Kenning, 2015, p.52).

Whilst the craft practices provide positive benefits for most crafters, some noted that the practices could also be challenging. Frustration was not uncommon and was mentioned in six of the papers (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Mayne, 2016; Smith, 2019). Frustration is a key component of any learning and even those more experienced crafters experienced frustrations when learning a new technique or trying to read a complicated pattern. For the lace makers of Sydney, the frustration was acknowledged to be part of the challenge the practice and it was accepted that the frustrations felt would often lead to a sense of achievement (Kenning, 2015), thus contributing to their well-being and self-confidence. Making mistakes in knitting can demonstrate that despite them, the end goal is still achievable, but more importantly, it is richer because of the lessons learned (Corkhill *et al*, 2014, p.40). The frustrations and difficulties of making mistakes can have a positive impact on the well-being of the crafters

that can be replicated and transported into their everyday life. By contrast to the frustrations felt from practicing the craft as an individual, some of the more experienced potters in Central Canada experienced frustration towards fellow potters in their workshop. The more experienced potters felt held back by the less experienced potters who required a much slower pace of working (Genoe and Leichty, 2017, p.99).

### Time for the self and self-care

Making time to craft was mentioned in all 16 papers in some shape or form. This can be explained in two ways. First, those who work full time or are stay-at-home mothers. For these individuals, the time for craft was a vital aspect of their self-care routines. It was deemed a "manageable" activity to practice amongst the stresses of everyday life (Pöllannen, 2015a, p.8). They were not always able to weave crafting practices into their everyday lives, however, it was often important to find or create the time for themselves on a regular basis.

> *Some participants reported that because they did their housekeeping in the morning, they earned their relaxation to do crafts. Others reported that they had to do craftwork before they could concentrate on other things. In both cases, craft making activated the participants' days.*
>
> *Pöllannen (2013, p.221)*

> *For some of the crafters who cared for children, they claimed that they felt that they had to "earn" their time for relaxing by completing housework and chores, before they could sit down and craft*
>
> *Pöllannen (2013, p.221)*

Here is it clear to see that whether craft was a precursor for the days' activities, or a 'bribe', the practice of craft was used a motivation to complete daily tasks.

Many of these crafters justified the time that they took away from ‘mundane’ and ‘everyday’ activities – though never asked as to do so (Brookes *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Pöllannen, 2015a; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013). It was unclear who they felt they needed to justify their actions to, but it was not uncommon. Whether they felt that they needed to “earn” their time to relax, use their self-care time “productively” by crafting, instead of doing ‘passive’ activities such as watching television or listening to music (Corkhill *et al*, 2014, p.37; Mayne, 2016, p.18).

Most of the participants in the reviewed studies were over 65 years of age and retired and as such, they had more ‘free’ time each day as they were not working. That is not to say they were not ‘busy’, but that they did not have the commitment of a full-time job.

> *For most participants, knitting was a prominent element of their occupational identity, contributing structure and purpose to daily life.*
>
> *Brooks et al (2019, p.123)*

> *… for those who were unemployed and for the elderly, craft structure the day; it was an organizer of daily rhythm. Making crafts served to laziness and stimulated engagement in other daily occupations.*
>
> *Pöllannen (2013, p.221)*

Crafting time gave these women a structure to work around and towards and combatted constructed feelings of ‘laziness’. For these individuals, the time spent crafting became crucial for the organisation of their entire day. Retired individuals needed, enjoyed and appreciated the structure that craft gave to their everyday lives. These individuals were able to make more time for crafting that those who worked or had other commitments (eg. families), however it was not clear which group valued it more.

## Perceived control in everyday life

Craft enabled an element of control in the everyday lives of the participants (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen, 2015b; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013). For some of the participants their lives were dictated by external events and responsibilities from themselves such as family life, children, work, personal ill-health and well-being, and the health and well-being of those they cared for. Each of these everyday challenges controlled what the participants did, when they did it and how they felt, however, crafting allowed a degree of autonomy to choose a pattern and complete it, design their own pattern or modify a pre-made pattern.

> *The analysis revealed that the craft had relieved the feelings of sickness and pain, so that illness did not control daily life and the future*
>
> *Pöllannen (2013, p.223)*

The participants here used craft as a way of regaining control over their own pain, much like those participants mentioned earlier on in this chapter. Through distractions, and embodied practice that embraces touch, pain was not managed using traditional medications, but holistically through the practice of craft and distraction techniques. Likewise, for those crafters living with a mental health condition such as depression, anxiety, or an eating disorder, it was not uncommon for them to feel as though they were not in control of their thoughts (Brooks *et al*, 2019) and frequently experienced "psychological discomfort" (Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020, p.359). Something as simple as "two sticks and some string" (Brooks *et al*, 2019, p.118) were enough for one older woman to feel empowered again.

Whilst crafting did aid participants regain or increase the feelings of control over their own lives, it is important to recognise that this was, to some degree, limited. When practicing their chosen craft, they could decide which materials and colours they used, though this was to some degree still controlled by the recipient of the artefact (often members of the family or a friend).

The time spent crafting was an element of their life that handcrafters felt they were in control of. For three of the studies' crafters, the stresses of everyday life were often exacerbated by the added pressures of caring for sick family members (Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Pöllannen, 2015a), remembering medication, and organising the children's after-school activities etc. participants felt out of control and their lives were dictated by others. What they made, which pattern they followed, which material they used, who they crafted for were all decisions that the participants were in control of choosing by themselves, not other people or external factors.

The description of control through creativity given by Burt and Atkinson (2011) is contradictory. To be creative is to be free of limitations. To be in control is to suggest structure. Creativity and structure are not assumed to work alongside one another and suggesting otherwise suggests and ironic contradiction. This could, however, be interpreted that the participants had autonomy over when they chose to craft, and who for. So, whilst the craft was for someone else, it was on their terms, and within their temporal, spatial and importantly, emotional capacity.

## Extrinsic values of craft

### Social connectedness

Nine of the studies focused their attentions on the impacts of craft on well-being through organised craft groups – eight of these were physical groups who met in person, one of them was an online Facebook group. Despite some of the crafters not experiencing the same social connectedness as those who met face-to-face, the support received online from fellow crafters was still, on the whole, positive, supportive, and improved feelings of well-being. Being online still enabled crafters to experience improved self-confidence and a sense of belonging (Corkhill *et al*¸ 2014; Mayne, 2016). Some women spoke of the feelings of isolation as they did not know anyone who practiced the same craft. By joining an online community, they were able to feel part of something (Mayne, 2016), even if they could not physically access an in-person craft group. From this, it can be derived that communities of craft are not bounded by or restricted to physical space, but to a

construction of space, whether that is virtually on social media, or on a craft forum, or be it in person in a workshop (Smith, 2019), in a café, or a craft guild.

The facilitation and need for social 'interactions', social 'connectedness', social 'relationships' or social 'networks' were discussed in all of the reviewed papers.

> *"… all you need to do is find a guild or go to a knitting store and all of a sudden you have friends because it's a hobby that joins" [P2, F, 50s]*
>
> *Brooks et al (2019, p.119)*

> *"… quilters are a very friendly crowd… very supportive… I've made some really good friends" [Agnes]*
>
> *Burt and Atkinson (2011, p.37)*

It is widely recognised that social interactions through self-care practices such as crafts are highly beneficial for individuals' well-being. The sociality of craft practices was clearly important for almost all crafters, but particularly those who were retired or un-employed (see Burt and Atkinson, 2011). These groups provide vital contact with like-minded people who often become close friends and relationships were formed. Furthermore, these friendships form important spaces for individuals to discuss their emotions and life troubles in a 'safe' space (*see* Smith, 2019) without fear of judgement. These were spaces in which people could attend and speak with like-minded others who could support each other's personal life events.

### Spaces of recovery through social connectedness

The social connectedness was, in some studies, more important than the practice itself. Social connections made through crafting were a welcome relief for some of the more vulnerable participants who had experienced trauma or grief. The group environment was frequently a space of relaxation and calm and healing.

Smith (2019) was the only paper to explicitly claim that the atmosphere of the workshop was of greater benefit than the practice of craft as the space encouraged social connectedness. Some crafters attended their chosen groups and brought with them "mindless" knitting projects (Brooks *et al*, 2019, p.119) which allowed them to have "stimulating conversations" and therefore not worry that they needed to focus on stitch counts or complicated patterns. This demonstrates the importance of the group environment, not just the practice itself.

Smith's research emphasised the need for a "cohesive and supportive atmosphere" (2019, p.14) which became vital for the emotional well-being of the attendees at the Grassmarket wood workshop in Edinburgh. A number of the attendees were in recovery from drug dependency or had experienced extreme loneliness and a reclusive lifestyle for a length of time. The organiser of the Grassmarket suggested that the craft itself benefitted the well-being of the handcrafters significantly less than the atmosphere of the building itself.

> *"I think the people coming here… are getting away from…if you've got any problems, getting away from that… This is kind of like my time – when I come here I can forget all that, and if the phone goes I can say 'look, I'm at woodwork at the minute, can you phone me back?' and then that gives me the whole day to do whatever I want to do without having to sort their problems out. So that helps me, once I'm here". [Elaine]*
>
> *Smith (2019, p.11)*

The Grassmarket was a hub of safety for many and in the case of Elaine, the therapeutic benefits of the craft were only recognised when she was in the building (Smith, 2019, p.12), suggesting the benefits were bounded both temporally and spatially.

One participant did contradict most of the common assumptions about the benefits of social groups such as those mentioned. In Tzanidaki and Reynolds' study of older women crafting in

Crete, a participant mentioned that she really did not like attending the groups as she found them to be “cliquey” and “gossipy” (Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013, p.379).

Social interactions did not always take the form of an organised group. For some crafters, they enjoyed the mobility and implicit social connections that knitting, and crochet could provide. Some would often take their craft on public transport or to a café and they explained that this would interest people and on-lookers would ask what they were doing (Brooks *et al*, 2019, p.120). These crafters reveled in the opportunity to talk about what they were making and this interaction with strangers was appreciated.

### Spaces of belonging, identity and purpose

11 of the papers reviewed stated the positive impact of craft practices on the crafters sense of belonging and identity (Brookes *et al*, 2019; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Mayne, 2019; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen, 2015b; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Smith, 2019; Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013).

The sense of belonging often came from the need to form friendships and feel part of something and developing their purpose within the family. Friends and family were both intrinsically and extrinsically valuable to each study. All 16 studies mention “friends” and/or “family” at least twice. Five of the studies explicitly state that the participants crafted or have crafted for their friends and family (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Mayne, 2016; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen 2015b). 11 of the studies claim that their participants enjoyed craft or practiced craft for the community, the social connectedness and development of friendships that organised craft brings (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and MacFarlane, 2011; Nevay *et al*, 2019; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Smith, 2019).

Many of the craft groups had several members who had suffered ill-health hardship or were caring for a family member with ill-health (Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015).

> *Makers were keen to emphasize that they did not go to craft groups to talk about their sadness, illness, or bereavement. They said they did not have to because everyone knew what had happened and would simply "be there."*
>
> *Kenning (2015, p.57)*

The group became a space in which the attendees did not need to explain how they were feeling or go into detail about their struggles as they all already knew how each other felt (Kenning, 2015). This was of great comfort to many. The craft group was a space to just enjoy time being themselves as a 'hand-crafter' not as the 'carer', the person will an illness or the grieving widow. Independent crafters also identified with this narrative as the practice itself enabled them to "disengage from the sick person's passive role" (Pöllannen, 2013, p.223).

For those who experienced trauma in their lives, they expressed this emotion through their craft. Some of the quilters associated their work with a particular event in their life (Dickie, 2011; Mayne, 2016), be that cancer diagnoses and subsequent treatment, bereavement and grief, or emotional management after a flood, hurricane or for some, the events of 11th September 2001 (Dickie, 2011, p.213). Not all quilts told stories of trauma, some quilters sewed the stories of their 'everyday' and 'mundane'. Likewise, the potters in Central Canada valued the process of ceramics over the final product.

> *…participants generally noted valuing the process over the product in terms of an opportunity for self-expression, but also expressed a great deal of joy and pride in the pieces they did produce despite flaws because they represented their own creative expression.*
>
> *Genoe and Leichty (2017, p.97)*

The participants felt empowered to express the inner most self and took pride in the “flaws” (Genoe and Leichty, 2017, p.97). Knowing that they had made it and it was an artistic form of themselves. This ability to demonstrate self-expression was therefore, connected to improved well-being.

Many of the participants described the feeling of purpose that crafting gave them, whether this was the ability to provide family and friends with handmade craft artefacts that were “made with love” (Pöllannen, 2015b) for their homes, or donating items such as blankets to children’s charities and “contributing to the community” (Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011, p.706), the crafters felt that they were needed, and their activity was purposeful (Brookes *et al*, 2019; Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and Macfarlane, 2011; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020).

> *“It’s craft with a purpose, older women now have got the chance to participate in so much more than they used to be able to, because once they outlived the usefulness of being a grandmother when the grandkids grew up, and weren’t needed any more, so they sat down and become un-needed”. [Thelma]*
>
> *Maidment and Macfarlane (2011, p.707)*

Here, the women found meaning in their everyday after a period of what they felt was meaningless. They did not feel that they had a purpose or were needed by their families any longer. Beyond finding purpose in the everyday family life, the lace makers in Sydney (Kenning, 2015) felt that they found purpose in their contribution to the history of lace making. They were not only replicating the history and keeping the practice alive, but they were also creating new history that they hoped would be replicated by future generations.

For Glaswegian quilters, their purpose came from making quilts for family and charities (Burt and Atkinson, 2011). These quilts and crafts were not a requirement for any individual to produce and the handcrafters choose to make them. The ‘purpose’ these crafters feel is so necessary, was

therefore socially constructed, though this is not to diminish their desire for purpose. The crafters felt that by giving back to their community, their existence meant something, and they could help another. Though not all crafters gifted to charities, nine of the papers reviewed mentioned gifting to friends and family (Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Brookes *et al*, 2019; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Mayne, 2016; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen, 2015b Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020).

The materiality of physical space created a safe place for more vulnerable crafters to visit. These were spaces where crafters felt supported (Pearce, 2017, p.53) and safe from outside pressures or fears in everyday life. Smith mentioned that many of the attendees at the Grassmarket had their own space in which they felt most comfortable. Elaine for example was always situated at a desk by the first window, near the entrance to the workshop (2019, p.9). The next workstation along, Brian had habitually found “his space” (Smith, 2019, p.9). Pearce (2017) spoke of the seating pattern that emerged after just a few weeks of the group starting, and as participants became more comfortable around one another, creating “sub-structuring” within groups (pg. 55).

### Pride, Praise and self-confidence

Some of the crafters, their purpose, belonging and self-confidence came from the praise given by their friends, family, and fellow group attendees (Burt and Atkinson, 2011; Corkhill *et al*, 2014; Dickie, 2011; Genoe and Leichty, 2017; Kenning, 2015; Maidment and MacFarlane, 2011; Mayne, 2016; Nevay *et al*, 2019; Pearce, 2017; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen and Hanski, 2020; Smith, 2019).

> *“[Exhibiting quilts is] something that an ordinary person caIo ... when you see your quilt hanging up you are just so thrilIled ... it’s that proud moment ... your picture up on the wall in the classroom”. (Flora)*
>
> *Burt and Atkinson (2011, p.57)*

> *Participants such as "Joan" expressed a sense of pride in their work, in learning I techniques... She said she felt "quite chuffed" when she looked back on pieces of lace that she had made. "Ngaire" took great delight in recounting that she had taken on a particularly challenging piece of work and succeeded. She recalled that she had seen this especially "tricky" piece of lace being made by one of her friends and thought, "if she can do it, I can."*
>
> *Kenning (2015, p.58)*

Each of the participants here reveled in seeing their final product, and seeing their hard work materialised in front of them. Seeing their own progress was significant in boosting their self-confidence and pride.

Those who lacked confidence or were struggling with a new skill benefitted greatly from the positive verbal feedback and praise from fellow crafters. Most crafters spoke highly of the educational support that their more experienced peers could provide. Having a mix of advanced and beginners in a group meant that beginners could see the possibilities of progression, whilst the more experienced crafters gained a sense of satisfaction in the progress that they had made. This was possible by seeing how the beginners worked and subsequently, see how their own work compared. Experienced crafters sensed pride in their ability and work when they found themselves able to help beginners, a testament to how far they had come. Some crafters enjoyed looking back at their earlier work and reveling in the knowledge that the time and effort they had put into developing their skill was paying off. Seeing the mistakes made in earlier crafts or the difference in the quality of work produced over time gave them a sense of pride and confidence that they had not wasted their time, and they were making progress (Kenning, 2015, p.61)

Whilst many of the crafters did not feel that their families appreciated the practice of their skilled hobby, it was not uncommon for family members to voice their praises once they could see the finished artefact on display, at an exhibition for example, or as a gift. This vocal recognition and

praise brought joy to the handcrafters. Likewise, seeing their craft on display and being used in the homes of loved ones brought feelings of pride and happiness to the crafters, as well as a sense of purpose, and subsequently well-being.

## Discussion

### The value of craft processes vs. products

Whilst it was not the intension, many of the articles in this review emphasised the importance of the process as a supporting mechanism for well-being, whilst in fact, the end product, the artefact, also produced the sense of purpose, emotionality, the meaning of the activity and/or the pride many participants spoke of. Both the process and the product were of great value, but for very different reasons.

Ingold describes making as a four-step cyclical process (2006), beginning with the "umbrella plan" or the initial idea, where the materials, tools and design are considered, moving onto the performance of the first line on the page, the first incision of the saw on the wood, or with reference to the crafts in this thesis, the first magic circle of the granny square. After "setting out" comes "carrying on", where the stitches are rhythmically placed, one after the other, before finally, the amplitude of the action is diminished, the ends are sewn in, and the tools – the crochet hook – is placed in its' home, already beginning the next cycle of making. In this description of making, Ingold never places the emphasis on the end product, but does however state so in other work: "Skilled workmanship serves not to execute a pre-existing design, but to actually generate the forms of artefacts" (Ingold 2000, p.291). This statement places great emphasis on the product of the practice, and much less on the process. In doing so, this reinforces the value of craft is situated in the product and not the process.

Brookes *et* al (2019), Burt and Atkinson (2011), Pöllannen (2013), and Pöllannen (2015a) all explicitly emphasise the relationship between the end product and well-being. Kenning (2015), Maidment and MacFarlane (2011), Pöllannen (2015b) each implicitly infer the value of the product.

Brookes *et al* (2019) and Maidment and MacFarlane (2011) both mention the joy and pride felt by the crafters on completion of their projects. Pöllannen (2015b), however, mention the value of the products came from the praise given from others and the subsequent boost to self-confidence. Online crafters alluded to the value of the craft on the final product, but never explicitly claimed as such. Each of these examples support the claims made by Ingold (2000, p.346): “The notion of making, of course, defines an activity purely in terms of its capacity to yield a certain object”. Instead, products were loaded with meaning, particularly those products that were made during traumatic periods of time (*see* Mayne, 2016). It is this contemplative attitude that Ingold assigns the significance of an object, not into a habitual pattern of use, or importantly the process of making, but through the symbolism that the artefact embodies (Ingold, 2006). Likewise, the meaning in the product was clear when crafters spoke of the pride they felt when they came across an old craft that they had made, and they could see the improvement and skill development (Pöllannen, 2015b). It is these emotions of pride and joy that boosted self-confidence and demonstrates the value in the product, though on a longer temporal scale.

The research by Genoe and Leichty (2017) was unique from all the others and the potters claimed that the value came from the process over the product as a result of the multi-step process of ceramics – much like the four-step process outlined by Ingold (2006). Controversially, the potential for mistakes, the opportunities for experimentation and the potential for their work to explode in the kiln was a thrill and, in fact, a motivator to continue the craft, to push their skill and challenge the craft itself. Will the pot come out in one piece? This was the only exception of all 16 papers reviewed. Most of the papers that discussed the potential for mistakes, or mentioned mistakes in some way, spoke of the frustrations of having to re-attempt the pattern once more – not an emotion associated with positive well-being and not a part of the process that was ‘enjoyed’ *per se*.

Practitioners who inhabit their skill learn to appreciate and value the aesthetics of their craft through the final product (Hankins, 2017). Creativity produces “something brilliantly original”

(Gauntlett, 2018. P22), unique to the worlds' eye. However, Gauntlett explains that is not enough. It must also be recognised by others in the field of the craft to make an impact (2018). Here, he places the value of the craft on both the product, and other people's opinions of the final product, however Gauntlett also goes on to mention that the creative process can be better understood by the process of doing. There is an "inherent pleasure in making" (Dissanayake, 1995) and a sense of being alive (Gauntlett, 2018).

### *Gendered craft*

The majority of the participants in all of the studies analysed in this review were white, middle-class women. The crafts were almost all traditionally 'feminine' crafts, specifically handcrafts. The practice of craftwork is gendered, but the division of gendered craft "depends on various interlinking cultural and social aspects" (Kokko, 2012, p.177). The gendered practice and interpretations of craft is, I argue, rooted in the social norms that are instigated from childhood. Kokko presents this argument, using narrative essays written by boys at school. For boys to choose to practice textiles and not, what they call a "technical" craft, 'risked' their masculine reputations. This narrative was instilled from young childhood when the boys learned these 'technical' crafts from their fathers and grandfathers, whilst they learned the 'small decorative things' (p.182) from their mothers and grandmothers. This gendered narrative is repeated throughout the papers in this review – specifically, Smith's study (2019) of woodworkers (most men) in the Scotland, whilst the majority of textile crafters were women.

