

Well-being and craft

Craft and self-care practices are synonymous with well-being. There is a broad consensus that performing craft workshops (eg. Smith, 2019) or practicing craft individually (eg. Pöllannen, 2013) will inevitably improve well-being. The evidence for this is not disputed, however this research questions the approach to the evidence and asks the important questions of how self-care practices can impact well-being.

The process of self-care practices is extremely important. The NHS (2019) suggest that there are 5 steps to well-being, one of which is to “learn new skills”. However, the learning process can be difficult and frustrating which can result in participants becoming agitated. This is explored in more detail through participant observations over 6 months.

Methodology

Participant observation of 17 craft workshops (Crafternoons at Keele SU) between October 2018 and March 2020

- ⇒ Crochet (11), Origami (1), pom-poms (1), Dorset buttons (2), Sewing (2)
- ⇒ ~100 University students and staff at Keele inc. pilot study and un-observed sessions
- ⇒ 8 Male*, 1 Trans-Female*, 2 Gender Neutral*
- ⇒ 5 Staff

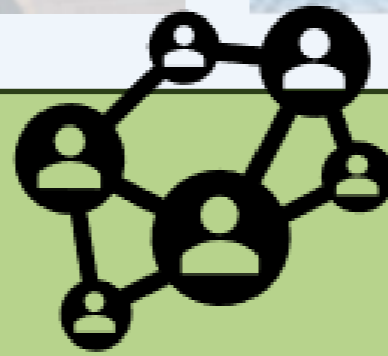
3 unstructured interview

Scoping Review—“An investigation into how craft enhance well-being”

**These figures include participants who openly*

Results

- **17 participants attended 2 or more sessions**
- **At least 2 were able to assist teaching their peers** within 6-10 weeks of learning the skill themselves!
- **Drop-in style workshops in open spaces are most suitable for crafting workshops**, especially when learning is involved, ensuring all participants receive the person-centred support they need to succeed
- The **learning process is complex and involves stress frustration, irritation**, and knowing when to stop. It was not unusual for participants to give up because “it [wasn’t] for me” or it was too stressful.
- Students chose to “procrastinate from work” by **learning a new, somewhat difficult skill, in replacement of learning new, often difficult academic content**
- **Crafternoons became a very important time and space** that gave students permission to switch off and invest time in self-care away from studies and everyday life.



Research Questions

1. How do self-care practices impact well-being?
2. How are self-care practices incorporated into everyday life?
3. How do young people articulate their experiences of self-care?
4. What are the barriers associated with accessing self-care activities? Barriers could include time, cost and opportunities.



Conclusions

This project has engaged with a diverse group of participants during their learning process. The workshops were not advertised for ‘well-being’ and the research has demonstrated that it is important to recognise that doing so can be mis-leading. Well-being is highly subjective and whilst it may be an eventual outcome for some, it is not guaranteed. In order to understand the learning process it is vital to experience it first hand. I have demonstrated and experienced, how frustration is a crucial aspect of learning and not something that is often forgotten. Rather than assuming that learning is therapeutic, we must dissect how this learning takes place. The time-space configuration of learning opportunities should be considered when producing these events. Heavily structured events are not suitable for this type of workshop and the fluidity of the Crafternoons became one of its biggest assets.