The use specific language of 'technical' crafts by the boys and 'decorative' crafts in Kokko's study (2012) further emphasizes the effects that language plays. This is also commonly found elsewhere. Ingold (2000; 2006) and Sennet (2009), for example frequently refer to the 'masculine' crafts as 'skills', whilst Corkhill (2012) and Pöllannen (2013), often refer to 'feminine' crafts as hobbies. This is particularly damaging language and could close doors for individuals seeking to find a self-care activity for fear that they may 'risk' losing their gendered reputation.

Markowitz (1994) challenges the feminisation of crafts, and in particular, embroidery. She demonstrates the way in which embroidery has been referred to as a craft, very rarely an 'art', suggesting that this is because the practice was almost solely completed by women. 'Art' is deemed 'art' if it presents something profound, personal and/or original (p.15), however embroidery was traditionally practiced to "encourage girls and women to develop and display a domestic and submissive female character" (*ibid*, p.61), therefore not 'worthy' of the title 'art'.

## Social connectedness and communities of practice

Communities of practice are an important element of self-care practices. The key theme connecting each of the publications included here is community. Each and every one of the papers in this review mention community and social connectedness in some way, shape or form. Communities of practice open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives (Wenger *et al*, 2002), or those who are experienced crafters and those who are not, whilst inviting these different levels of participation and ability. People participate in a practice and find value in the community of practice for different reasons (intrinsic and/or extrinsic) and often find value in the personal connection, or the opportunity to develop, improve or learn skills (Wenger *et al*, 2002).

When learning a new craft, or skill, having support from more experienced individuals benefits both parties. The beginners receive the information they need to learn, tips of how to perform an action, and ideas of how to overcome challenges, to correct or improve a technique. Meanwhile, the experienced practitioner is able to see how far they have developed, compared to the beginner. By engaging with others, both those more experienced and fellow learners, Straughn explains that they were able to collectively comment on the process, and performing the activities together highlighted the body language and actions whilst also "outlining the context and evolution of events as they happened" (2015, cited by Hawkins 2017, p.323).

The performance and practice of crafts in a social setting can bring together like-minded individuals but can also support them therapeutically to understand and process traumatic events.

Some of the publications in this review already touch on this, however Leone (2021) discusses the importance and value of collaborative craft activism. Historically craft has been used to express cultures and personalities, but also to build community and resist social and political oppression. Practicing craft, sharing knowledge and skills provides the space for participants to reflect on issues that are affecting them and stitches together each individual experience to form a collective experience. The stitches in Leone's study, represented the stitching together of the city, the community through a period of disruption and gentrification. The participants, like those in this review, described the stitching process as "relaxing", "therapeutic" and "intimate". The process of handcrafts, especially without the use of a machine is inherently slow, which allows for conversations to be had. These conversations create space for "respectful, trusting relationships with each other" (Leone, 2021, p.162). In doing so, these individuals moved beyond a community of practice, and became a practice of community.

## Concluding remarks

Craft is characteristically teleological. We craft for a purpose, for the self and our well-being; to produce an artefact for a friend, or family, or a charity; to escape from everyday life. We generally have a desired end goal in sight. To craft without an end goal is almost impossible. One must have something to work towards else, what is the point? Pöllannen (2013) insinuated that the crafters' actions were purpose and value driven. She argued that the craft must be meaningful, which is a requirement for a therapeutic craft. However, this was in vast contract to Corkhill *et al* (2014) and Smith (2019) who suggested the activity should be done just because, because it was 'therapeutic', because there was the potential for improve mental well-being, because the practitioner felt like it. Both Smith (2019) and Corkhill *et al* (2014) attempt to suggest that crafting for a well-being should be non-teleological, that through the process of crafting, it is possible to experience improved well-being, even though the idea of a product does not have to e–st.

It was well-documented that crafts generally have a positive impact on well-being, though there were experiences of frustration. Throughout the process of analysis, it became clear that many of the handcrafts were described as therapeutic and rhythmic which initiated experiences of flow and meditative moments. The extrinsic values demonstrated the importance of social connectedness and social interactions for many of the handcrafters, particularly those who may be socially isolated due to age (retirees and widows), those who aid or care for the health of a family member, or stay at home parents, particularly mothers caring for their children and families. Through the practice of the activity and the social connections built, a sense of purpose and identity returned to the lives of handcrafters who felt that their employment or caring status had begun to define them.

The process of crafting was identified as a contributor for improved well-being, however, unlike most other reviews, the product was implicitly described by many of the participants in each study to be a motivator to continue practicing their craft. The final product was found to incite pride and joy in the lives of the crafter, but also their family. This feeling of pride contributed to the purpose developed through the practice of craft.

This review has demonstrated the elements of crafting practices that enhance the well-being of communities and individuals alike. The rhythmic and often repetitive qualities that encompass many crafts were suggested as therapeutic and meditative by most of the reviewed studies. The activity itself created order and organisation in everyday life and a sense of purpose for those crafters who felt overwhelmed by the monotony or struggles of everyday life. For those handcrafters who cared for family members or lived with a psychological condition that frequently influenced each and everyday decision they took, craft enabled them to experience a perceived sense of control over something in their life – the material used, the time spent practicing their craft, the pattern they followed, or the control and ability to deviate from the pattern to create something unique of their own. Almost all of the reviewed papers have identified and

demonstrated the importance of social connectedness. However, the social connectedness that crafts brought to the lives of most participants exceeded the benefits of the practice itself. Participating in simple craft activities enabled the crafters to chat and enjoy like-minded company, whilst the space itself was safe and enabled the crafters to feel heard and understood. The unofficial talking therapy that these spaces permitted were vital coping mechanisms for some of the participants to help them deal with the grief or illness they experienced daily. As such, the importance of this was downplayed by most of the papers reviewed and only Smith (2019) explicitly claimed that the sociality of the activity was arguably more important for some of the crafters, than the craft itself.

Most of the papers reviewed discussed the benefits of craft on well-being as either intrinsic or extrinsic. However, few, if any, could explain how these work hand-in-hand. We have demonstrated that well-being being is not necessarily achieved through *either* process or product but from the duality between the two. This can also be translated to the discussion on intrinsic and extrinsic values of craft. Whilst the crafter reaps the intrinsic rewards of improved well-being and sense of control from the therapeutic processes of craft during the process of making, they often make with and/or for others. Even when alone, the crafters spoke of the intention to give the product to family or friends once completed. And the value in these cases was not just from the intrinsic process of doing, but from the extrinsic process of giving to others, and the subsequent feelings or pride and purpose felt when their work was complemented or placed for all to see in its' new home.

Previous reviews and research papers have not explicitly identified the importance of the product on the well-being of the practitioner. Many of the papers reviewed included quotes from crafters who exclaimed their pride seeing their artefacts in the homes of those that they loved. Many of the crafters spoke of their final product, but few of the papers explicitly commented on the relationship between the product and well-being.

Too frequently, the emphasis was placed on the importance of the practice and process itself. The process is not possible without a product, no matter how ‘formed’ it was in the minds of the crafter and likewise the product is impossible without the process. The significance of the product, however, was downplayed and this review has highlighted just how central the product is and can be for the longevity of the practice and the well-being of the crafter. This review suggests that the value of the practice was not entirely within the process of the activity, but from the final product. For those who donated their crafts to charity, they were proud of the recognition they received and the positive impact they could have for the recipient and/or the financial contribution they could make to the charity. Likewise, the pride felt when seeing crafts sitting in the homes of loved ones as recognition and appreciation of the hard work and time all demonstrate the importance and value of finishing each project as a motivator to continue crafting and as such, experiencing improved well-being.

# Chapter 6: The temporalities of craft practices

## Introduction

The chapter is distinguishable by the rhythms of crafting, specifically, 'past, present, and future – that is, before starting the craft, the process of doing, and the product(s) of craft respectively. The chapter is split into two main sections – *Making Time for Craft* and *Learning Craft*. It begins by attempting to understand the motivations for crafting (*(un)planned participation and Motivations to Craft*) which explain the before. To understand the present, the *Temporal Rhythms of Crafternoons* are quantified to describe and explain both the fixed and fluid temporal rhythms of Crafternoons. This sub-section also details the experiences of doing craft in the moment. Finally, this first section of the chapter endeavors to present the aspiring future of the craft practice for the participants (*Crafting Future Plans*).

The second part of the chapter discusses the learning process (*Learning Craft*) and begins to demonstrate the challenges that many beginners faced. Here, I present the ways in which participants overcame the challenges, grew confidence in their ability and the implementation of the newfound skill in everyday life. Throughout the learning process, and the practice of craft, the space of doing began to impact the body and affected the practice of craft and participants' learning journeys. The spatial components of Crafternoons are addressed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

The final component of this chapter ties together the temporal reality of the craft process and the learning process to address the material and metaphorical products of Crafternoons. I introduce evidence that the process of learning is different to the practice of self-care, or at least it was in the case of Crafternoons. This was also mentioned in Chapter 5: Scoping Review and as such, I conclude Iit would be naive to assume that learning is a given practice of self-care.

Time is used in this chapter as a framework for analysis. Time, however, is deeply complex within and across cultures and as such it would be impossible for one person to justly develop a critical

explanation of the cultural representation of time. Time is more than bi-linguistic. Language and tenses differ culturally and to provide a sufficient explanation is not possible at this stage and would require a thesis to do so. For this reason, time will remain a framework for analysis, and I have chosen to adopt Adam's (2004) synthesis of time as past, present and future to aid the analysis of the data. The past refers to (un)planned participation in the Crafternoons or the decision to join the Crafternoons or motivations to craft in everyday life. Motivations to do something were generally influenced by past events or conversations. The present relates to the rhythms of the Crafternoons that developed over the weeks and months; Finally, the future is in reference to the conversations that were had most weeks related to the plans that the crafters had to produce a pattern that they had found, or a trip to local craft stores.

I wish to leave a reminder here that the Crafternoons were never advertised as 'self-care activities', nor did they ever claim to enhance well-being. As mentioned in the Chapter 3: Literature Review 1, the third step to improving well-being is to learn a new skill (NHS, 2021). Whilst Crafternoons were a space designed to do just that, well-being was not a stated purpose for the sessions. Participants had very different experiences of taking part in the workshops, and these varied over time. The workshops capture how learning processes are complex (Wenger, 1999) and can prove challenging and frustrating. The latter, frustration, has not been explored in great detail and as such, this chapter begins to explore the challenges that the learning process can present to the well-being of craft practitioners.

## Making time for Crafternoons

Crafternoons ran every Friday between approximately 1400 hours – 1600 hours. Bi-weekly Crafternoons involved crochet and the weeks in between ranged from sewing by hand, sewing using a machine, origami (see Figure 5), and learning to make Dorset buttons (see Figure 6). Whilst the Crafternoons were advertised with a fixed time, this was fluid and it was encouraged that people should join the Crafternoons for as long or short of a period of time that they have time

for, even if they arrived ‘early’ and stayed beyond 1600 hours. The Crafternoons quickly grew to become a relational space for students to join each week. They were initially organised with the intention of providing students, and staff if they so wished, the opportunity to learn a new skill, but also, and importantly, to provide an alcohol-free leisure activity, something that is being encouraged by the National Union of Students (NUS) Alcohol Impact initiative, followed by 31 universities throughout the UK (NUS, 2021).

*Figure 5: An example of origami swans made during the Crafternoons*

*Figure 6: An example of a Dorset button made during the Crafternoons*

## Past: (Un)planned Participation and motivations to craft

Each crafter came to Crafternoons with their own reasons and motivations. Interestingly, no one acknowledged that they wanted to learn a new skill for their well-being or to include in their self-care routine. Motivations can be distinguished as either intrinsic or extrinsic. The former, intrinsic refers to motivation from within the self, an internal desire or drive to do something. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation alludes to an external contingency (for example familial influencers) (Deci *et al*, 1991). Some participants were avid crafters and grateful for the space provided by the Students' Union to practice their hobby (intrinsic). by contrast, some participants had not planned to attend the Crafternoons and only found the Crafternoons existed when making a visit to the Students' Union.

### *Planned participation*

One member of staff found out about Crafternoons through a colleague and adjusted her lunch break to join the group.

> *P41 is new too. She is much older and I find out that she is a member of staff who recently found out about the Crafternoons and has moved her lunch hour an hour later especially so she can come along at 2pm!*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

This particular staff member moved her usual lunch break from 1-2pm to 2-3pm in order to join and crochet with the group. Some participants were actively making time in their day to craft and take time away from their work. Similarly, a student had seen the Crafternoons advertised and chose to drop into the session for 45 minutes to take a break from his work.

> *He [P48] saw the Crafternoons advertised around campus and was doing some work in the library but wanted a break so came down to see what we were doing today.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 13th March 2020*

As a newcomer, this was unusual. P48 was one of the only participants to arrive at the Crafternoons, acknowledging that he needed a break from working in the library and as such joined Crafternoons intentionally. Most newcomers and regular Crafternoon attendees commented on their workload but spoke negatively about allowing themselves time away and referred to it as procrastination. Other participants do not acknowledge that they may have needed the time away from their work, that they needed to take a step back from the difficult academic work in order to take time for themselves. Whilst P48 never specifically used the term "self-care", it was clear that they were aware of their emotions and mental capabilities, and therefore recognised he needed to take some time away from his work. Likewise, P41 never mentioned she moved her lunch for self-care purposes, but she wanted to use her lunch productively to perform an activity she enjoyed at home, with likeminded others.

### *Unplanned Participation*

Located in the downstairs of the Students' Union, the Crafternoons' craft bench was very visible (see Figure 2) and accessible for potential participants and, I would argue, is one of the most accessible spaces on campus. This often meant that people joined the Crafternoons out of curiosity, unlike the two crafters mentioned above [P41 and P48] who specifically mentioned that they organised their schedule to attend. It was not uncommon for people to walk past a couple of times before approaching and asking to join.

In the first week, one young woman walked by twice before approaching and asked if she could join in or if she had to book and bring her own things. Upon explaining that it was free, and we would also provide her with a hook and some yarn to take home and to get her started, she smiled and happily joined us. Others followed a similar story.

> *…another female arrives [P3]. I notice that she has walked past the table twice before approaching but I have not made a note of this until now. I saw her about 15 minutes ago*

*walking through towards the reception desk from the side entrance with a rucksack and she peered over the table and we smiled.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 11th October 2019.*

This participant returned on two other occasions, though Crafternoons often clashed with her classes so she would arrive ad-hoc throughout the afternoons. This particular unplanned participation did lead to future planned participation, and the subtle encouragement to make time for self-care without ever insinuating self-care was 'needed' or an outcome. This example demonstrates that having an open and relational space can and does make a difference to how people value and organizs their time.

In week 6 (coded F on Figure 7), a charity called Morsbags[11] was invited to join. It was a very popular event and resulted in both planned and unplanned attendance. This week also saw the largest number of participants – 22 people over a 4-hour time period. It was this week in which staff began to join in the Crafternoons. Two staff members of note had popped down to see Charlotte to see how she was getting on but did not appear to have planned to give the sewing a try, however, with a little encouragement from Charlotte they did.

*SU staff member (SUS1) comes over to Charlotte to ask to have a look at what we're all doing. Charlotte encourages then to sit and join in. They are unsure and linger at the top end of the table for about 5 minutes… SUS1 decides to sit down on an empty machine opposite me.*

*Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

Like P3, SUS1 needed some gentle encouragement to join, having not planned to attend. She also encouraged her colleague to join her, though they mentioned that they should have both

[11] https://morsbags.com

been working. This was the only week in which SUS1 and SUS2 actively joined in the Crafternoons, despite regularly visiting the Crafternoons over the 6 months of observations. The visibility of Crafternoons and subsequent unplanned participation gave students and staff the permission that may have unknowingly needed to take time away from their everyday responsibilities, including work. Having permission to "procrastinate" is this case is in vast contrast to those procrastinators who do appear to have the autonomy (Sirois and Pychyl, 2016, p.244) and have a tendency to use procrastination techniques as an avoidance mechanism. The examples here, in particular P3 and P48, highlight the importance of organisations such as universities in supporting and guiding young people's autonomy to recognise the signs that they need time out from everyday life and provide the space to do so.

### *Procrastination*

For some of the participants, though procrastination was not an overt motivation for joining the Crafternoons, it became a theme of conversation. The crafters would mention that they should be in the library reading, writing an essay or revising for exams, but instead they chose to come along to Crafternoons. Whilst time can be measured or quantified, the way in which each individual perceives time is largely subjective (Macan, 1994 cited in Chu and Choi, 2005, p.248). Taking place at 2pm on a Friday afternoon, it was not surprising that students and staff felt the need or desire to procrastinate and not attempt to complete their work.

> *P14 says "yea, I should be doing some coursework, and this is a great distraction". Everyone laughs and P5 nods and smiles in agreement. P5 announces "I should be in the library, but we can do this instead! We could take it to the library and work."*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

> *SUS1 and SUS2 appear embarrassed. SUS1 ducks and hides behind their machine. They look at each other and SUS2 eyes are wide. SUS2 whispers, "hide, we shouldn't be doing this!".*

*Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

The latter extract demonstrates the actions of two members of staff who had joined, unplanned, and as such 'should' have been at work. They had both seen their boss walking past but SUS1 and SUS2 were avoiding work for half an hour. Both extracts demonstrate the recognition of guilt felt by participants for taking time away from the work that they "*should*" have been doing. Meanwhile, with reference to the aforementioned excerpt about P48 experience of planned participation, P48 had specifically planned to join the Crafternoons, not necessarily to procrastinate, but to take time away from work. SUS1, SUS2, P5, P14, P48 and others chose to take time out to learn a new, somewhat difficult, skill, in replacement of learning new, often difficult, academic content, or completing challenging work, regardless of whether they had planned to attend or not. Each participant made the choice to practice a mentally taxing and active practice, instead of a passive leisure activity such as watching television, or 'hanging out' with friends (see Cho *et al,* 2018). This type of procrastination can be understood as 'active procrastination'. Active procrastinators are deemed as those who construct "purposive uses of time, control of time, self-efficacy belief, coping styles, and outcomes including academic performance" (Chu and Choi, 2005, p.245).

One of the motivators to join Crafternoons involved procrastination from academic work. This procrastination is a delay of the inevitable or an example of embodied political thinking (Barraitser, 2017) whereby the crafters hope that by ignoring the essay deadline, it will not approach any faster. However, this time that they are deeming to be 'free' time for procrastination is never free time whilst there are future obligations – in this case, essays and exam revision. The procrastination within the present is therefore intergenerational between the present and the future (Barraitser, 2017 pg. 94). However, I argue that whilst this time is not 'free', it is indeed needed to rebalance the mind and refocus attentions away from the perceived stress of academic work.

Despite the negative connotations with procrastination there are some short-term benefits compared with non-procrastinators[12]. Procrastination can be interpreted as a strategy to regulate negative emotions (Tice and Baumeister, 1997). When used at appropriate temporal intervals, active procrastination (*see* Chu and Choi, 2005) can have positive effects on both emotion regulation, stress management and ultimately productivity and quality of work. As mentioned earlier, Chu and Choi (2005, p.247) make the distinction between active and passive procrastination which resonates with the observations throughout the Crafternoons, though just one participant recognised and explicitly acknowledged this at the time. Taking place on a Friday afternoon, it was inevitable that some participants joined the Crafternoons to escape their work commitments after a week of work and lectures. However, very few crafters acknowledged that they may need some time away from their work commitments. Making time for Crafternoons may not have been a deliberate act of self-care or priority for some. However, in creating a specific time and space, Crafternoons gave permission for individuals to switch off for an hour or two, permission that the individual could not or would not grant themselves for fear of feeling unproductive.

### *Family*

With reference to extrinsic motivators, all of the participants with prior experience, no matter how much, had learned from family members – predominantly matriarchal figures such as mothers and/ or grandmothers.

> *I ask P20 about her experience with crochet. She tells me that her grandmother taught her granny squares when she was younger. Both P20 and her Grandmother are left-handed though, so she learned much quicker from her grandmother as she'd already learned how to do it.*

[12] See literature review

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th January 2020*

*I ask the same questions to P42. She explains that her mum taught her a few years ago.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 14th February 2020*

*I ask her [P45] what she does and how she learned, and she happily told me that she learned crochet from her great grandmother and knitting from her mother and grandmother.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th March 2020*

These three participants were influenced and taught by female members of the family. The commonality here is that it was the matriarchal members of the family that taught the crochet, demonstrating the ever-present narrative of gendered textile crafts discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 5). Likewise, those crafters who had learned "*a few years ago*" often learned as school aged children but did not continue the practice throughout their teenage years and it was only now, in their late teens and early 20s that they resumed the craft. The reasons for this were not explored further[13]. As such, there is scope for further investigation to identify and understand the reasons why and the relative success of the learning process of individuals who had some, if not limited, experience.

The matriarchal influencers here are significant and demonstrates the gendered nature of textile crafts, which was discussed in great detail in Chapter 6 (Scoping Review). The skills of crochet and sewing are often transferred and passed down from generation to generation. Historically, these textile crafts mentioned and observed have not always been practiced as a form of often unpaid labor by the matriarchs in the family and these extracts of the field notes reinforce this stereotypical narrative. Today it is still seen as labor, though Conor *et al* (2015, cited by Hawkins,

[13] I had planned to clarify this through interviews, but these did not take place due to the pandemic.

2019, p.972) have referred to it as ‘playbour’ (Conor *et al*, 2015 cited by Hawkins, 2019, p.972), or non-essential labour, performed for one’s personal enjoyment. Whilst this so called ‘playbour’ is suggestively for fun or ‘play’, it is still important to recognise both the historical value of textile crafts performed by women and the teleological societal expectations that are arguably still placed on women to perform these activities with a purpose, not as a hobby because they want to.

Whilst other crafters were not taught by female family members, they were influenced by them.

> *They [P36 and P35] are both new to crochet, though 36 mentions that her mum does do crochet, but she’s never really learned properly.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 17th January 2020*

> *Participant P explains that their mum does all the sewing. She was a GP and since retiring, she needed to fill her time so sews and makes lots of clothes for her, particularly traditional Indian dresses for weddings, and other family events.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2020*

The latter extract is taken from a non-crochet Crafternoon, when Morsbags visited and taught staff and students how to sew shopping bags using hand wound Singer sewing machines. The participant here was influenced by her mothers’ experiences of sewing and was interested in learning how to use the sewing machine to make something. This is also an example of the motivations of craft having a familial function and purpose. Both excerpts, however, show the importance of familial influence of learning the craft. This was not to say that they wanted to learn only because of their mothers’, but there was an influence, else why mention them at all.

Prior family involvement in the craft(s) was not the only motivation for some crafters. Family and friends became motivators of craft practices for some participants on the occasions that family

and friends began placing requests for handmade craft items such as amigurumi animals, scarves, and blankets.

> *P12 mentions that her mum has a Labrador and if she gets practicing, she could probably make one [an amigurumi Labrador] for her for Christmas.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 8th November 2020*

> *She [P14] had completed her octopus that she was making the last time she was here and was making a zebra for her mum with a blue and purple yarn.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 13th January 2020*

> *She [P33] mentioned that her mum had requested a tea cosy but changed her mind and not wants a blanket instead. Clare says "aah, [you're] taking orders now!".*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, Dorset buttons, 7th February 2020*

Again, it is the matriarchal figure referenced by all of these participants. However, that aside, Clare's quote in the latter extract – "aah [you're] taking orders now!" – clearly shows the progression of participants, It also demonstrates the communities of practice that were beginning to evolve. The participants had reached a stage of the learning process in which the practice of crochet was no longer predominantly individualised, but, as many other research projects involving crafts groups demonstrate (see Mayne, 2016; Pöllannen, 2015), the practice of craft is evolving to become less about the individual crafter and more about others around them. The crafter loses some control over the project and product that are being made, the colours of the textiles and the textures that are used too. The practice itself may be relevant for the practitioners' well-being or self-care routines, however the outcome, the product, is made for another person. This is something that was also seen in the scoping review (Brooks *et al*, 2019; Mayne, 2016; Pöllannen, 2013; Pöllannen, 2015a; Pöllannen 2015b)

The products of crafts, particularly textile crafts, are not often kept by the individual who made them and more often given away as commissions or gifts to friends, loved ones, to charity, or sold to make a little extra money. With this in mind, it raises questions about who benefits from the practice of craft. Is it self-care or is it care of the self and others? Whilst some insinuate that the benefits of craft come from the making process (see for example Bunn, 2020; Smith, 2019), the doing, as previously mentioned in Chapter 5 (Scoping review), and the products hold significant value also. The value comes from both the completion of a project, a material demonstration for a beginner (or indeed advanced crafter) that they have mastered their skill, but value also comes from the verbal praise and recognition of work by the recipient of the product.

## Present: Temporal rhythms of Crafternoons

Lefebvre draws attention to the multiplicity of rhythms (Crang, 2001, p.189), and to the cycles of time – daily, weekly, monthly, or annually. Here, I will begin to contextualise the rhythms of the Crafternoons on an hourly and weekly basis and I will be quantifying the temporal data collected through field notes. Learning a new skill requires patience, perseverance and most of all, time. Few publications relating to craft practices attempt to understand or comment on *how* people learn a new skill, whilst there is a wealth of data aiming to understand the way(s) in which skills such as textile crafts impact the everyday lives and emotions of practitioners (see Brooks *et* al, 2019; Corkhill, 2012; Rowe and Corkhill, 2017; Schwanen and Wang, 2014). As such, the remaining analysis will begin to unpick the temporal rhythms of the Crafternoons, to consider, following Lefebvre how rhythms are either cyclical or linear (Lyon, 2022, p.24). The linear rhythms of the Crafternoons are established through the routine timing (2-4 every Friday) and the expectation that participants could take material home and craft in between the sessions. Within the crafter noon cyclical rhythms emerged within the sessions, which I explore below. The data begins to demonstrate how crafters learned crochet, among other crafts, and to highlight the way in which the challenges of crafts impact the practice as a self-care activity.

### *Structure of the workshop*

The workshops soon fell into a familiar temporal routine, demonstrated in Table 7. In general, the first 10 to 15 minutes became time for participants to arrive, set up, have a chat with each other and settle into their activity. This time was full of conversations and plans for the day, general chatter about how everyone has been getting on that particular week with work, university or sharing updates on recent craft projects. There was also talk of what people were going to achieve during the next couple of hours of the Crafternoon.

| **Time** | **Activity** |
|---|---|
| 1400hrs | "Scheduled" start time |
| 1400hrs – 1415hrs | Setting up and settling in |
| 1415hrs – 1530hrs | Concentrated craft |
| 1530hrs – 1600hrs | Distracted craft[14] |

*Table 7: Temporal structure of the Crafternoons[15]*

From about 1415 hours until 1515 hours – 1530 hours, the Crafternoons were a hive of activity. This hour or so was quiet. There were fewer conversations of personal matters, and chatter was more directed at the activity of the week and helping each other when needed. It was productive and reflective at the same time.

Between approximately 1500 hours to 1530 hours most participants were more easily distracted by more 'personal' conversations, mobile phones began to appear and idle chatter of television programmes such as Friends, films, often Disney, or weekend plans were ever present. Most weeks, participants helped to pack away the equipment, scrap material, yarn or paper at around 3.50pm, though conversations often continued well after 4pm.

[14] 'Distracted craft' refers to the periods of time in which crafters were still attempting to do the activity, but were engaging in conversations that differed from the activity in hand

[15] The times in this table are not exact, but a guide. Some of the timings did deviate slightly, depending on the activity and number of participants. It does however act to give an example of the rhythms of the Crafternoons.

It was also around this time that people, including myself, became aware of their physical self. After an hour of crafting and deep concentration – it could be argued that these were instances of flow – many participants developed a greater awareness of the surrounding environment, but also any tension that they were holding in neck, shoulders and back, and their posture. Participants needed to take a moment to relieve their tension.

> *P20 says that she needs a break. She sighs, puts her work firmly on the table and rolls her shoulders back whilst scrunching her hands. She says that they are cramping again. She rolls her neck around too, stretching from hunching over for so long. She says that her forefinger and middle finger knuckles are sore and that this sometimes happens when she is sewing.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th December 2019*

> *She [P1] comments that her hand is beginning to cramp up and I say that I am not surprised as she's been crocheting around and around and around.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th December*

These are just two examples that I noted. Participants mentioned cramp on at least four separate occasions. The physical impacts of embodied craft on the self will be discussed in more detail within the next chapter (Chapter 7). However, it is important to recognise that the temporal rhythms of the Crafternoons were affected by these embodied experiences of craft and vice versa.

### *Fluidity*

Figure 7 demonstrates the way in which time was spent throughout the Crafternoons. The time has been distinguished, very simply – time spent predominantly concentrating on craft (blue), time spent crafting but distracted (yellow)[16], and time spent not crafting (red). References to time within my field diary were analysed alongside descriptions of what activity was taking place. There were two weeks, week 2 and week 14, in which there was no mention of time within the field diary and therefore they have been left blank.

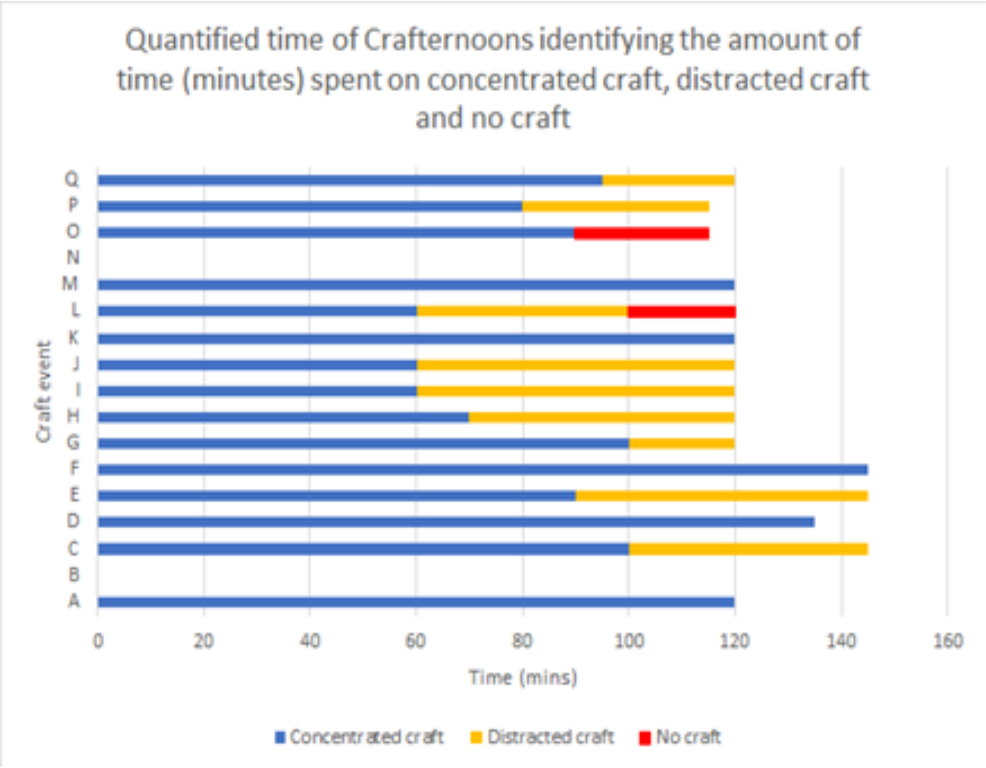


*Figure 7: A graph demonstrating temporal quantification of the Crafternoons (See Table 5 for craft event code)*

The Crafternoons became more temporally fluid throughout the year. It soon became apparent that two hours was not always enough (see week 3, week 5, and week 6 on Figure 7). Clare, Charlotte and I took the decision to allow extra time. We each took responsibility, depending on

[16] Distracted craft refers to the craft that is not being performed at full capacity and is often accompanied with non-craft based conversations

our schedules to be present earlier than 1400 hours and/ or later than 1600 hours. Participants sometimes arrived before 1400 hours to eat their lunch, or we would arrive and find that they had already found themselves a spot to begin their craft.

On three occasions observed, the Crafternoons overran. On one of these occasion (week 5 - 8th November 2019) two participants wanted to stay until they had completed a particular section of their crochet and left at 1630 hours. Week 6 (sewing bags) had been planned to run from 1230 hours until 1630 hours to allow enough time for people to have a go. There were just six sewing machines, and each bag took approximately 30 minutes to complete. Conversely, on two occasions (see week P and week Q on Figure 7) we ended the Crafternoons a little early. As Figure 7 demonstrates, the participants were distracted and no longer crafting, and it was therefore felt that we should pack away earlier than scheduled. Coincidentally, these weeks also saw some of the lowest numbers of attendees.

### *Distracted craft*

Figure 7 establishes that participants were not as distracted on some weeks as others. Interestingly, the weeks that involved less time performing distracted craft did not involve crochet. The activity of the week (for example origami or pom-pom hedgehogs) required less concentration, and arguably, less skill than crochet. The instructions were simpler and therefore easier to follow without 1:1 support. This allowed the participants to remain focused on their craft, whilst also continuing with conversations.

The open environment of the Students' Union, in the hub of the university campus, meant that Crafternoons were in a prime location for distractions. The SU is home to one of the main eateries on campus, a take-away café, music often plays on the overhead sound system, and charity fundraisers such as 24-hour rowing challenges take place within the space. On a few of the weeks, there were also small-scale events (eg. Charitable awareness campaigns) situated next to the Crafternoon bench.

For the most part, this was not a hindrance for teaching a skill. This increased foot traffic also increase the noise and surrounding distractions. On one notable occasion (17th January 2020) there was an overlap of events which meant that the TV in the "Lounge" was playing F.R.I.E.N.D.S episode marathon quite loud throughout the afternoon.

> *The lounge, next to the craft tables has 6 students sat on the brightly coloured sofas and chairs whilst watching back-to-back episodes of "F.R.I.E.N.D.S". This makes for a very different atmosphere to Crafternoons. The TV is playing quite loud and Clare comments that she hopes it isn't going to be a regular occurrence as it's quite off putting. It isn't until I pull out my own crochet and begin counting that I realise it [Friend in the background] is quite distracting.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 17th January 2020*

When counting stitches, it can be very distracting to hold a conversation with someone or be actively listening to surrounding conversations at the same time. It is easier to lose count of stitches, but it is also challenging to concentrate on reading a pattern and getting into a rhythm when there is too much going on in the background. Likewise, conversations that took place in the Lounge sometimes became a distraction for participants. On one occasion, a man was talking loudly and using an aggressive tone speaking on the phone.

> *He's speaking very loudly in a language I am not familiar with. His arms are waving around as he's speaking. It's stressful just listening to him and watching his hands gesture, waving around*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

The lounge often had a number of people sat on the sofas and chairs, however, those sitting were not often in groups and chatting loudly like the man mentioned above. The people sat down were usually working quietly, reading a book or scrolling on their phone. One crafter commented on this

heated conversation, stating that she felt stressed just watching the call take place, and we politely laughed about it. However, this background noise was distracting and not always conducive to the calming, relational space that Crafternoons endeavored to be. The impacts of the space on the crafters experience is explored in much more detail in the following chapter (chapter 7).

### *Experience*

It was not always possible to collect data on the experiences of each crafter, however of those spoken to, eight participants explicitly mentioned that they had previous experience of crochet. Of these, five stated that they practice regularly and did not require or want learning support. Six had no prior experience of crochet at all and required 1:1 support. Four stated that they had limited experience or learned at a very young age and saw the Crafternoons as an opportunity to re-learn.

Participant 5 was very clear about her motivations for attending Crafternoons. She had approximately one years' previous experience of crochet and had chosen to complete at least one hour crochet a week to support her Duke of Edinburgh award.

> *I ask P5 what her experience is with crochet and she mentions that she first began a year or so ago at Craft Society when they were learning during one of their meet ups. She had completed a couple of projects, however never continued with it until the start of this semester. She is completing her Duke of Edinburgh and her "skill" is crochet. She must complete at least a week of crochet each week – hence her taking it back up and joining in with the Crafternoons.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

Participant 5 attended four sessions in total and frequently mentioned her independent progress that she completed at home. Whilst attending the Crafternoons she completed some of the themed crochet patterns available to participants each week, but towards the latter half of the

observations, she was crocheting a midnight blue shawl using a pattern that she had found online. It involved a number of different, more complex stitches but she had been influenced by a "phoenix blanket" that Charlotte had been making. Participant 5 was also experienced enough that she would help Charlotte and Clare teach beginners in the weeks that she attended.

### *Doing craft*

Craft practice was encouraged outside of the allotted time every Friday. All materials were free for participants throughout the Crafternoons, and most weeks participants could borrow and/or keep materials to develop and hone their skills in their own time at home. Participants did discuss how often they made time to craft outside of Crafternoons, however there was no clear pattern or rhythm to this. It was a very personal and individual practice dependent on a number of factors.

> *I asked P1 how she got on with her crochet over the last couple of weeks and how regularly she practiced crochet. She said that she did it when she felt like it, and between work. She completed the most the last week but had to stop because she ran out of yarn.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October.*

Here participant 1 states that she completes it when she felt like it but was limited by the quantity of materials that she had access to. This particular participant subsequently went on to buy a couple of different patterns and related materials, quickly building up her supply of yarn within a couple of weeks.

> *P1 is sat to my left. She is making a reindeer – she started this before Christmas and admits she's not done as much as she had hoped over Christmas*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 17th January 2020*

By January Participant 1 was not able to complete as much craft as she had hoped or had been able to in previous weeks, not due to lack of materials, but due to lack of 'free' time. Between

revision for exams, writing assignments and celebrating the Christmas festivities, P1 was limited on time. The limited availability of potential craft time was seen amongst other participants.

> *…she's [P40] managed to produce a couple of rows at home. I ask how much she has managed for the last couple of weeks, and she explains that she's not had much time.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 14th February 2020*

> *P40 says that she's not had any lectures or seminars, so she had time to complete some crochet yesterday.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 21st February 2020*

These two extracts were taken a week apart. The time available to participant 40 differed throughout the month due to her workload and she was able to spend more or less time crocheting depending on her timetable each week. This was common among participants, though some used Crafternoons as an excuse to avoid completing work (as discussed in "procrastination"). Here, participants 1 and 40 claim to not have time outside of the Crafternoons to complete their crochet, however, despite the lack of time outside of Crafternoons, they both made time to attend within the "normal working week" (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) which supports my prior discussion that creating a space that gives 'permission' for self-care is very important to reduce the feelings of guilt, to improve work-life balance, and in some instances, improve/maintain well-being. Participants appeared to find it a challenge to allocate free time each week, however, they were willing to assign two hours on a Friday afternoon to craft. The feeling of guilt has been associated with the allocation of time for self-care (see Holdsworth, 2021), however, much of this literature is associated with caregivers. These Crafternoon participants never disclosed caregiving responsibilities.

## Future: Crafting future plans

The practice of craft was also synonymous with the non-practice of craft. By this, I mean to say that there were numerous occasions where crafters fell into the discussion of crafts they hoped to make in the future. The Crafternoons were a creative space to not just practice crochet but plan, and for some, these plans materialised, however, at least whilst my observations were taking place, these more often did not. Most weeks participants would share patterns they had found online, and Charlotte recommended websites in which crafters could locate free patterns, or at least more affordable patterns and yarn. Some of these patterns materialised in the weeks following discussions. One example of this is P1 who ordered and made an amigurumi dog. However, many saved the patterns for later but for as long as I was observing, these were not started. I too was guilty of this.

There were two occasions where the group discussed the potential of visiting a haberdashery in the local city.

> *This sparks another conversation suggesting that we all take a trip to a yarn shop soon. We had a similar conversation a few months ago at the start of the Crafternoons but more people are interested this time around.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

Crafters spoke of all the yarn and fabric they could buy and in the 6 months of observations, this never happened. It may well have occurred if covid-19 had not have paused in-situ events, however by March, with two months left before exams and students' return to their familial homes, no plans had officially been made.

There were also talks of running an exhibition of Crafternoons crafts.

> *Niall and P37 talk about that 1000 cranes project. I have to google it as I can't remember what it's called, and we all begin to talk about how amazing it would be to do in the SU*

*somewhere. Could this be an idea for a workshop? Or for the exhibition? 1000 cranes in the shape/ colours of the Keele Crest?!*

*Crafternoons observation, origami, 24th January 2020*

Again, there is no telling whether or not these exhibitions or projects would have materialised had there not been restrictions from the pandemic.

## Learning craft

The geographies of care have not yet begun to understand the role of the learning process within self-care. Hawkins (2019) begins to touch on the ways in which learning impacts self-care practices and routines within higher education however little has been done to address the understanding of learning self-care practices. Creative geographies are beginning to acknowledge the challenges of crafts. Hawkins, for example reflects on the challenges and frustrations she faced when "mark-making", however does not detail the way in which these frustrations affected her crafting process, or indeed, progress, though does direct the conversation towards others who have expressed "vexations… of creative geographic doings" (2018, p.974). Likewise, Straughan (2018) begins to highlight the challenges of craft in the form of taxidermy as well as the failures she faces when during her learning process. These examples are, however, limited and do not begin to describe or explain the ways in which this really affects the individuals' outcome of the learning process.

### Frustrations of learning crafts

Frustration is part and parcel of any learning process, though this is not frequently discussed within the academic literature on learning skills, and even less so on the topic of learning skills for self-care or well-being. On the second week of crochet, charlotte commented on frustration in response to an outburst of frustration by a beginner.

*Charlotte commented that not getting frustrated when [it] doesn't work first time is the hardest part about crochet*

*Crafternoon observation, origami, 25th October 2019*

Frustrated outbursts were frequent and occurred most weeks, but they were particularly present during crochet weeks. Those who were outwardly frustrated often required encouragement, though many of the participants were not forthcoming to ask for help.

> *"I'm doing it all wrong!" P32 announces. I see that she is going to unravel. Clare replies with "no you're not, you can see all the stitches really clearly".*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th December 2019*

Here, it is clear to see that the participants needed to hear that they were not "doing it all wrong". This suggests that there may have been a lack of confidence in their ability which almost resulted in the participant unravelling their work. The learning process is complicated, and though the positive experiences of practicing a skill are proportionate to the difficulty of the task (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002), a skill that is particularly difficult to master, such as crochet, can create doubts for some who subsequently may not attempt the activity again, much like the following participant [P4] in the excerpt below. As such, the benefits will never be experienced, though that is not to say impossible.

> *P4 has unraveled again. They sigh and say "I'm giving up! It's too hard and frustrating". Though they do say that they will try it again soon.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

P4 was not reassured by the encouragement or support that she was given. In this instance, I note that P4 had frogged their work at least 4 times within the hour and a half that they were present at the Crafternoons. She was not forthcoming to ask for help and when she was given 1:1support, she really struggled to pick up the technique. This participant never did return to try crochet, though they did attend other non-crochet Crafternoons. Some would give up, as the field

diary excerpt above demonstrates. For others frustration was an embodied process of crochet. Some crochet beginners were very vocal about their frustrations

> *"Oh I hate this! It's too hard!" [P20]*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th December 2019*

> *I try to explain how to maneuver the hook rather than the yarn as it makes it easier to grab the yarn. She [P36] watches what I am doing and tries herself. It takes a couple of attempts for her to manage her first chain and she says "argh" each time she misses it.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 17th January 2020*

> *She [P46] hasn't got the hand of dc at all. I show her slowly using mine. She watches me do it a couple of times then has a go herself. She huffs, she sighs, and she says "oh balls" quite a few times before she manages it.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 13th March 2020*

Others, however, were less vocal and experienced their frustrations within and through their bodies, visible from the tension in their shoulders, hunched body language and consistent staring at the yarn and hook. This is discussed further in the latter half of this chapter.

> *She [Clare] comments that P40 is very tense and needs to relax a little. Clare describes the easiest way to position the crochet is as though you are holding and reading your phone. P40 gets frustrated every now and again but Clare reassures her each time.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

The reassurance mentioned here is particularly important. When beginners became frustrated, most participants responded well to reassurance or gentle guidance and suggestions on how to relax their bodies and minds, or where to place the next stitch. This is where the community of

practice was particularly evident (see Wenger 1999). Whilst the practice was individual, the benefits of the community presented themselves. Fellow crafters, both beginners and experienced, support one another's' learning.

Whilst frustration was a common theme each week, it was often important for beginners to learn how to correct their mistakes and to exercise perseverance. Making mistakes is a vital aspect of the learning process and it was undoubtedly something that was a constant presence throughout the Crafternoons. Mistakes were made not just learning crochet, but also the simpler crafts such as pom-pom making and origami. 'Frustration', 'tension' and 'making mistakes' are not words or actions that are conducive with 'self-care practices' or 'well-being'.

### *Frogging*

The way in which individuals dealt with the process of making mistakes differed drastically. One of the most common coping mechanisms for making mistakes in crochet is referred to as 'frogging'. This is a term frequently used within crochet to describe the process of un-doing stitches. It gets its name from the noise that it makes when pulling the stitches – it sounds like a frogs' 'ribbet'. There was not one crochet week observed whereby at least one participant did not frog their work either partially, or in some instances entirely. Frogging is not just something that occurs in the learning process. The more experienced crocheters were prone to frogging also, though the context was different. This would occur when someone had mis-counted or used the wrong stitch. 'Unnecessary' frogging was particularly common among beginners who either lost count of their stitches, or more often, when they were unable to see where their stitches began and ended. This was when they believed they had done it 'wrong' and is something that is usually corrected with experience and knowledge of the practice.

> *P14 is trying to make a magic circle to begin the first foot. She is struggling and has unraveled a couple of times. She needs 4 stitches but keeps ending up with 5 and doesn't know why*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

> *At 3pm, P1 has to unravel the entire thing. They realise they've been counting the pattern all wrong and completing half a stitch, not a full stitch (through the front loop only) so they've created a ridge. This is the first time that I've seen them unravel at all!*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

One participant, P10, spent most of a Crafternoon working on a teddy bear that she was making from scratch, no pattern, for her friends' baby. She had completed the head and most of the body, before I noticed that she had begun frogging the entire project. P1, P14 and P10, all beginners (P1 and P14 had some prior experience), though have a basic ability and knowledge of crochet. They are learning to count stitches and understand what stitches should look like. Participant 1 was one of the few participants who was very able to learn the skill of crochet very quickly and with little 1:1 support compared to her peers. She was the only participant who was not observed to have frogged her work multiple times each week. She often looked closely at the stitches she had made and managed to correct her mistakes with little to no frogging. It was not until 22nd November 2019 (see above), 7 weeks after her first crochet Crafternoon, that she was witnessed frogging the whole head of her amigurumi dog when she realised she was using an American pattern and using British stitches[17] – a very common mistake. These two crafters are examples of those who frogged when a mistake had been made, however there were many more occasions (such as the instance with P10) where participants frogged their work for no apparent reason, other than, one can assume, lack of confidence in their ability to crochet.

### *Overcoming challenges and asking for help*

There appeared to be two types of learners participating in the Crafternoons – first, those who actively sought out help and spoke up when they needed support and second, those who did not

[17] Differences Between British and American English Crochet Pattern Terms https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/crochet-pattern-terms-british-american-english-978272

and/ or would not ask for help. It was not always clear why crafters were not asking for help however some participants appeared to lack confidence, whilst others were very independent. The latter more independent crafters would sit staring and frowning at their work for some time before someone asked them if they would like some help. When help was offered it was generally well received and I noted that on a couple of occasions the offer of help relieved tension being held in the shoulders and in the face, and there was look of relief on the face of the learner.

> *P16 is looking confused. She is frowning and looking at her crochet and yarn. She keeps looking from her crochet to the pattern. She won't ask for help.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 6th December 2020*

> *P16 needs some help from Charlotte again. They aren't afraid to ask for help. "Oh no! What did I do?!". She's split the yarn and charlotte reassures her that this is normal and that the yarn isn't the most expensive yarn and therefore it's prone to separating sometimes.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 6th December 2020*

These two excerpts were taken from the same field diary, approximately 20 minutes apart. In the first instance, P16 would not ask for help and instead was attempting to figure it out herself. P16 was a particularly confident crafter, but also very independent and would often work through challenges and her mistake(s) without help. However, in the latter instance, something appeared to have gone wrong beyond her knowledge and capabilities and, in this instance, she required assistance. Watching this unfold, she did not hesitate to ask for help immediately when she knew she didn't have the knowledge or experience to work out the mistake.

Likewise, some beginners were confident enough to ask for help when they needed it but did not choose to, instead, they pondered over their work for 10 to 15 minutes at a time to work out the mistake they had made.

*P40 thanks Clare often, every time she helps or gives some advice. She is very responsive to Clare and listens intently. She asks for help and reassurance without hesitating.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

*She [P46] is not afraid to ask for help. When she gets stuck, she tries to work it out, though this often involves looking at it for a while before asking where she's going wrong.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 13th March 2020*

Both of these crafters were confident to ask for help, however the key difference was the frequency of asking. P40 was much quicker and more likely to ask for help when she became confused, whilst P46 spent a couple of minutes trying to work it out for herself before asking.

These more confident beginners did go on to learn all of the basics of crochet and were able to complete small projects. Those who were not so confident, often did not return (for example P4). Some participants did not need regular support and once they had been taught the basics of how to do each stitch, how to read the pattern and how to count stitches, they were very independent. This type of learner, however, was less common. As the Crafternoons progressed, some of the beginners, including P1, P16 and myself, were able to help newcomers with the very basics, such as reading a pattern, chain stitches, double crochet stitches, treble crochet stitches and eventually granny squares. When we did not know the answer to a question, we sometimes asked for help on behalf of the beginner.

There is a question about why people did not ask for help – something that could have been explored further with interviews. Those that persevered and asked for help, were more likely to overcome the learning process, whilst those who sat quietly could not, and subsequently would not return.

## Concluding remarks

The geographies of learning and learning processes have been spatially limited to large institutional spaces within economic geographies (Bathelt and Gluckler, 2011), or smaller and more formal educational spaces. Furthermore, the current narrative in the geographies of learning and education align skills with employment (Holloway and Jöns, 2012) and fail to acknowledge the relationship between learning skills as a precursor for self-care. This research begins to bridge the gap between formal and informal spaces and processes of learning. It begins to develop and understanding of the temporalities of learning processes, organised and supported by higher education institutions (and the organisations that run within these institutional spaces). This chapter has begun to draw connections between two sub-disciplines – the geographies of education and the geographies of care – by unpicking the role of time in practice theory.

Temporalities of practice can be analysed using rhythmanalysis. The Crafternoons were observed over 6 months and a number of rhythms were identified. These rhythms varied, depending on the craft in practice, but also from crafter to crafter. Learning and practicing craft is both an individual process and process of community, however each individual experiences the process differently within time. Crafts such as pom-pom making and origami had clear instructions and were relatively straightforward for participants to follow along independently, whilst chatting and having non-craft conversations. These sessions involved more chatter and open discussions. By contrast, crochet and Dorset button Crafternoons developed more structured rhythms of practice. There was noticeably less chatter in the first hour and much less doing in the latter half of the session. These rhythms were not intentional but developed naturally in time.

Over the 6 months of observations, 17 participants returned to two or more Crafternoons which was deemed an achievement and evidence that they were able to successfully engage in the learning process. Many of these participants went on to complete at least one crochet project. One participant who did have some basic experience prior to Crafternoons was in the process of

making a chunky yarn cardigan when Crafternoons were halted by Covid-19. One of the exchange students had made a scarf and an amigurumi dog before she returned to her home institution, whilst participant 14 made a large, colourful, amigurumi zebra (see Figure 8).

*Figure 8: An example of a participants' origami zebra*

Unsurprisingly, the learning process was more difficult for some than others. The rhythms of learning were ambiguous and differed from crafter to crafter. A number of the participants appeared to pick up the technique of crochet relatively quickly, usually within a couple of weeks, if they also practiced at home between Crafternoons. P1 was the quickest learner we had and within 6 weeks (3 weeks of crochet, 3 weeks of other crafts) she was able to begin helping other beginners with at least the basic principles of crochet such as teaching fellow crafters how to read a pattern and complete certain stiches, for example, a chain stitch and a treble crochet stitch. It was not possible to accurately quantify the time it took for the crafters to learn, but they generally

took about 3 crochet Crafternoons to be able to confidently and independently complete double and treble crochet without the 1:1 support and read a basic pattern using these two stitches.

The temporalities of learning craft are undefined and as such, the observations from the Crafternoons clearly demonstrate that the temporalities of learning craft are identified through the past (motivations), present (rhythms), and future (planned projects), which reiterates the temporal framework explained by Adam (2004, p.64). On a macro level – the Crafternoons as a group of people – the Crafternoons adopted and fell into a familiar rhythm each week which were predominantly driven by the present. I identified three distinct experiences of time: concentrated craft, distracted craft and non-craft. These three divisions of time altered the experience of the practice in that moment.

On a micro level (individual experiences of time) the Crafternoons were driven by the past; past experiences, familial influencers, and a desire to procrastinate from work that 'should' be done; and the future. These past and future influences, then, undoubtedly implicate the present moment of the Crafternoons (see Mead, 1932, cited by Adam, 2004) and how the participants were able to experience the learning and/or practice of a craft.

Crafting and well-being have traditionally been confined to treatment of psychological ill-health, particularly historical female neurosis (Price and Hawkins, 2018, p.14), however self-care practices, be them textile crafts, woodwork, gardening, or walking, can be created as time for the self. Time is perceived as a commodity (Gluxksmann 1998 cited in Medley-Rath, 2016, p.60) and as such, society enforces the narrative time 'should' be spent well (La Rossa, 1983 cited in Medley-Rath, 2016, p.60). Work and leisure time are easily blurred (Medley-Rath, 2016 p.61), some choosing to monetize their products of craft, others unable or unwilling to clearly define 'work' time and 'play' time. The Crafternoons enabled and encouraged participants to value 'play' time by providing and facilitating both time and space. The participants used Crafternoons as a break from their work, specifically P48, and staff (P41) actively chose to alter their working hours

to make time to crochet. Like the participants in Medley-Rath (2016), Crafternoon participants also attempted to fit their craft practices around their work. Some, though prioritised work or used it as an incentive or reward to craft later on in the day.

There was a sense from some participants, that the practice of crochet, among other crafts, could indeed form part of a self-care routine. This will be demonstrated by the suggested experiences of flow states, embracing the rhythms and repetitions of the hook and yarns' movements (Chapter 7). However, these seemingly positive experiences were fewer by comparison to the experiences of stress, frustration, and disappointment when something went wrong, or learning was more difficult than expected. It was also demonstrable by the number of individuals who returned and overcame the challenges of the learning process, and those individuals who did not return to try again.

The Crafternoons demonstrated that the learning process is complicated and messy, whilst also highlighting the significant role that organisations such as student's unions can play in supporting students through these challenges, but most importantly, providing the space and time for self-care in a neutral capacity. That is, not advertising activities for self-care and well-being, but encouraging students to challenge themselves, learn something new, but also give them permission to take an hour away from work when they potentially need it most. By advertising for self-care and well-being is potentially irresponsible and misleading.

# Chapter 7: Craft, space and the body

## Introduction

Massey argues for the conceptualisation of space and time to be written about integrally, which means we should think of it in terms of space-time (1994, p. 2). In the previous chapter, I explored the temporal affects and influences on craft practice. This chapter will begin to explore the effects of the space in which Crafternoons took place (*Making space for Crafternoons*) and highlight some of the key benefits and limitations of the space. This will help to provide some background to the second half of this chapter (Craft and the body) to understand how spaces can be created to support communities of learning skills.

I will begin by introducing and describing some of the spaces in which the crafters liked to practice, both inside and outside of the Crafternoons, and the micro spaces or *relational spaces of craft*, created within the Students' Union and community of Crafternoons (*Crafting communities and communities of practice*) that began to emerge towards the end of 2019 and beginning of 2020. I will emphasize the importance of communities for the learning process.

As an embodied practice (see Hawkins, 2021) the impacts of the activity are felt by practitioners both physically and psychologically. Therefore, the second part of this chapter will go on to unpick some of the impacts of these spaces and practices of crafts on the body, both mentally and physically (*Craft and the body*). I will address the positive impacts on the confidence of participants (*Being still)*, whereby I present the evidence of participants who experienced flow and the benefits of therapeutic crafts. I will also address the topic of *Posture and pain* and the ways in which the space affected the crafter's ability to do craft. Here I address some of the negative impacts of the space and the particular activities within the space upon the body that are infrequently discussed but have a significant impact on the practitioner's experience and ability to develop and hone their skills through the learning process.

Finally, I highlight some of the challenges the participants faced resulting from their self-confidence and demonstrate the benefits of community through physical and verbal celebrations that I was fortunate to witness every week throughout the ethnography. The material and temporal space that was developed throughout the Crafternoons encouraged crafters to learn new skills, to practice new skills, and given them the space and time that they may otherwise not have had. Throughout this chapter I will demonstrate how and where this empirical research is situated within the geographies of craft, geographies of space and embodied geographies literature. I will weave these together to demonstrate my contributions to the realms of the Geographies of Care and Carescapes.

It is necessary to briefly discuss what is meant by a relational space of craft. The term “safe space” is heavily loaded with meaning and often associated with gender, sexuality, and race. This was not, therefore, deemed an appropriate term for this study. That is not to say that the Crafternoons were not inclusive in these ways, but due to the nature of a Students’ Union, this was already a pre-requisite and strongly encouraged and enabled throughout the six months of observations. Relational spaces of craft alludes to the idea some spaces can be emotionally and physically inclusive, and individuals could seek emotional comfort (though, as mentioned in previous chapters, this was not a given, nor were the Crafternoons advertised as such). Comfort Geographies will be briefly mentioned however, I choose to use the term “comfort” when referring to emotional comfort only, not physical comfort as the physical impacts of the Crafternoons was experienced quite negatively throughout. Furthermore, I emphasize again, that emotional comfort will be used carefully, as frustration and stress were frequent emotional experiences for many of the crafters in the early stages of the learning process and this does indeed contradict “emotional comfort”. I argue that there are no intrinsic qualities to craft and binaries are not helpful in relation to the Crafternoons. Within this space, ‘comfort’ took on different forms for different people.

Throughout this chapter I will frame the discussion around comfort and (dis)comfort, drawing upon McNally ***et al***'s (2021) Geographies of (dis)comfort research. There is a distinction between the emotional and relational comfort that some Crafternoon participants felt, and the physical (dis)comfort of the space in which Crafternoons took place. There is an undeniable dichotomy between them and it would be naive to frame the learning and practice of craft as entirely 'comfortable'. Comfort, in relation to craft, is, then, a constant process and there is definite tension between comfort as a space of degrowth (or the comfort zone in relation to emotion) (Price *et al*, 2021, p.12), and the material capacities in relation to the body, practice, and space (Price *et al*, 2021, p.12).

## Making space for Crafternoons

### Locating Crafternoons

The Crafternoons were located in the downstairs of the students' Union. The SU had bought a long bench table with bench seats for the Crafternoons which sat in front of floor to ceiling windows (Figure 2), next to some doors. Behind the table, there is a "lounge" area, with brightly coloured chairs and sofas and a couple of coffee tables. Figure 9 demonstrates a basic layout of the space. There is also a television in which music is played, and occasionally television programmes. This proved distracting at times, which was addressed in Chapter 6. The other half of the room is dedicated to the food hall. There is a serving station and a number of tables and chairs. It is generally a busy space and is the central hub of the university campus.

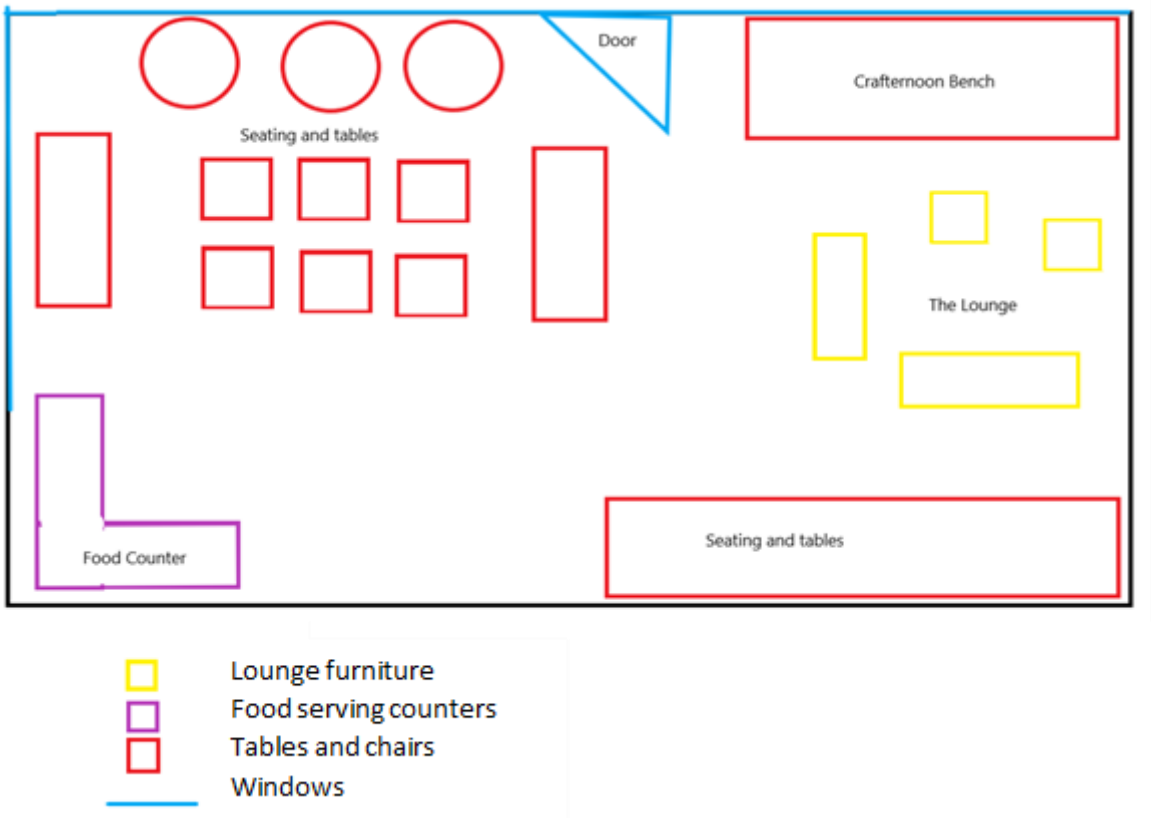


*Figure 9: Layout of the Students Union at the time of observations*

The table and benches were made of wood, and the benches had no backs on (see Figure 10). I will elaborate on the impacts of such design later and highlight the effects on posture. The benches became uncomfortable after an hour or so of sitting on them.

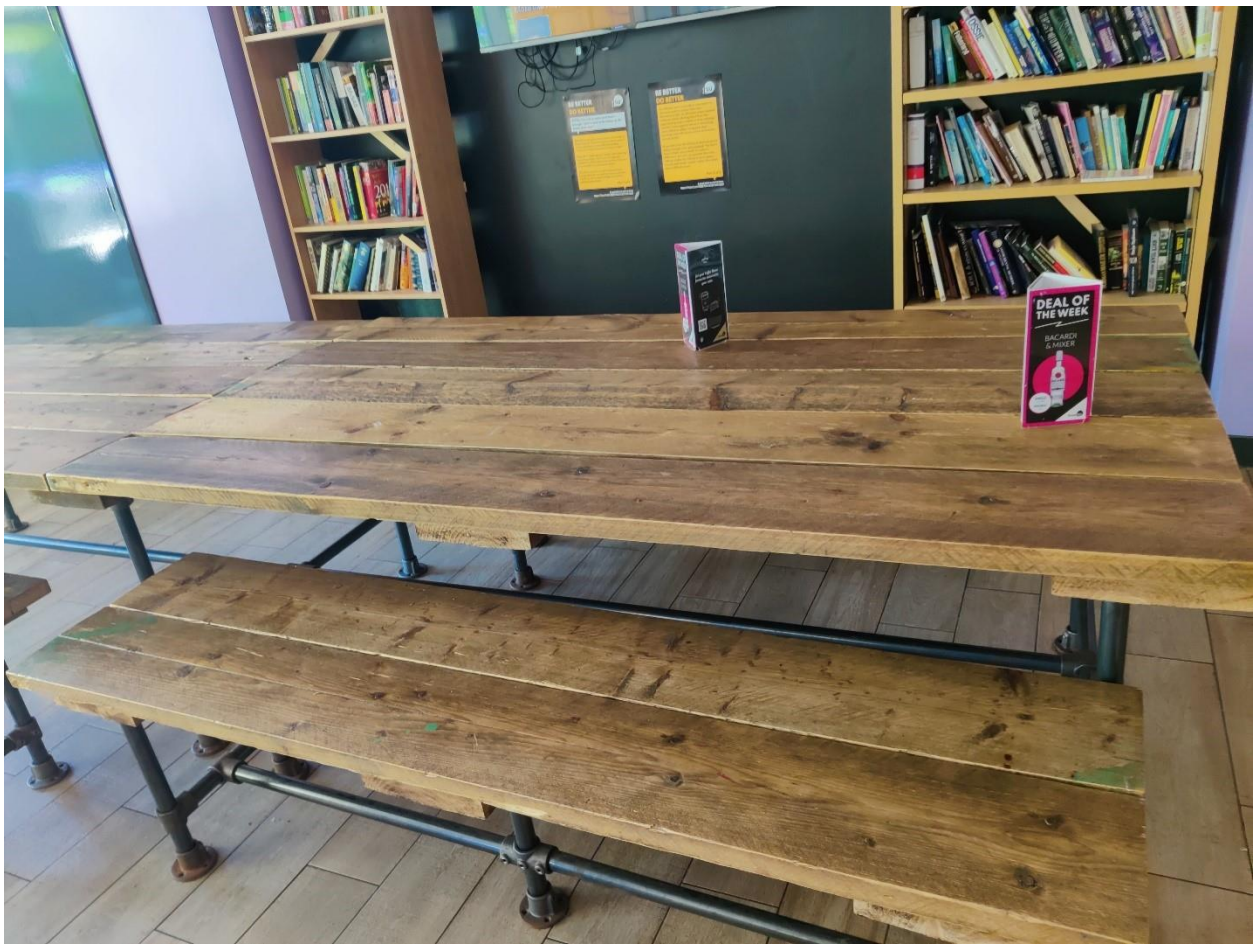


*Figure 10: The Crafternoons Bench*

### *Lighting*

The lighting was regular topic of conversation, but also a frequent hindrance on the comfort of crafters. The lighting was poor. the overhead lighting was not conducive with the activities we were practicing and as Figures 2 shows, though the table was sat next to floor to ceiling windows along the length of the table, the daylight was often limited due to the orientation of the building which away from the sun, and also the architecture. Directly above the windows is an overhanging balcony which also limits the light able to come through them.

The Crafternoons took place in the afternoon, but the observations were also conducted across the autumn and winter months of October 2019 to March 2020 when natural daylight was

increasingly limited. It was often beginning to get dark outside about 1430 hours and 1500 hours. Furthermore, if the weather was cloudy, again, the natural light was impacted. The overhead lighting within the building was also poor and unsuitable for all crafts, particularly crochet, which involved deep concentration to see the smaller stitches. There were just two angled down lights which were located at either end of the table, meaning those in the middle did not benefit from the lights. There were also led strip lights, which changed colour, though it was not until mid-November that we realised we could request the colours to be changed by the building managers. Certain colours, red and green in particular, made it very difficult to see the individual crochet stitches. For beginners this made it even more difficult if they were not yet entirely sure what the stitches looked like or where to place the next stitch.

The poor lighting often meant that participants commented on struggling to see where stitches should be placed. In an attempt to reduce the impacts of eye strain, we encouraged the use of specific coloured yarn, often bright colours such as yellow, orange, green or blue, and never red, white, brown or black, as these are notoriously more difficult to see. Darker coloured yarn such as black and brown, were difficult to see against the wooden tables. Meanwhile the bright colours contrasted with the colour of the wooden table and could therefore be seen more clearly.

The concentration required to learn, but specifically learning to identify and locate the next stitch to crochet into, is difficult enough at the start of the learning process, however when the lighting was not suitable, this just exacerbated the challenges some of the participants were faced with. A number of participants struggled demonstrated here:

> *There were decorative lights in green?! As the afternoon went on, eyes grew tired and the light began to fade, this made it increasingly difficult.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

*P14 is using a green yarn and says "oh no! It's [the lighting] green like my yarn, I can't see my yarn". Charlotte settles on white and everyone is in agreement. The blue was too dark, and the yellow was not contrasting enough for the colour of the table.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

The latter excerpt is describing an occasion in which Charlotte was trying to alter the lights to find the most suitable hue. We regularly encouraged beginners to learn using brightly coloured yarn as this contrasted well against the tables and the surrounding environment. Unfortunately, the red and green LED lighting in particular not only clashed with the colour of the yarn, but also strained many participants' eyesight. In terms of accessibility, though specific numbers were not collected, a number of participants were wearing glasses, including myself, indicating some degree of sight impairments were present and as such lighting was an important factor for both fully sighted and partially sighted participants. These environmental factors are not frequently mentioned in the literature with reference to the practice of crafts.

*My eyes are getting tired and the light has reduced. Clare mentions about the lighting being difficult. P5 and P6 say that they are okay as they're directly next to the window, but myself and P1 are struggling being in the green light.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

*Whilst I am looking at her crochet, I comment that the lighting is awful today. The miserable weather outside doesn't help, but the LED strip lights still aren't working and only half of the spotlights are working today too and they're not pointing down at the table. I sigh, say out loud that the lighting is horrendous today and Charlotte comments that she thought that too.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 21st February 2020*

*I notice that the lighting today seems much better. I soon realised that it is because the lights are white! They have been changed! The lighting is much better suited to the Crafternoons. Everything is clearer, easier to see and less strained on the eyes. The bright white does however make more shadows as its still false light from overhead.*

*Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing) 15th November 2019*

Each of these three quotes above demonstrate the frequency of the lighting discussion throughout the Crafternoons. The first two extracts demonstrate particularly negative experiences of the surrounding environmental impacts on the body, particularly eyesight. The lighting was a conversation we had on many occasions and at times it was distracting, contributed to mistakes being made and subsequently feelings of frustration. The latter extract, however, is more positive and it confirms the effect of "good" lighting on the ease of the activity. These three excerpts all demonstrate the importance of a comfortable environment needed for certain activities to reap the benefits of mental and physical well-being.

The effects of the lighting within the space of Crafternoons is not what would be typically associated with a "therapeutic landscape" (see Gesler, 1992), "therapeutic taskscape" (Dunkley, 2009; Smith, 2019), or space of care which is supposed to aid wellness. Like the geographies of comfort, therapeutic landscapes are those which are culturally constructed by different individuals (Dunkley, 2009), but are impacted by the physical surroundings in which life within it is taking place. Likewise, the geographies of comfort in relation to the materiality of things, can be used here to explain the way in which participants struggled to seek comfort with the space and the environment that the Crafternoons took place. Rather, the absence of comfort and presence of (dis)comfort (see Price *et al*, 2021) with the space effected the experience of the practice for some participants, exacerbating the feeling of tiredness after a day of working, but also intensifying the sense of frustration with the learning process. For the crochet beginners who were already struggling to understand where the stitches were, the poor lighting impacted their ability to see

the stitches too. The space in which the Crafternoons took place challenged the notion of craft as a therapeutic activity and most importantly, it created additional difficulties for those attempting to weave their way through the learning process. The impact of the lighting on the body is also related to a latter sub-section of this chapter – *Posture and Pain* – however I felt it warranted its' own explanations within this sub-section.

## Making space for Crafternoons in everyday life

### *Situating craft in space*

In contrast to previous research on skilled workshops, there was no obvious pattern to where people sat themselves each week. Smith (2019), for example, made a point of highlighting the way in which many of the crafters at the Grassmarket thrived on the habitual familiarity of having their own place to craft and set themselves up (p.159). Those who returned time and time again did not sit in the same place each week. Clare, Charlotte and I did not often sit in the same spot. Whilst we all started off stood or sat near each other, once crafters began to arrive, the place in which we all sat was generally dependent upon who needed 1:1 learning support.

> *I realise that despite coming week after week, no one really has their own "spot" or place that they sit. People come and sit wherever there is space.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

Dewsbury and Bissel (2015) commented that comfort and familiarity are created through habitual practices. Whilst this was the case for some returnees, the transitory nature of the Crafternoons, somewhat explains why there was no pattern, or familiarity, to where crafters chose to sit. That is, whilst there were many returnees, it was designed as a space in which people could attend for an hour, 15 minutes, or for two hours, week after week. As such, each week saw a new crafter join, whether they returned or not. This meant that the 'regulars' may not have been able to sit in their spot. This further added to the fluidity and relationality of the Crafternoons. When participants had

to sit in different spaces each week, he sat next to or near different people which forced them to communicate with new people each week.

It was not just within the spatially and temporally bounded Crafternoons that crafters chose to practice their activity. Most of the participants had already or were in the process of creating craft habits in their home spaces. The previous chapter has already highlighted a number of participants began the learning process at home too which was, for some, a motivator to join Crafternoons on a Friday. The crafter spoke of how and where they preferred to craft.

> *P33 and P34 say that when they go home they're going to watch Netflix and keep crocheting. P14 says that she struggles to watch Netflix as when she has to count she finds the programme distracting. P5 and Charlotte both say that they are indifferent, but often like to watch something in the background. P5 does say that she struggles to focus though. P14 responds to say that she even has to turn off music sometimes.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

This excerpt from the field diary describes how therapeutic spaces differ for each individual. It outlines the way that each person crafts differently, in different spaces and surrounding environments. Some multitask and choose to both watch and concentrate on the television and their crochet, some just like the television on for background noise and some, such as P4, commented that they do not like to have any background noise or distractions and prefer quiet spaces.

> *P5 and Charlotte begin a discussion about where they practice their crochet. Charlotte explains that she loves doing it whilst relaxing in bed, but P5 strongly disagrees and says that she's got to be sat up properly so she can concentrate.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

Here, Charlotte and another participant were considering their preferred sitting positions when they crafted in the home. Whilst P5 and Charlotte both agreed that they liked the background noise, they both preferred to be sat differently. Charlotte preferred to be in bed and cozy, whilst P5 needed to be sat upright to aid concentration and support their posture. These two excerpts (31st January 2020 and 25th October 2019) demonstrate how the practice of craft can be highly individualised process and the preferred space in which different people practice is dependent on the individuals' wants and needs.

Crafting at home was common among the regular participants. However, by contrast to the conversations noted above, some participants could not, or did not, make time to craft at home (see Chapter 6, page 170 '*Making Time for Crafternoons'*) and used the Crafternoons as their space of craft. Feminist geographers have sought to counter the argument that home is a space of comfort in which they actively choose to perform self-care activities (See Brickell, 2013 *cited in* Price, 2021). For some, group spaces of craft can generate sensations of comfort, support and well-being through the embodied act of the craft, in this case textile crafts and origami. The craft practice itself is deemed "physically, viscerally, [and] affectively relaxing" (Price, 2021, p.197). Rather, it is important to acknowledge the way in which the space of the craft group produces comfort. The comfort is "generated by the material and social relations that the [craft] affords" (Price, 2021, p.197) and we can draw on Wenger's communities of practice. Communities gradually develop around things that matter to people (Wenger 1998; Smith 2003), such as practices of craft. Comfort is not a given for any practitioner, craft included, and the comfort of craft is not extrinsic but intrinsic. The comfort of craft will mean different things for different people.

Whilst the home is a space of comfort to perform self-care, many craft activities require more space to perform crafts and store any necessary materials. Most of the participants in the Crafternoons were students and as such, they were mostly living in halls of residence or shared living meaning they had very little personal space outside of their bedrooms. Stalp's study of 48

quilters found that just 68 percent had no space to quilt regularly (2007) – it is likely that this number would be significantly higher for the Crafternoon participants who did not have an entire house, but relatively small, rented rooms that constituted their sleeping space, eating space, workspace and spaces of self-care. The Crafternoons not only provided the space for participants to practice an activity, but also use the materials that, whilst they could take home, they could also be left for others to use, or for the participants to return and use on a weekly basis.

## Visibility of Crafternoons

As I noted in Chapter 6, the visibility of the Crafternoons played a significant role in the success of the weekly event. The location was busy enough that it reached participants who were unaware of the marketing materials, but not too busy that it was a distraction for participating crafters. The table was highly visible from around the SU as demonstrated by Figure 2 and 9. Whilst some people had planned to join the Crafternoons and knew about them from either advertising or word of mouth, a number of people joined because they walked past, and the activity spark an interest.

> *They [P8 & P9] ask myself, P4, P5, P1 if we made the amigurumi on the table and we are all very quick to laugh and say no and point to Charlotte.*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 25th October 2020*

These two participants returned a few times and were initially drawn into the Crafternoons after seeing the distinctive stuffed amigurumi figures that Charlotte had made and placed on the table (see Figure 10). These figures often grabbed the attention of passers-by and unconsciously acted as a conversation starter whilst also enticing a number of participants to join in.

> *Charlotte asks [N] how they found out about this workshop and they said that they were just walking past and were interested in giving it a go.*
>
> *Crafternoon observations, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November*

The week that Morsbags[18] joined the Crafternoons saw the most unplanned participation. It was a very busy event and with relatively large pieces of equipment (the sewing machines), which like the amigurumi figures was an unusual sight in the SU, therefore commanded attention. It was and still is unusual for students and staff to see six sewing machines and a large stash of colourful fabric in the Students' Union. The space in which the Crafternoons were located, and the visibility of the table meant that the Crafternoons became a unique and transitory crafting space, unlike many craft groups which, whilst they are not relatively "closed" spaces (for example a university), they may be difficult for some individuals to approach without an invite or prior knowledge of the event for fear that they are interrupting something or encroaching on a perceived closed group. The location of the SU meant that the Crafternoons were not only visible, but importantly, accessible, which ensured that the Crafternoons were an inclusive and relational space of craft for as many potential participants as possible.

[18] A charity who specialise in the production of re-usable shopping bags, using hand wound sewing machines. All of the fabric used is donated. https://morsbags.com/

*Figure 11: Amigurumi animals, from left to right, a giraffe, a dragon, and a toadstool, sat on a table with some crochet granny squares.*

## Relational spaces of craft

Creating a relational space of craft was not specifically an intention of the Crafternoons. Relational spaces are formed from the flow of processes (in the case of Crafternoons, the process of craft) creating spaces (Murdoch, 2006, p.19), however these spaces are not permanent. The Crafternoons were not a permanent fixture in the SU. The space was used by many groups for their own activities, but it was also an open social space accessible to all students most of the day. The spaces are "contingent on the processes that create, sustain and dissolve them" (Harvey, 1996, p.294 cited by Murdoch, 2006, p.19).

The term "taskscape" (see Ingold, 1993) has been used to describe such spaces in which the temporality and rhythms of practices within a landscape intersect. The taskscape is "the rhythmical resonance that lies between the multiple and various tasks of which the task scape is constituted"

(Gruppuso and Whitehouse, 2020, p.589). In contrast to a 'workshop' a taskscapes has multiple purposes and is not defined by either the task or the space, but the interactivity between these. The Crafternoons could therefore be described as a taskscapes, rather than a workshop.

The Crafternoons were not only a space to learn a new skill. They were also a space to be with likeminded individuals and the temporal rhythms of Crafternoons that were discussed in throughout Chapter 6, I wish to draw upon them again here. I begin to unpack the rhythms in relation to the space in which they took place. Crafternoons were developed as an accessible and transitory space for students, and staff, to attend and learn a new skill. The Crafternoons were a space of emotional comfort for some, though not all, who joined in the Crafternoons and through repeated inhabitation each Friday, the space of Crafternoons became familiar (Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015, p.23). The "comfort" was created from the social phenomena and the materiality of the space, however less so the material space itself which in fact facilitated physical (dis)comfort among participants.

The crafters who returned more than once (n=17) demonstrates the ability of some practitioners to experience enjoyment, thus indicating that they were comfortable enough to return, particularly when they only returned in a social capacity (that is, not with the intention of doing craft).

> *At 3.05pm 4 new people arrive [P17 and P18]. P19 and P20 do not join in, but they just sit and watch.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

On a few occasions we had people come along to just sit with friends who were participating but not join in the craft themselves. The Crafternoons were a place that for some, emerged *"in habit,* through repetition of practices" (Dewsbury and Bissell, 2015, p.23, original emphasis). These individuals sometimes came with friends and were returnees (those who has already attended at least once), who were between lectures, or passing by on their way to the gym. The Crafternoons

were a welcoming and fluid communities of practice which was open for anyone to join, crafting or not.

> *I notice that people seem to be more talkative in these other craft sessions than during crochet. I can hear the radio playing in the background and it feels like a really nice, friendly and welcoming atmosphere. Everyone is still smiling.*
>
> *Crafternoon Observations, pom-pom hedgehogs, 29th November 2019*

> *Today has been very relaxed. Everyone has been getting along with their own little projects and we've talked about a lot of different topics from dodgey landlord stories to pets, the struggles of being first year, and the comparison to second and third year.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 14th February 2020*

After a few weeks, returnees were getting to know one another and there was often general chatter about the crafters' everyday life; what they were watching on TV, weekend plans, and assignments that were due. The two extracts above both highlight how Crafternoons became relational spaces, and spaces of community, care and emotional comfort. By March 2020, when the Crafternoons were abruptly halted, there was a handful of regular crafters who joined, particularly crochet weeks, who had incorporated Crafternoons into their regular weekly routine. A couple of participants began to open up to the group and felt safe enough to discuss their personal life, including gender and sexuality. I should, however, recognise that being in a university Students' Union, a space which aims to be inclusive, and these experiences may differ to experiences in private cafes or other organised craft groups outside of an inclusive university setting.

Some participants embraced the craft to such an extent that they were able to let their inhibitions go and embrace play.

*Some of the students are experimenting and playing with different faces on the Hedgehogs. I have cut out eyes and noses for everyone but someone suggests some eyebrows too [P28]. Some students are really beginning to personify their hedgehogs and having fun - almost childlike?*

*Crafternoon observation, pom-pom hedgehogs, 29th November 2019*

*P38 has completed her [origami] frog by about 2.30pm. P37 completes just a few seconds later. They [P37 and P38] both begin to play with the jumping frogs and they begin bouncing across the table. We all laugh and look at their new master pieces.*

*Crafternoons observation, origami, 24th January 2020*

The two extracts above demonstrate the comfort that attending participants felt, so much so that they reverted to play techniques with people they did not know or know in a social capacity. Participants were playing with the "*family" [Crafternoon observation 19th November 2019]* of hedgehogs that they had made into a pyramid to photograph (see Figure 12), and the crafters' cupped their hedgehogs carefully and protectively in their hands.

*Figure 1213: A selection of thirteen pompom hedgehogs that were made by students and staff in the Crafternoons*

Though the crafting community that we developed was generally a very positive and emotionally comfortable space, the second week of observations demonstrated that craft groups were not exempt from some examples of more negative and cliquey behaviors, like those mentioned in (Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013). Crafters were invited to make hand sewn wheat bags that can be placed in the microwave and warmed. On this particular week there was a group of six students who all knew each other. Whilst they were polite, and never spoke unkind words to others, there was some degree of animosity and 'cliquey-ness' over the quantities and sharing of materials, specifically the wheat, being used by particular crafters. There were a few more participants than the organiser has anticipated, and there was therefore a finite amount of equipment and materials. Some participants were asked to make slightly smaller bags and use less wheat to accommodate more participants, however they were not very forthcoming or willing to share and redistribute some of the wheat stuffing in their much larger bags. This meant that some people were turned away and others had much less wheat in their wheat bags.

This particular incidence was limited to just this week. Some of these participants returned for a second event, but fortunately there was no animosity at all and all materials were shared with consideration. This presence of a 'clique' is not unexpected and in fact, was anticipated (*see* Tzanidaki and Reynolds, 2013). The Crafternoons were, on-the-whole, a very open and kind space where I frequently witnessed two people, having met just a mere hour or two previously, laughing, talking, and importantly, helping and offering positive vocal cues to their new acquaintance.

## Crafting communities of practice and therapeutic taskscapes

The relational space aided the Crafternoons in creating a small community, or community of practice, within the University that integrated the lives of undergraduate students, post-graduate students and staff in a space that was comfortable and familiar to its users. The use of the term communities of practice as a relatively stable community is central to learning and knowledge generation for particular individuals (Amin and Roberts, 2008, p. 355). Many of the Crafternoon participants did not come with friends and came alone. Some of these participants brought their friends with them at a later date [for example P3], others came on the own time and again, but began to develop friendships or at least familiar acquaintances week on week that were developed from a foundation of the practice. It was a space of comfort for its users and was a therapeutic" space, or 'therapeutic taskscape' (Smith, 2019; see also Bell *et al*, 2018).

Space and place are often described and explained in terms of social relations (Massey, 1994) Massey asserts that they are not independent dimensions, but constructions of social relations. Crafternoons were a social space, defined by the temporal rhythms of the practice of craft, though not designed specifically for the purpose of well-being. They did however begin to evolve into a therapeutic space for some of its users. The "…environments, social conditions and human perceptions combine[d] to produce an atmosphere which is conducive to healing" (Gesler, 1996, p.96). Though the extent of this was not explored in this project due to the pandemic (see

methodology and Covid statement for more details), Chapter 5 (Scoping Review) explored the effects of craft practices and well-being in greater depth. The space was not intrinsically therapeutic, but relationally therapeutic that emerged over time through a complex set of transactions between people and the practice of craft (Conradson, 2005, pp.338).

Wenger (1999) claims that communities of practice are those that are formed by people "who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor", that is, the community support and help one another in the learning process. This very much describes the space in which Crafternoons were situated. The meaning and value of the practice is located in the process of doing the craft itself, from the initial planning to the completion of the project but also through shared experiences of the communities of practice.

In a learning capacity, Lave and Wenger (1991) situate learning in specific forms of social participation. That is, rather than focusing the attention of cognitive processes and conceptual structures involved in the learning process, Lake and Wenger began to question and investigate the types of role of social engagements in the learning process (1991, p.41). The relationships that are developed within the communities are deemed essential for learning in a craft-based scenario. There was evidence of this within the empirical data collected. The way in which the participants supported each other played a significant role in the confidence of the individuals' self-confidence.

## Craft and the body

Craft is an embodied practice. The space in which it is practiced has an effect on the body, both mentally and physically. Merleau-Ponty (1962) speaks of practicing with "bodily intentionality" (cited in O'Connor, 2005, p.190). The ability to understand what one is doing and why, enables the individual to experience with intention and as such the techniques of the practice become *"sense-full"* (O'Connor, 2005, p.190 [emphasis as written]). The experience of the practice, for a beginner, is likely to be informed by past experiences, not from lived practices of the craft, but

other areas of their life, other experiences of the learning process. As such, their ability to understand or perform a specific stitch within crochet, will develop through adaptations. Much like O'Connor's description of novice glassblowers, novice crocheters will adapt already known components of crochet, by making mistakes such as missing or dropping a stitch and the crafter will manage this new situation with a greater or less degree of success (2005, p.191). Through these adaptations and re-positioning of the body, no matter how small the adaptations, the beginner will begin to shift their practice of doing crochet.

Of all the crafts practiced and learned during Crafternoons, from crochet, to origami, they are all relatively still crafts. Most of the movement required for crochet is located in the lower arms and hands only, with some movement required in the shoulder occasionally. The stillness throughout most of the body sometimes contributed to tension and cramping (see *Posture and Pain* on page 228). However, there was also evidence of mental stillness and participants experiencing flow states.

### Stilling the mind and experiencing flow

On a personal level, crochet enables me to experience mental stillness. On two occasions I noted in my field diary that I had become engrossed in practicing crochet or simply watching someone else crochet, however this happened almost weekly. This was described by some of the other participants, and also observed, though I do recognise that this is subjective. Csikszentmihalyi explains that optimal experience is possible when the practitioner perceives the activity to contain enough challenge that stretches the person's capabilities to maintain the practitioner's attention but not too much so as not to entice frustrations so great the practitioner cannot continue. There should be a balance between skill and challenge (Csikszentmihalyi and Lefebvre, 1989, p. 816). This reasoning can be used to explain the experiences of craft practices such as crochet.

Watching other people crafting was often therapeutic, not just practicing it. Whilst using the sewing machines when Morsbags visited, one participant commented:

> *"[it's] very therapeutic" they say. I agree and say that [I'm] finding it therapeutic just watching everyone and we both laugh.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

On a couple of separate occasions whilst observing I found myself engrossed in watching participants crocheting. It was easy to lose track of time when counting the stitches, but also just watching others count.

> *I find that I keep becoming engrossed in watching P1 crochet and developing my own crochet. I subsequently forget to make notes for a few minutes and then have to scribble something down. I realise quickly as I'm making some notes of our conversation that I am definitely experiencing flow!*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, crochet, 11th October 2019*

The rhythmic and repetitive movements of the hook and yarn were somewhat hypnotic to watch but also to practice. Often, I found my attention was solely focused on holding the yarn correctly, looping the yarn around the hook in the correct way required for the specific type of stitch I was attempting to do, recognising and seeing where to place the next stitch, and finally, counting each stitch so as to follow the pattern. The activity requires such concentration, particularly in the learning phase before the practice becomes second nature, or subconscious, much like riding a bike, that the mind becomes empty and only focuses on the skill in hand. The flow state that was mentioned above occurred on more than one occasion, and was often broken by a loud noise, someone asking a question or starting a conversation, a gust of wind or cool breeze from the doors next to the table, the acknowledgement of cramp in the hand and/ or should, or even a change in song being played on the radio.

The experience of flow is a condition that is conducive with mental well-being, and it was an opportunity for attending students and staff at the university to escape the pressures and stresses

of everyday life. As mentioned in Chapter 6, the university facilitated the time, but also the space for students and staff to practice an activity, inadvertently encouraging flow experience which have already been proven to improve well-being and aid the care of the self.

## Therapeutic crafts

The repetitiveness of textile crafts did initiate experiences of flow and some of the participating crafters referred to the experience as "therapeutic". During pom-pom week, participants noted how calming it was to repeatedly wrap and wind yarn around and around whilst making the pom-pom.

> *P21 comments "this is very therapeutic. I could do this all day"! And P22 responds by saying "I feel so calm". People around the table and smile in agreement... "I just love how it makes everyone so happy" [P21]. This is a very valid point. For a large group of 20-somethings, every single person is smiling, talking, even they don't know each other...*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, pom-pom hedgehogs, 29th November 2019*

There were some people who attended this Crafternoon event with friends, however the majority arrived alone. Those who arrived on their own usually settled into the session within a few minutes, asking their craft peers to pass a ball of yarn or to borrow some scissors and joining in conversation. These seemingly simple questions gave participants a voice to open up conversations between new friends or acquaintances and echoes previous discussion on the creation of inclusive and relational spaces.

P18 acknowledged that the rhythm and repetitiveness of crochet was appealing.

> *P18 nodded in agreement and then commented on how therapeutic they were finding it... They say how calming it is as [it's] so rhythmic and repetitive.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

This repetition and rhythm of the craft are recognised frequently in the self-care craft literature (see Corkhill *et* al, 2014; Dickie, 2011). The therapeutic experience that participant 18 alludes to here was repeated on three other occasions. Interestingly, no participants were observed to explicitly claim that they wanted to learn for the purposes of their well-being or as part of their self-care routine yet acknowledged the calming effects of the practice. Whilst crochet can be frustrating, it can also be therapeutic If the individual has the ability to embrace and overcome challenges. As skills develop over time, the fluidity of the practice improves, and the time spent feeling frustrated can be outweighed by moments of moments of calm. The more experienced and confident the crafters become, the more therapeutic the practice can become, and therefore less stressful. It was not until the Crafternoons began to weave into the lives of its' participants after a few weeks that students began to refer to the activity as "therapeutic", "calming" or "relaxing".

### Posture and pain

Despite the psychological benefits and therapeutic aspects of the Crafternoons, there was some evidence of physical discomfort as a result of the space in which it was located. The practices of craft were impacted by the benches we were sat on. The benches contributed to cramping and tension, particularly in the upper body from the neck to the shoulders, upper arms and hands which was the result a lack of support back support (see Figure 10). I would like to note here that there is a distinction between the tension in the body and tension in the crochet. Tension in the body often meant that participants gripped the crochet hook – typically, a hook should be held with the same loose grip as a pen. Increased tension in the body generally impacted the practitioner's tension in their stitches. The differences in stitch tension can be seen in Appendix Figure 9. Holding tension in the body often resulted in a much higher likelihood of experiencing cramp in the hand, or sore shoulders and neck.

For many of the participants learning crochet, it was the first time they had attempted the craft and as such, their familiarity with the tools was limited or "spatially discrete" (see O'Connor, 2006, p.179). The beginners needed to be given an outline of the tools required and how to hold them correctly. As was increased body tension, the way in which the tools are held impact the tension of the stitches immensely – the more tension in the yarn being held, the tighter the stitch. Tighter stitches also make it more difficult for the practitioner to insert the hook into the stitch on the following row which in itself can lead to aforementioned frustrations and difficulties.

Four participants explicitly commented on cramp that developed throughout the Crafternoons however, this number was likely higher, evidenced by the number of participants needing to physically shake their bodies to relieve built up tension and stress in their body. As previously discussed in this chapter, physical discomfort, pain and cramping occurred after about an hour of crafting. The craft bench that we used did not have seats with backs but bench seats (see Figure 10). When practicing a craft such as crochet, this often led to participants hunching over their crochet project.

> *P5 laughs and says that sometimes she finds herself tensing up quite a lot when she's concentrating or learning something new. She says that sometimes crochet is very relaxing, but at other times she finds it not so relaxing at all.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

For beginners, it is common for people to grip the hook and yarn tightly. This can often lead to cramping in the hands, but the tension is often felt up to the shoulders, in the neck and down the back. P5, however, was not a beginner which demonstrates that the practice of crochet can be challenging for more experienced practitioners too. Here we begin to see the paradox between spaces of (emotional) comfort, and (dis)comfort in the body, whilst the practice had some psychological benefits for the crafters, tension has the potential to distort this experience.

Furthermore, this (dis)comfort demonstrates the way in which organisations promote craft for the purposes of well-being can be naïve and could potentially mislead people into believing their well-being will be improved.

> *P12 is frowning again, she is studying her crochet very closely. P12 asks Clare to look away whilst she tries to correct herself. She does manage to correct her mistake and her shoulders relax somewhat, though still not fully.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 8th November 2019*

> *P40s tension [in the crochet stitches] has become quite tight and she is struggling to feed her hook through the stitches. Clare asks if she would like her to take over for a moment so she can make a couple of stitches so that it's easier to crochet into. She nods and seems relieved to have a moment to breathe.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 31st January 2020*

The commonality in these extracts is the struggle both participants faced when trying to correct a mistake. Likewise, when both participants managed to solve or pass on the step that they were struggling with, their posture and body language changed. In both cases, they relaxed, shoulders fell down, they sat up a little taller, and the crochet was not being held so close to their face or body. The latter appears to have altered her natural breathing pattern when in a stressful and tense situation. All three extracts demonstrate the way in which participants were not particularly aware of the tension they felt until they had released it from the body. It is therefore important to recognise the physical impact of learning. The tension is held throughout the body, but particularly the upper body. This tension begins in the mind but emerged and weaved itself into the stitches which makes it more difficult for the beginners to see and place the next stitch (see Appendix Figure 11). To overcome this, the practitioner must be aware of their tension, and focus on the technique, starting with their tools, in the case of crochet, the hook. The hook must become

synonymous with the body (O'Connor, 2006, p.186) wherein the hook "emerges as an object of focal awareness… so that the [crochet] becomes foregrounded in the practice" (O'Connor, 2006, p.187). Overcoming these challenges are indeed possible, however, it is very unlikely that an individual will not experience the challenges that tension presents at some point during the learning process. Even experiences practitioners, such as P5 who do not need to concentrate so hard on the individual stitches experience the challenges of tension. The difference between the challenges lies in the knowledge of how to overcome the challenge.

### Accessible crafts

The Crafternoons endeavored to be accessible to most students and were prepared to make adaptations for anyone who required them. None of the participants observed spoke of or presented with a visible disability. The Crafternoons were in an open, wheelchair accessible space, in the downstairs of the Students' Union. With regards to financial accessibility, it was free for all to attend, having been supported by some funding from the SU and the NWSSDTP Collaborative Innovations Grant. It was not, therefore, the spatial or financial accessibility that limited beginners' experiences, but, from my own observations, their self-confidence. The learning process is synonymous with having to overcome challenges that the practitioner may not have faced before and as such, only some will have the confidence and will power to develop their skillset in order to practice the skill effectively. Here, it would be wise to draw upon Bourdieu's concept of corporeal knowledge. "[The body] is inclined to be able to anticipate [regularities] practically in behaviors which engage *corporeal knowledge* that provides a practical comprehension of the world" (Bourdieu, 2000, p.135 cited by O'Connor, 2005, p.200). Whilst beginners can adapt their bodily movements to correct a mistake after it has been made, they are not necessarily able to anticipate the mistake before it happens. As such, if a practitioners' *habitus* is not used to anticipating such mistakes, for we cannot know an unknown, and/or the practitioner does not process the mistakes as quickly or as efficiently as their more experienced peers.

Consequently, the practitioners tended to question themselves, demonstrating decreased self-confidence. These individuals needed more reassurance or guidance.

The confidence of each beginner differed greatly. For some, they were very determined to learn but struggled greatly. Others were able to pick up the practice of crochet quickly.

> *She [P31] says that she's "not very good at this craft stuff" but loves doing it and I reply that it really doesn't matter how good it is, so long as you are getting something positive from it and she smiles and agrees.*
>
> *Crafternoons observations, pom-pom hedgehogs, 29th November 2019*

This participant appears unconfident in her ability, openly stating she "is not very good". However, she also shows great confidence and determination by continuing with the activity. Regardless of her self-doubt and love of the activity, she still experienced feelings of joy from it. As previously mentioned in Chapter 6, some of the less confident participants simply needed more reassurance and more regular support.

> *P10 wants to learn more about learning how to make amigurumi crochet figures. They are very confident and are very forthcoming when asking for help.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

In stark contrast to P31, P10 appeared confident to ask for help and was determined to learn. She was in fact able to successfully learn crochet. It is not clear whether this was the result of her determination and confidence, but a desire to learn, ability to ask questions and/or ask for help must have had some impact on her ability to do so.

> *P6 asks Clare to look at what they've done. They [P6] seem to need more reassurance than P1 did when they were learning. P4 seems to have managed on their own, however they've unraveled a few times. They seem to have less confidence in what they are doing?*

*Crafternoons observation, crochet, 25th October 2019*

The final excerpt demonstrates how lack of confidence did have a more profound effect upon the progress of the learning process. P6 did not possess the confidence to attempt to correct their mistake, instead seeking reassurance from others whilst P4 could solve the mistakes alone, she did not have any confidence in her ability to do so which resulted in P4 unnecessarily 'frogging' her crochet on multiple occasions.

## Celebrating the learning process

Despite the frequent lack of confidence experienced by many of the crafters, there were many celebrations of success and progress. These celebrations were weekly occurrences and were a significant aspect of the learning process for many crafters, especially the beginners. So far, the embodied practices of craft considered so far have been portrayed in a negative light. However, there were a number of very positive embodied experiences of the craft practice relating to the collective recognition of achievements. At the start of each crochet Crafternoon the first 10 minutes were often spent admiring and verbally celebrating each other's progress and achievements for the week. Throughout the Crafternoons, as relationships, friendships and acquaintances were developed, the kind words of support became more and more frequent. These kind words of support varied from positive prompts to helpful guidance towards one another.

> *P5 pulls out the start of an amigurumi unicorn where they're using sparkly, multi coloured (pinks, blues) yarn. P1 is very excited about this and is smiling and asking to have a look.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

> *P5 continues to support the new arrivals [P17 and P18]. P5 has not made any progress with the unicorn yet today as they've been busy helping others*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 22nd November 2019*

*P10 and P13 are however smiling. They have both moved to sit closer together and are helping one another and looking at each other's work.*

*Crafternoons observation, crochet, 8th November 2019*

*P37 and P38 decide to make a crane next. I have started the crane now too. They are working effectively together, helping each other interpret the instructions which aren't always the clearest. They solve their problems together and have only asked for Niall's help once at the start.*

*Crafternoons observation, origami, 24th January 2020*

*P42 completes 2 coasters in the two hours - 1 larger and 1 smaller. The first is a little larger than the second but this is down to tension. She comments that "it isn't very heart-y though" ... I say, "it is!" and show her the pattern to demonstrate it looks almost identical. P42 laughs and says, "thanks for the support guys" and we laugh.*

*Crafternoons observation, crochet, 14th February 2020*

Each of these field diary excerpts all demonstrate examples of peer-to-peer support. Peers helping one another, or simply offering positive words of affirmation. This peer support was of particular value to the confidence of practitioners, especially beginners, who may need a little more reassurance. Receiving support from others is often what helps create meaning for crafters (see Wenger, 1999). It was also quite important for beginners who were transitioning into experienced crocheters as it was reinforcing the knowledge of how far they had come.

Peer support also contributed to the development of a relational space of care. Some weeks were busier than others and/or people needed 1:1 support. This was not always possible for Charlotte or Clare and therefore, it was peers that supported peers to answer more basic questions that

Charlotte or Clare did not have time to answer if they were working with someone else. An example of this is demonstrated below:

> *P31 is needing some additional help but Charlotte is helping P14 with the pattern as she doesn't understand what the pattern is saying. P1 offers to help. This is the first time P1 is properly helping another student.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 6th December 2019*

For participant 1, a complete novice who started in October, she was able to start assisting new novices after six weeks, demonstrating to herself just how far she had evolved through the learning process.

### *Physical celebrations*

When Morsbags visited, the ladies had brought along a bell. This bell would be rung by a crafter each time the completed a bag and the table would collectively cheer, clap and pause, just for that moment to recognise someone's achievement.

> *Shortly after I arrive (~1.30pm) someone finishes, and they ring a bell. Everyone smiles, cheers and claps. (B) holds up their bag and has a photograph with it – Charlotte is taking photos. Someone else finishes but I don't see who it was. They ring the bell too, just seconds after (B).*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*
>
> *Another bell rings at 2pm (F) and (H) have both finished. (E) comments "WOW! You've powered through those bags!".*
>
> *Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 1I November 2019*
>
> *SUS1 finishes soon after (E) and they ring the bell fast, 5 times! Everyone claps and cheers again.*

*Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

The bell gave the participants a clear and defined end point to the activity, but also a moment of recognition, just for them, to celebrate their achievement. Celebrations took other more physical forms such a celebratory dance or wiggle when participants completed a project or overcame an aspect of crochet that they had been struggling with.

> *[G] finished at almost 2.15pm. She asks, "Am I done?". Charlotte checks and says that she is. [G] celebrates by lifting the bag above their head, shaking it and doing a little dance. They have a large smile of their face. They look very proud of themselves. They say that the just love the pattern and they're going to use it all the time*

*Crafternoon observation, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

> *Everyone looks up at her [P14] tentacle, it's curly and everyone "ahhhs" and congratulates her. P14 is really smiling and doing a little wiggle/dance.*

*Crafternoon observation, crochet, 6th December 2019*

> *She [P3] takes another deep breath and smiles. Is the smile a sign of accomplishment? The entire 5 minutes she was hunched over and did not look away from her hands once and on completion she was sitting up straight and looking at her work from further away, smiling.*

*Crafternoon observations, crochet, 11th October 2019*

The wiggles and dances that crafters performed were surprisingly common occurrences. The crafters channeled their excitement beyond a more reserved smile, like that of participant 3 in the latter excerpt. it was important for the crafters to recognise their achievements, particularly when learning new crafting skills. It encouraged their ability to overcome difficulty whilst also demonstrating the value of overcoming their frustrations and struggles. To some extent, it helped

give positive meanings and values to the activity for those able to overcome the challenges and frustrations. Body language tells us as much of a story as the verbal language and sounds. I spoke previously about the negative body language – hunching over and frowning – however, the first quote mentions sitting up straight and the second mentions the gleeful "wiggle" when she gets it right. The participants here are literally picking themselves back up after a period of frustration and struggle. They are able to celebrate their achievements, demonstrating not just how deeply embodied crafting is, but how the confidence that arises from overcoming mistake can be both internally and externally expressed.

### *Verbal celebrations*

Finally, celebrations took the form of verbal cues and positive language from the participants and others around them.

> *After a couple of attempts to fix it, she [P1] says "Yay!" and sits up straight after hunching over to look in closely at the, now fixed, mistake.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 11th October 2019*

> *She [P47] manages it! And wiggles and smiles "yay!" she says.*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 13th March 2020*

> *P33 announces "I've done it!" She's completed her first round of treble crochet. "Yes!" says Clare, "Now do that again".*
>
> *Crafternoons observation, crochet, 17th January*

This final excerpt above also emphasizes the positive language used by not just the learner, but the teacher too. The positive reinforcement was reassuring to the participant and encouraged them to continue overcoming the challenges of the learning process. Likewise, the top two quotes demonstrate the externalised celebrations of the crafters through both verbal and physical celebrations.

*Charlotte demonstrates to P12 how to do the triple crochet. As she is demonstrating, something seems to click for P12. Her shoulders fall backwards, and she sits up straighter and says "aahh!". She begins to focus in on trying herself. She hunches back over her work and has a frown on her face.*

*Crafternoons observation, crochet, 8th November 2019*

Here, it is clear to see that being shown what to do in a 1:1 setting was particularly helpful for this participant. Deleuze once said that learners should not be told "do as I do", but "do with me" (1994, p.23). This level of support enabled a more positive embodied experience for the crafter. Participant 12 was able to relax and refocus her energy in a positive way. Many craft workshops are performed in group settings, with a set structure (including the activity, knowledge, time, and the space available), programme of events and objectives, much like the pilot study that was ran in May 2019. It has a profound effect on a participants' experience. The "aaah" and relaxing of the upper body is a clear example of how 1:1 teaching, in some circumstances is far more conducive with the learning process. Therefore, it is of great importance to recognise that workshops such as the Crafternoons should be designed in a way to support extended independent learning and should ideally not have a fixed end time. The reality of this is difficult, however in running the workshops over a couple of hours, with no obligation to arrive or leave at a specific time enables some form of compromise here. Taking place in a university setting meant that the Crafternoons could take place within a space that was not temporally bound to finish at a specific time. This may be more difficult in a public community setting where specific bookings need to be made.

Beyond the 1:1 teaching, this quote here demonstrates the focal awareness required throughout the learning process and using O'Connor's (2005, p.181) observation of craft practices taking on a lived character, we can begin to see how Charlotte was able to bring the crafters awareness to the specific movements of the hook to create the stitch, thus honing the skill of the crafter.

*[H] comments, "that was the best lunch we've had in ages". They add "I think it's ace that young people are learning this". [F] points to the machines and agrees "especially on these machines". [F] and [H] leave at 2.07pm.*

*Crafternoons observations, Morsbags (sewing), 15th November 2019*

## Concluding remarks

The space in which Crafternoons took place had a profound effect on the relative success of the Crafternoons, but also upon the experiences of each of the participants and their bodies. The more experienced crafters, and those proficient in crochet in particular, were affected more by their physical surroundings, such as lighting and comfort of the seats, than the frustration of the practice detailed in Chapter 6. The issue of the lighting were recurring themes each week and undoubtedly had an effect on the participants' ability to learn.

It was not just the lighting that affected the comfort of the crafters' practices. The bench seats did not provide sufficient support for the crafters which led to discomfort in the upper body and tensions in the neck, shoulders, and arms. Tension in the body emerged not only from the frustrations and concentration of the practice, but also the space that did not support the practitioner in its entirety. The physical space for beginners especially, likely exacerbated an already stressful situation which contributed to making an already difficult learning process even more challenging. Comfort was found extrinsically but intrinsically. Different crafters spoke of the different spaces that they preferred to practice in their homes – a stark contrast to a backless, hard wooden bench in the Students' Union. Some preferred to craft with background noises, others preferred silence. Some preferred to practice in the comfort of their bed, others preferred the structured support of a chair.

Comfort was not created by the space itself, which crafted physical discomfort, but by the materiality of the space. Some participants found the space of Crafternoons comforting to simply

be, not do. The Crafternoons succeeded in becoming a relational space of craft, community and learning.

The Crafternoons produced a space for students to visit in a specific time and place each week, a space to learn with 1:1 support, and a space to meet new and like-minded people. Crafternoons became a space in which students and staff could learn and practice skills such as crochet and sewing in order to produce clothing, toys and experiments for their friends and family. However, whilst Ingold speaks of products as the materialisation of a thought that pre-dates the final outcome (2013), this was not necessarily the case for Crafternoons. Each beginner crafted products that were chosen by Charlotte or Clare. Once they had progressed to "independent" crocheter, only one crafter (P10) attempted to crochet something from just a thought (as suggested by Ingold, 2013). This participant however never completed their 'thought' and as such they were witnessed frogging almost half of a project before beginning to complete another pattern brought along by Charlotte. This is often the case in craft, particularly textile craft. Crochet-ers, knitters and quilters, are frequently inspired by a pattern and complete their project alongside this (Kenning, 2015; Pöllannen, 2013). That is not to say that they do not alter the pattern in some way to fit the colours or quantities of materials that they have to hand, however, it is still not an 'original' idea, but an adaptation of someone else's.

The data highlights just how important the individual, or *immunitas* (*see* Esposito, 2015), is to finding value in learning a skill, particularly if it becomes part of a self-care routine. Regular Crafternoon attendees spoke of their choice to crochet throughout the week, often in the evenings as a reward for completing their work that day. Crafting for self-care is possible. I do however, stand by my argument that crafting for self-care during a psychological crisis and/or when the craft skill in question is being learned must be recognised as potentially counter intuitive. The NHS's suggestion to learn a new skill (NHS, 2020) to improve well-being fails to recognise the challenges that learners are very likely to face. These challenges, inevitable mistakes, and negative emotions

such as frustration and disappointment when things do not appear to be going ‘right’, are not conducive with well-being and rely on an individuals’ resilience to overcome such challenges.

Research conducted in group environments previously has very much focused on the value of social connectedness, *communitas (see* Esposito, 2015), and of the importance of having a space to meet with others. The data in this research does not contest this, the social was very much a contributor to the success of the Crafternoons. The focus each week was very much on each individual’s learning experience as much as it was about providing an accessible (physically, temporally, and financially) and relational space. The Crafternoons were not so much aimed at completing large projects for others. It became a relational space of learning and doing and as such, the crafts’ value often came from the relative success of the learning process for each crafter. No one explicitly claimed that they were attending the Crafternoons for their own self-care or as part of a self-care routine. However, there were indications that this was to become a part of their self-care routine.

Despite the physical effects of the space, the relational space of Crafternoons and subsequent evolvement of a therapeutic space for the regular crafters was of great significance. The Crafternoons were visible throughout the SU and were a unique space – it was bound by neither time, nor space. The fluidity of the Crafternoons supported the development of relationships, founded by mutual enjoyment and struggles of crafting practices. The community that evolved supported one another and helped to boost the self-confidence of many crafters. The Crafternoons succeeded in producing a community of practice and learning. Some of the participants were able to draw from previous experiences of craft in an attempt to manage the new situation that they had placed themselves in. They were able to use their knowledge and experience of the learning process, which for many, particularly the students, they had experience with, to adapt to the situation in which they are in (O’Connor, 2005, p.200).

As Massey stated, space and place are constructions of social relations (1994). The Crafternoons were defined by the temporal rhythms of practices of craft but importantly, they were not designed for the purpose of well-being. Price (2021, p.203) claims that she believes that a sense of well-being and relaxation can be found by all in a knitting group but with caution. Value was placed in the process of doing and through shared experiences of learning together. The community supported one anothers' progress and and challenges. Embodied celebrations, wiggles, claps, bell ringing, "ahhs" and "yay"'s became important to the development of the relational space. The recognition of celebratory ringing of a bell within the Morsbags Crafternoons gave the participants a moment to acknowledge their achievement in a unique way. The weekly updates of progress at the start of each afternoon allowed participants to share in their progress and/or ask for help in a comfortable and non-judgmental space, whilst newcomers were welcomed and celebrated too.

# Chapter 8: Conclusion

This research has explored the ways in which the development of self-care practices aligns with the well-being of practitioners within time and space. Using the medium of craft, I have evaluated the challenges of learning a new skill and begun to understand and outline the ways in which the learning process effects the practitioner. A qualitative ethnographic exploration of craft as a practice of self-care was undertaken to gain insight into the ways in which organisations can create relational spaces of care. My research, and those publications that I repurposed in the scoping review (Chapter 5) investigates how embodied practices of craft are curated in these relational spaces of care to cohere around the body. The bodies are affected by the space in which they inhabit, whilst the space of care is also affective on the body.

In this final chapter, I will summarise the research in response to the research questions. This chapter will draw together the empirical and theoretical results that have been presented; highlight any implications for policy makers; outline the limitations of the research project; and I will complete the chapter, and this thesis by presenting the opportunities for future research.

## Responding to the research questions

### How are self-care practices, specifically handcrafts, developed to support wellbeing?

Self-care practices are the tools that can be utilised to support well-being. The practice of self-care, the learning process and the desire to learn for well-being are, however, all interconnected. The Crafternoons were not a space to learn for wellbeing, nor were they a space in which participants focused exclusively on learning a craft. Learning for well-being and learning a craft are both processes that, when performed in appropriate spaces, have the potential to support each other. A practice of self-care, such as craft, can be utilised to support the well-being of the practitioner, but the practitioner does not and should not practice self-care for the sole purpose of achieving well-being. Well-being is subjective and it is a sliding scale that is open to interpretation.

To perform any activity with a specific purpose is teleological, but it is also completely possible to perform an activity in a non-teleological way. Intention and motivations to practice an activity do

not have to be linear, nor do they have to have a tangible outcome or product (Holdsworth and Hall, 2022). By not advertising the Crafternoons for well-being and/or self-care, non-teleological practice was encouraged. This also removed any potential for pressure to practice 'mindfully' or for well-being which, as I made clear in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7, is not always the case. The students in particular mentioned the anxieties they felt about their workload and the pressures imposed on them to complete assignments on time and to the expected standard. The Crafternoons were not, therefore, a space in which more pressure or standards were to be placed.

My research does align with previous research that crochet and other handcrafts can support well-being. However, it is vitally important to acknowledge the challenges that beginners may face and here should be adequate support in place for these individuals to overcome said challenges, or at the very least support the individual to process the challenges even if they couldn't overcome them. This relational approach to the Crafternoons maximised the impact through the temporal and spatial fluidity, but also the community of practice. The Crafternoons, then, were a relational space in which they could facilitate learning a skill which had the potential to incite flow and curate a therapeutic space in which to practice a therapeutic activity. Craft practices can and do incite experiences of flow which are associated with positive well-being and practices of self-care.

### How do handcrafters articulate and value different experiences of self-care practices?

The value of practicing handcrafts will naturally vary from individual to individual; however, my research has identified a number of key themes that can be identified as either intrinsic (located within the self), or extrinsic (located in the voices and actions of others) experiences and values of self-care practices by conducting a scoping review (Chapter 5). The product, or the artefact was of significance to many of the participants in both the scoping review and the ethnography. With the artefact, there is potential for the practitioner to visualise their accomplishments, to see how far they have come and how much they have learned, but importantly, to receive positive verbal affirmations from their fellow crafters, family and friends. The community of practice was of

significant value for most participants in this research. These positive compliments and affirmations were reassuring to the participants (see pages 157 and 231), with some even stating that they were grateful that their families appreciated the way in which their chosen hobby, or skill, was not a waste of time, but was of value. However, the product cannot exist without the process and whilst this making process was mentioned within many of the publications identified in the scoping review, this was limited.

The ethnography identified both the challenges and facilitators of the learning process and process of just doing, with or without purpose. The ethnography emphasises the importance of recognising the process of doing, specifically the learning process for beginners. This process of doing and of learning, often dictates the value that the practitioner experiences. Those who could not overcome the difficulties and challenges of the learning process, notably the frustration and inevitable making of mistakes (see page 191), struggled to see or experience the value of the practice of craft (specifically crochet).

This proactive, doing, approach to self-care has proved valuable for many of the participants. The discussion on procrastination demonstrates the way in which the participants made the proactive decision to do *something* rather than do *nothing*. To do nothing in this sense, I mean that the participants did not react by choosing to engage in a passive activity (such as watching television). In doing crochet, or pom-pom making, the value of the craft came from the rhythms and repetitions of movement which were deemed calming, relaxing and therapeutic to both watch and do. Active procrastination facilitated embodied practice and, in some instances, enabled participants to enter a state of flow when they managed to focus their mind and engaged body in the gentle motions of textile craft.

## What are the barriers associated with accessing self-care activities?

Space, time and cost appeared to be some of the most prominent barriers to accessing self-care activities which were identified within the literature and throughout the scoping review. I will break this down and summarise each separately.

Crafts do require space, some more than others. Woodwork, for example, requires a space large enough for the objects being created and the tools needed to build. These tools are often large in size, especially relative to most textile craft practices. Knitting and crochet require relatively small tools. The crochet hook is generally no bigger than the size of a pen so can fit into a handbag or rucksack with ease. Yarn is soft and malleable and, like the hook, can be easily transported in a small bag. However, depending on how much yarn is owned by a practitioner, more and more space is required to store it. My own personal collection has grown significantly over time, but I acknowledge the privileged position I am in to have the space to store yarn in a converted loft space. A student living in halls of residence generally does not have the same luxury.

Craft activities practiced with others will inevitably require space – this space must however be suitable for the practice in question. My observations demonstrated that despite the very accessible location of the Crafternoons, the lighting and the table setup was not always conducive for some craft practices. For an activity that does not require great precision or concentration, such as making pompoms, the location and lighting were acceptable. However, when performing an activity such as crochet, whereby it is imperative to be able to see the individual stitches the lighting and the bench seats without a back were not suitable. Furthermore, for learners who inevitably held more tension in their upper bodies, the lack of back support did raise some issues and cause back pain and cramping. The lack of natural lighting and poor overhead lighting, often coloured, made it very difficult to see some coloured yarns (for example dark colours such as brown and very bright colours such as white). Therefore, when deciding on a location for a

workshop, comfort for the participants should be carefully considered from the seating and lighting to the accessibility for all potential users.

Time was perceived as a barrier for many of the participants within the ethnography, and the scoping review. However, interestingly, despite commenting that they found it difficult to 'find' time, they were able to take up to two hours out of their 'working day' on a Friday to attend the Crafternoons. The difficulty to find time that some of the participants mentioned illustrates the challenges of assuming that time is an entity that can be used. The creation of a time and space therefore demonstrates the importance of these spaces in subtly encouraging individuals to think about caring for themselves, without putting the pressure or label on the activity as a "self-care" practice. In providing the time and space, the SU was able to give students, and staff, a form of 'permission' to switch off and engage in an activity that may bring positive benefits to their well-being.

Financial barriers of craft do exist. Some crafts can be expensive to pursue (for example ceramics). However, crafts can support economic well-being as well as emotional well-being. The Crafternoons were free for all those who attended and were financially supported by a research grant and the Students' Union. The Crafternoons were also supported by donated materials from staff, students and the local community. Furthermore, the students were given a small starter pack that contained a pattern and materials for most of the activities each week to take home and continue practicing and learning on their own until the next Crafternoon event. In making the Crafternoons free to attend, more students could join the event, and some were about to benefit from the activities. Most of the activities in the Crafternoons were not too expensive for students to continue if they found the activity enjoyable.

### What is the role of an organisation in facilitating these practices using a university as a case study?

There is an appetite for learning, but this needs to be carefully facilitated and curated because the learning process is not automatic and happens only with an investment of time. It is the role of organisations and other forms of support, such as universities, to acknowledge and facilitate the time and space of learning for self-care. I have demonstrated that it is entirely possible to create relational, supportive spaces of care for young people in a university environment. The cost of the activities was relatively low. I received £2000 funding; however, I used approximately half (£1000) of this for the Crafternoons. I also had enough materials to last through to the end of the academic year had a national lockdown not occurred. Universities in particular have the space (SUs, lecture rooms, food halls, communal spaces etc.) that could be utilised to reach out to students such as those at Keele. Most unions have activities coordinators, however there would be a requirement that they have some experience in skills such as crochet, sewing or origami, to be able to run these sessions effectively.

It is common for individuals to react to a decline in their mental health and well-being. This research, however, has attempted to approach well-being from a proactive stance. That is, I have been looking at the ways in which organisations can facilitate spaces of care to proactively encourage people to invest time for he self. By facilitating and curating spaces of care, students and staff were given permission to procrastinate, to distract themselves from everyday life and perform unintentional self-care that supported their well-being.

## Take home message

The Crafternoons were a relational space for students and staff to attend, to learn a new skill, to try something different, but most importantly, to step away from the stresses of everyday life, from their work and their studies. My observations of the Crafternoons establish that in providing an impartial, accessible space and time for students to switch off, they were able to allow themselves

time to perform self-care, whilst also constructively acknowledging that frustrations and making mistakes are an integral part of the learning process.

Craft is dynamic. This research has begun to demonstrate the multifaceted aspect of crafting – it has the potential to be all things to all people. The casual invitation to participate in the Crafternoons is an example of 'gentle geographies' (Conradson, 2010). It is an example of the way in which limiting the temporal and spatial boundaries associated with self-care and leisure practices can support young people on their path the well-being and encourage good practices of care. Though some sessions were more structured, and some participants planned their participation, the commitment to be in the same space and time each week enabled a relational space for participation with the guarantee of gentle support and encouragement. There is still potential to understand how craft is practiced and performed outside of an organisation, and in the home. This research has adopted a participatory ethnographic approach and has attempted to build upon the current ethnographic research on crafts. By approaching a group that was in its very early development stages, I was able to both witness and experience the process of learning a craft within a relational space of care in its' entirety. I feel that this has provided a unique and much greater insight into the lived experiences of craft practices, especially craft practices as practices of self-care. Many other researchers have personal knowledge and/or experience of the activities that they were partaking in and researching and as such, they were embedded differently. Furthermore, the Crafternoons were in their infancy, and as such, I was able to understand how such an organisation develops throughout time. I was able to witness the growth of the group and how important this was for the success and experience of the participants' practices.

This research project has considered the challenges of practices of well-being and, through the medium of craft, demonstrated the ways in which young people use and learn craft for their well-being. I have begun to navigate beyond the teleological narrative that to be happy, people should

do what makes them happy. Learning a new skill can be challenging and at times, it can illicit emotions of frustration and the desire to 'quit'. However, these emotions are vital to overcoming the learning process. If we are not challenged, then we cannot progress. If we are not frustrated, then we cannot appreciate the moments of achievement. We do not always have to do something that brings us complete happiness, for this is subjective and fluid, and as I have demonstrated, it is not possible.

Relational spaces of practice are a useful tool for enabling self-care practices. Organisations such as universities can use these spaces to support their students, without the added pressures of 'succeeding'.

## Implications for policy

If organisations such as universities hope to support well-being and facilitate practices of self-care, it is vital to acknowledge the importance of considering and integrating time and space. The success of the Crafternoons was largely the result of the relational space that was curated and developed over the six months of observations through to today, but also the lack of focus or attention paid to the well-being of the participants.

Self-care practices can aid well-being, however, certain activities, especially if the activity involves learning a new skill such as a craft, are not appropriate in instances of crisis. It is the role of organisations such as universities to facilitate self-care practices for students. These spaces of care should be viewed as an investment of time and an investment in the care of the self. As I have previously mentioned, the NHS suggest that the third step for well-being is to learn a new skill. Students' mental health has deteriorated over the last 5-10 years (see Office for Students, 2019; Thorley, 2017) which can be related to the challenges of learning. Whilst I do not wish to completely dismiss the NHS Five Steps to Well-being, I do encourage organisations, such as universities, to acknowledge that in the instance(s) of crisis, this is not always suitable for

everyone. Practices of self-care can be hugely rewarding, however we much first acknowledge, accept and overcome the challenges that we may be faced with during the learning process.

Following on from my critique of the suggestion that to improve well-being we must “learn something new”, the creation of relational spaces of care should be invitations to take part, not a recommendation or (social) prescription. By facilitating relational spaces of care, organisations can curate a space that is welcoming. There is not an obligation to attend more than once; there is not an obligation to continue the skill outside of the workshop or event; there is not an obligation to participate in the activity; and there is not an obligation to achieve or feel a sense of well-being, whatever that is for the individual.

## What were the limitations of the study?

Throughout this research I attempted to capture the complexity of the learning process and self-care practices. I have presented the argument that performing activities to make oneself happy is tautological and the practice of some activities, especially in the learning stages, is not always conducive with practices we commonly associate with being happy, or ‘well-being’. Whilst I have presented some new and innovative research, there were some limitations to the research.

The participatory observations took place in a single location, and this is therefore not representative of other/ all organised craft groups. The observations took place within a university. Unlike other craft-based ethnographies presented throughout this research, there was a diverse group of participants. Whilst this is positive, it was not indicative of most craft groups. Furthermore, there was no comparative element to the research. I had hoped that I could complete an ethnography within a local community craft group as planned, pre-covid-19. This therefore presents the opportunity to expand the research to reproduce the Crafternoons within a public community setting within a town or city to understand how accessible these events could and should be outside of a university to open up these activities to a more diverse participants from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately the original intention of the PhD

research was to apply the learning from the Crafternoons to spaces beyond the university, however this could not be achieved due to circumstances beyond my control.

I attempted to capture the participants' experiences and perceptions of craft practices in everyday life through the participant observation and unstructured interviews. I feel that with semi-structured interviews, time diaries and some focus groups I could have reaffirmed some of the more informal conversations I observed, but also delve deeper into understanding the emotions felt by each individual. Whilst I did manage this through the method of repurposing data within the scoping review, it would also have been interesting to follow the Crafternoon participants from start to end. Ultimately, my observations were just that – observations. They are subjective and written in my own words. I was unable to reaffirm my findings with participants that my observations were aligned with their own experiences.

I did not obtain any demographic information from the participants, other than the information that they verbally disclosed in conversation. It may have added some value to the study to understand the differences in experience according to age and gender.

## Future research

### Creating relational spaces of self-care…

#### *In the community*

Following on from the limitations of this study, investigating the relational spaces of craft available in the community (that is outside of a university/institutional space) would present as an opportunity to understand how small organisations, particularly those that are not part of, or operating within a large institution such as the university, can support members within the community. It presents the opportunity to compare the ways in which supported crafts practices could aid the wellbeing of differing communities. There is a large body of work that exists to explore the role of organised craft groups in the community, however many of these research projects do not acknowledge the challenges or the struggles that many participants face,

particularly when learning to perform the new skill. Whilst I have begun to do this, I have been limited to one location and it would be valuable to further this research into the wider community.

### *Online*

In an increasingly digital world, there is scope to understand the process of learning crafts and the value of online craft spaces. The ethnography within this research was solely based in-situ, likewise most of the publications included in the scoping review were in-situ. This raises the question of how online spaces differ and the way in which the learning process is affected when learning without 1:1 in-situ support. The body is a crucial aspect of the practice and experience of crafts especially from the teacher's perspective when demonstrating the motions and movements of materials and tools. This research has demonstrated the importance of having 1:1 support to guide the body and physical movements of the hands to perform specific stitches.

Furthermore, it may be beneficial to understand how online craft communities differ from those in-situ. Our everyday lives have been significantly disrupted in the last two years and as such, many groups, including the Crafternoons, turned to online spaces to create and facilitate spaces of community and spaces of care. How then, do people learn without the 1:1 in-situ support, and does this affect the experience and outcome of the practice? These groups are also a point of social contact for many individuals. As mentioned in the scoping review, craft guilds and groups were, for many crafters, the only in-situ contact they had with other like-minded individuals each week. Therefore, it would be valuable to understand how an online community can facilitate the care and support of the most vulnerable crafters in the face of adversity.

## Relational spaces of procrastination

There is a varying degree of research based texts on procrastination (*see Sirois and Pychyl, 2016),* and there is little in-depth research to understand why people choose to perform active self-care and leisure activities over passive self-care leisure activities and vice versa. This was something that I found particularly interesting in my findings. Chu and Choi (2005) argue that active procrastinators procrastinate because they are better under pressure, whilst passive

procrastinators are indecisive and struggle to self-regulate, however I argue this is not entirely the case. My data has shown that some people need permission to procrastinate due to feeling guilty (see page 175) that participants "should" be doing their work. What was most interesting about this, was that the participants found time to attend the Crafternoons, which again, encourages us to move away from thinking about time as something that can be used. Therefore, to better understand how people rationalise procrastination and to understand further how organisations, such as universities can facilitate this in other ways beyond craft practices.

## Gendering crafts

Throughout this thesis I have referred back to the gendering of craft practices. The scoping review demonstrated the paradox that many women were faced with when considering why they wanted to craft. They felt guilty for not spending time with family, completing housework, or for creating time for themselves through craft. This raises a number of questions. The first, being what impact does the gendering of craft have on those who may not choose to pick up a crochet hook and yarn, or some wood and a saw? Put another way, are there people missing out on performing practices that may be beneficial to their well-being, simply because of systemic stereotyping and socially constructed gender roles. Kokko (2012) has presented the ways in which school aged children are affected by this, but there is little else, especially relating to the adult population.

I did not refer to gendered craft in Chapters 6 or 7. The Crafternoons were attended by mostly young women, which is in itself an observation. However, the Crafternoons were a diverse space, relative those craft spaces found among the wider literature (see chapter 5). The SU encourages inclusivity and diversity and subsequently, the Crafternoons were attended by a diverse group of individuals. We did have participants of various age, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality[19].

[19] See appendix 2 for age and gender. This information was recorded from pronouns and information that was freely given during the Crafternoons. Specific demographics were not requested. This is explained in Chapter 4.

## Final conclusions

I have summarised the key findings of this research and will now outline to ways in which this thesis subscribes to current bodies of knowledge.

This research demonstrates that there is a need to reassess the way that craft workshops are approached, organised and structured. The scoping review highlights the importance of communities of practice and the support that they can provide. Very few of the publications, however, address the challenges that beginners face or the struggles associated with the learning process. The research involving craft groups and workshops did not detail the way in which space was important, with the exception of Smith (2019). This was, however, addressed through the ethnography.

Whilst there is an increasing body of literature citing the benefits of craft to the health and well-being of its' practitioners, detailing the processes of learning craft for well-being has thus far been neglected as an object of study throughout the field of human geography and the wider social sciences. This project has been the first to focus on the effects of learning craft as a practice of self-care and highlighting the (potential) limitations and challenges of the learning process.

Further to this, this research exhibits the way in which space has an affectual capacity on the experiences of the practitioners' journey of self-care practices. With reference to Smith's 'therapeutic taskscapes' (2019) and Andrews' 'relational space' (2018) I have demonstrated how organisations such as universities can facilitate fluid and relational spaces of care for staff and students, to encourage pro-active practices of self-care. The Crafternoons became a space to learn, to support and to be supported when practicing and/or learning a skill. As such, this research is the first to draw together these ideals to present an argument that it is not constructive to advertise activities such as crafts as well-being events, but to work hard to develop relational spaces of care that provide distraction and support from everyday life through means of practice.

Lastly, to my knowledge, this is the first human geographical piece of research to examine the effects of learning craft practices (specifically textile crafts) on the well-being of practitioners. It is the first of its kind to begin to highlight the ways in which learning processes present challenges and are not always conducive to therapeutic practices of self-care. This research has adopted a multi-disciplinary approach, drawing on multiple areas of theoretical understanding to present the argument for the learning for self-care is not a guarantee, it can be frustrating and to suggest it may be detrimental to the well-being of those seeking solace.

The data has presented an interweaving dichotomy between the role of collectivism and individualism. One the one hand, this was a research project which took place in a group setting, observing a community of practice in which people were learning a skill. By contrast, each crafters' learning process and practice was very individualised to them and by them. The speed at which people learned demonstrated the individualised nature of the learning process. For some this was difficult to witness as others appeared to be learning much quicker. It was difficult not to make comparisons to others' progress.

Whilst the learning process was an individual process, the crafters shared their progress and successes collectively and the community supported one another - crafters clapped or cheered and smiled and congratulated one another when they completed a project. But there was also a sense of collective frustration. Whilst learning alongside each other all the beginners were experiencing the frustrations and challenges of the learning process together. They were able to support one another through this by giving advice or helping a peer to solve a problem, but never-the-less, crafters experienced these challenges collectively.

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# Appendix 1

## Definitions and pictorial glossary

Crochet stitches are ultimately a variation on two stitches. In the UK, these are known as double crochet and treble crochet. These are sometimes referred to as single crochet and double crochet respectively in American patterns.

### Crochet hook

A crochet hook is the main tool (other than the yarn) required to practice crochet. They are generally similar lengths, however the widths vary. The smallest hooks are ~2mm wide and the bigger hooks can be around 35mm wide. Crochet hooks are mostly straight, with the hook at the end. The end is not sharp, but it can be slightly pointed to help push through stitches. Hooks are made from different materials, such as metal, plastic and bamboo. Hooks may have a rubber end to improve ergonomics and reduce cramping in the hands.

*Appendix figure 1: A variety of crochet hooks*

### Yarn

Yarn is the name given to the textile that is used to crochet with. It is sometimes known as ‘wool’. This material can take different forms from sheep or alpaca wool, to acrylic/synthetically made textiles or cotton. Like the crochet hooks, yarn can vary is size and the thickness is measured in mm. Balls of yarn are sold by the gram.


*Appendix figure 2: A collection of yarn of various colours and different materials. This image shows acrylic and cotton yarn*

## Stitch marker

A stitch marker is a tool used in crochet to hold a stitch in place if it is being packed away. It can also be used to mark specific points and numbers of stitches in a pattern. For example, if a blanket is 175 stitches wide, the crocheter may place a marker every 25 stitches so they do not lose count and/or only have to count from the previous stitch rather than 100+ stitches.

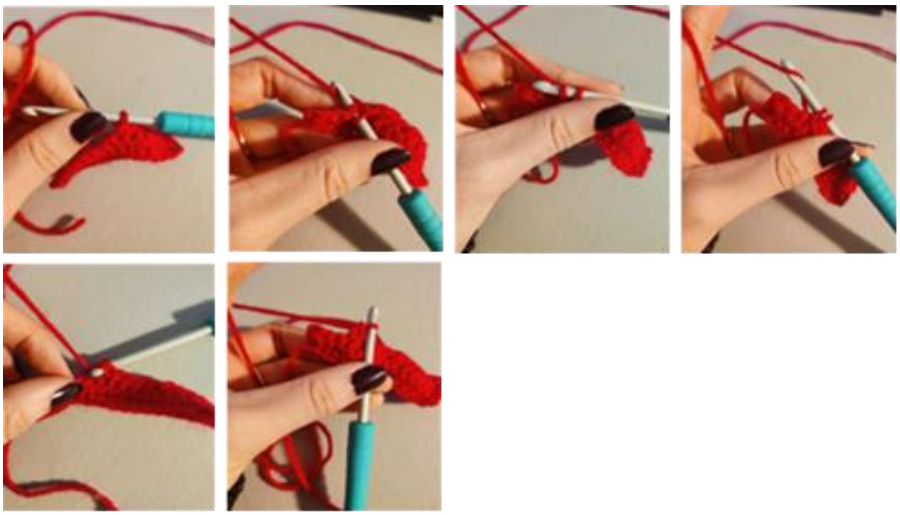
*Appendix figure 3: pictorial demonstration of how to make a slip knot*

## Slip knot

A ‘slip knot’ is the first step in most crochet projects. There are different ways of creating a slip knot, however the rhythms and movements used for the slip knot arguably set the tone for the whole project.

## Double crochet

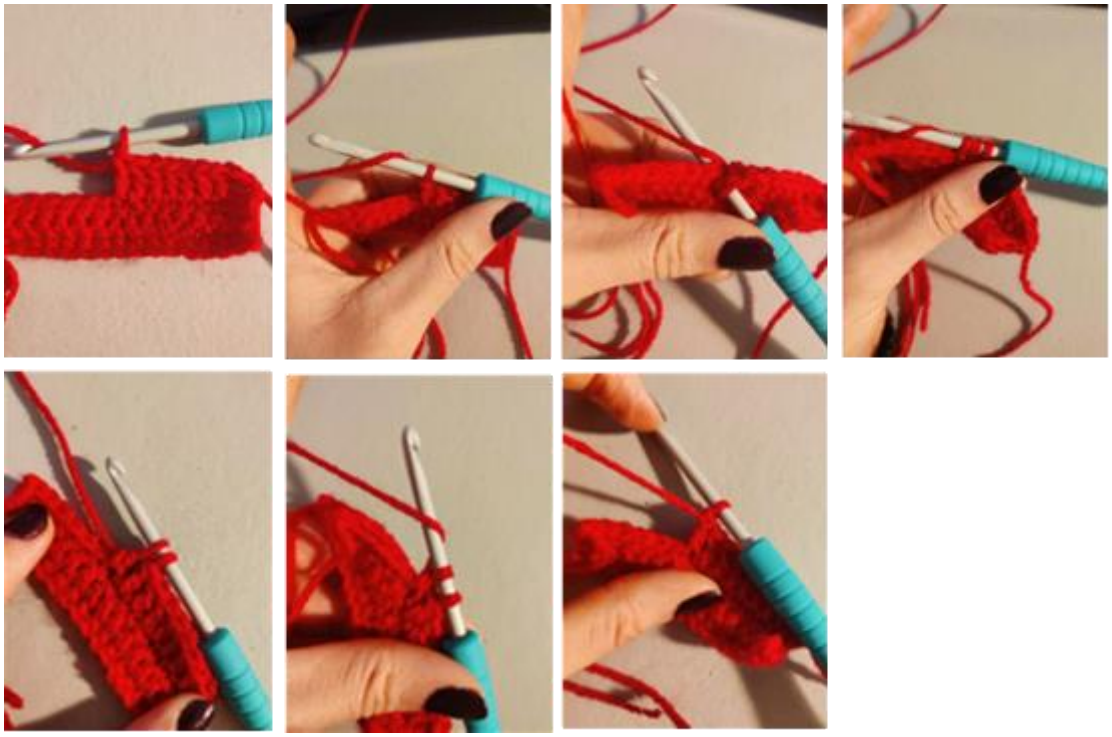
‘Double crochet’ (dc) is one of the simplest stitches. This stitch involves placing the hook into a stitch, yarn over, and pull through. In American patterns dc is referred to as ‘single crochet’ (sc). This can be confusing if crocheters do not know the difference between the two pattern ‘languages’.



*Appendix Figure 4: Pictorial diagram demonstrating how to crochet a double crochet stitch*

## Treble crochet

Also known as ‘double crochet’ (dc) in American patterns, not to be confused with double crochet in British patterns, ‘treble crochet’ (tc) is a slightly more complicated stitch than dc (British) whereby, the hook is placed into a stitch, yarn over, pulled through, yarn over, pulled through for a second time. This is stitch is longer in appearance than a dc. In American patterns tc is known as double crochet (dc). Again, if the crocheter does not know the difference between the two pattern ‘languages’, mistakes can be made easily.



*Appendix figure 5: Pictorial diagram showing how to produce a treble stitch*

## Slip stitch

A ‘slip stitch’ refers to the stitch used to complete a row or section of colour. This involves creating a dc stitch, but pulling the yarn all the way through, cutting it, and pulling it through tight to end the row or section.

*Appendix figure 6: Pictorial diagram showing how to make a slip stitch*

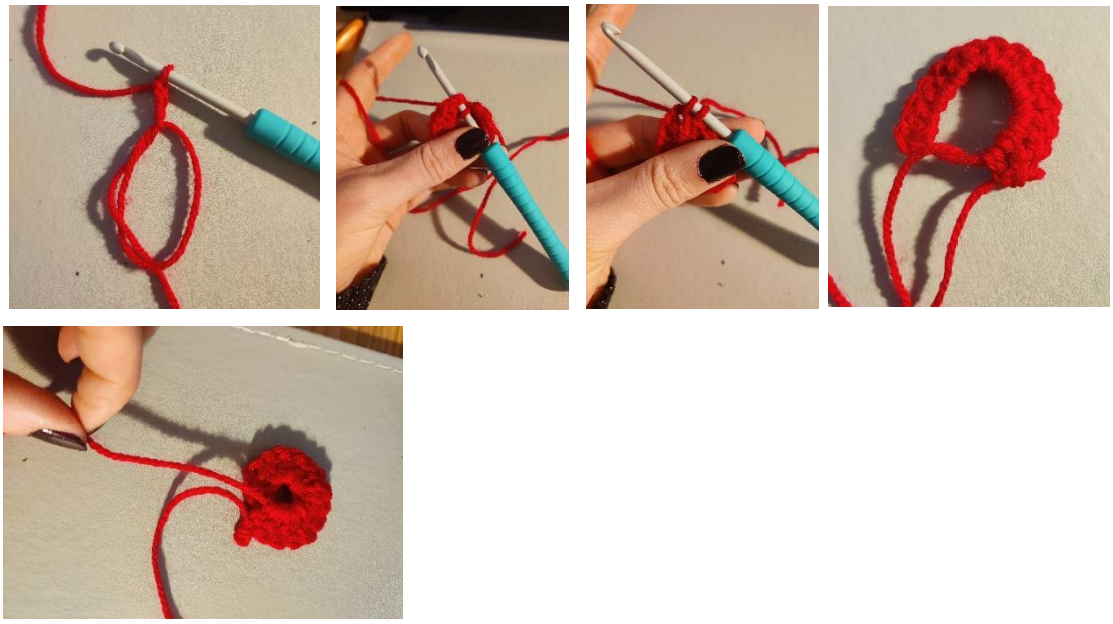
## Chain stitch

A ‘chain stitch’ is a basic stitch, often used as the base for the start of a new pattern for a blanket or item of clothing. It can also be used as a connecting stitch between rows. This is made using the yarn over hook and pull through method.

*Appendix figure 7: A chain stitch*

## Magic circle

The ‘magic circle’ is the name given to the small circle created in which stitches are weaved into when making a granny square, or a circular pattern. This involves crocheting a small number of chain stitches (exact number of stitches depends on the pattern) and joined with a slipstitch to close the opening like a drawstring bag.



*Appendix figure 8: Pictorial diagram showing how to make a magic circle*

## Granny square

A granny square was used frequently throughout the Crafternoons as a starting point for beginners to learn. Granny squares require just a single stitch – treble crochet. Granny suares also required the practitioner to learn to count their stitches which is very important when following a pattern. If the beginners could pick up this particular stitch, they were very likely to learn the other stitches much quicker.

*Appendix figure 98: A whole granny square made by Clare and used to show participants what they could make*

*Appendix figure 106: A granny square that was used during the Crafternoons for beginners to practice their tc stitches*

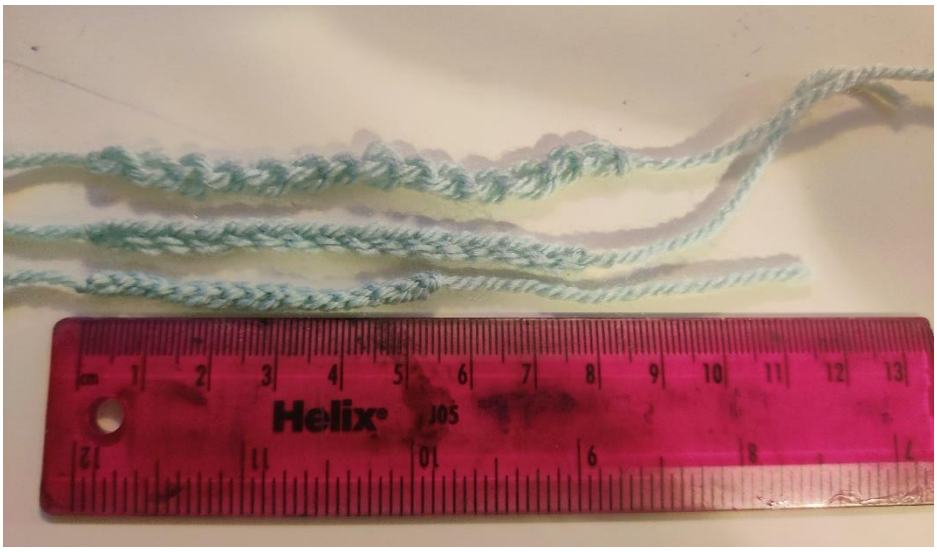
## Amigurumi

'Amigurumi' is a particular method of crochet that is used to make stuffed toys or products. Amigurumi predominantly involves a single stitch – dc. Starting with a magic circle, a number of stitches are placed into the circle, increasing and decreasing by a set amount each round. Once the shape of the animal, toy or product is made, the crocheter will stuff the insides with some form of stuffing material. This fills out the product to help define the shape.

## Tension

Tension is a common discussion amongst crocheter. Tension refers to how tight the stitches have been made. Too tight or too loose and the shape and/or design of the product is altered. When the tension is too tight (see the bottom strand of chain stitch in the figure below), it becomes very difficult to insert the hook into the previous row of stitches. Too loose and the product will sag (see

the top strand of chain stitch the figure below). Uneven tension can lead to a misshapen final product. Each crochet pattern will include a gauge, as previously mentioned, which acts as a guide for the practitioner to see how long a row of stitches should be (often measured in inches).




*Appendix figure 11: differences in tension demonstrated using the same yarn. The top strand of chain stitches is very lose tension, the bottom strand of chain stitches is a very tight tension and the middle strand of chain stitches are a regular tension*

# Appendix 2

## Crafter participation log

| Participant code | Events attended | Age | Gender*[20] |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 18-30 | F |
| 2 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 3 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 4 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 5 | 4 | 18-30 | F |
| 6 | 1 | 18-30 | TF |
| 7 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 8 | 3 | 18-30 | F |
| 9 | 3 | 18-30 | M |
| 9.1 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 9.2 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 9.3 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 9.4 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 9.5 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 10 | 4 | 18-30 | F |
| 11 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 12 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 13 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 14 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 15 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 16 | 3 | 31+ | F |
| 17 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 18 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 19 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 20 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 21 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 22 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 23 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 24 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 25 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 26 | 2 | 18-30 | M |
| 27 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 28 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 29 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 30 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 31 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 32 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 33 | 4 | 18-30 | F |
| 34 | 4 | 18-30 | F |
| 35 | 1 | 18-30 | F |

[20] Gender was recorded using pronouns mentioned by participants during the Crafternoons

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 36 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 37 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 38 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 39 | 1 | 18-30 | M |
| 40 | 4 | 18-30 | F |
| 41 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 42 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 43 | 2 | 18-30 | F |
| 44 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 45 | 1 | 18-30 | M |
| 46 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 47 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 48 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 49 | 1 | 18-30 | N/B |
| 50 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| 51 | 1 | 18-30 | F |
| A | Morsbags | 18-30 | M |
| B | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| C | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| D | Morsbags | 31+ | F |
| E | Morsbags | 18-30 | GN |
| F | Morsbags | 31+ | F |
| G | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| H | Morsbags | 31+ | F |
| I | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| J | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| K | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| L | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| M | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| N | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| O | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| P | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| Q | Morsbags | 18-30 | F |
| SUS1 | Morsbags | 31+ | M |
| SUS2 | Morsbags | 31+ | F |

*Gender code

F = Female

M = Male

GN = Gender neutral

N/B = non-binary

# Appendix 3

## Scoping review papers

| Paper | Activity | Location | No. Participants | Age | M/F | Semi-structured interview | Narrative | Ethnographic Observation | Review Paper | Reflective diaries | Questionnaire |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Brooks *et al (2019)*** | Knitting | Canada | 20 | 27-84 | 18F/ 2M | X | | X | | | |
| **Burt and Atkinson (2012)** | Quilting | Glasgow (UK) | 29 | NA | F | X | | | | | |
| **Corkhill *et al* (2014)** | Knitting | Global, online | 3545 | 21+ | 98.8 % F | | X | | | | X |
| **Dickie (2011)** | Quilting | N. Carolina (USA) | 18 | 35-86 | F | X | | X | X | | |
| **Genoe and Leichty (2017)** | Ceramics/pottery | Cen. Canada | 15 | 20-79 | F | X | | | | X | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Kenning (2015)** | Lace making | Sydney (Aus) | 16 | 45-90 | F | X | | X | | | |
| **Maidment and Macfarlane (2011)** | Textile craft | Victoria (Aus) | 9 | 54-86 | F | X | | | | | |
| **Mayne (2016)** | Knitting and crochet | Global, Facebook | ~400 | 35+ | NA | | | X | | | |
| **Nevay *et al* (2019)** | Misc. | Dundee, Scotland, UK | 15; 12; 13 | 17-60; 66+; 29-65 | F; F; F | | | X | | | X |
| **Pearce (2017)** | Misc. craft | UK | 102 | 33-83 | 58M/ 79F | N= 89 | N= 13 | | | | |
| **Pöllannen (2013)** | Textiles | Finland | 92 | 16-84 | F | | X | | | | |
| **Pöllannen (2015a)** | Textiles | Finland | 15 | 27-57 | F | | X | | | | |
| **Pöllannen (2015b)** | Textiles | Finland | 59 | 19-84 | F | | X | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pöllannen (2020)** | Textiles | Finland | 65 | 31-88 | F | | X | | | | |
| **Smith (2019)** | Woodwork | Edinburgh, Scotland, UK | N=10 | NA | M/F | X | | X | | | |
| **Trandiki and Reyolds (2011)** | Misc | Crete, Greece | 12 | 65+ | F | X | X | X | | | |