



City Research Online

City, University of London Institutional Repository

Citation: Collingham, H., Wallace, J., Brewster, J., Whittingham, R., Prost, S., Marshall, J., Kindleysides, M. & Benson, W. (2024). Dovetails: personhood, citizenship, and craft between children and older adults. *Design for Health*, 8(1), pp. 113-138. doi: 10.1080/24735132.2024.2333661

This is the published version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version.

Permanent repository link: <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/34967/>

Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2024.2333661>

Copyright: City Research Online aims to make research outputs of City, University of London available to a wider audience. Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. URLs from City Research Online may be freely distributed and linked to.

Reuse: Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

City Research Online:

<http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/>

publications@city.ac.uk



Dovetails: personhood, citizenship, and craft between children and older adults

Henry Collingham, Jayne Wallace, Jill Brewster, Rickard Whittingham, Sebastian Prost, Justin Marshall, Michelle Kindleysides & Will Benson

To cite this article: Henry Collingham, Jayne Wallace, Jill Brewster, Rickard Whittingham, Sebastian Prost, Justin Marshall, Michelle Kindleysides & Will Benson (2024) Dovetails: personhood, citizenship, and craft between children and older adults, Design for Health, 8:1, 113-138, DOI: [10.1080/24735132.2024.2333661](https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2024.2333661)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2024.2333661>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 02 Apr 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 624



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 1 View citing articles [↗](#)

Dovetails: personhood, citizenship, and craft between children and older adults

Henry Collingham^a , Jayne Wallace^a , Jill Brewster^b , Rickard Whittingham^a , Sebastian Prost^a , Justin Marshall^a , Michelle Kindleysides^c and Will Benson^d

^aSchool of Design, Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK; ^bLJB Design, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK; ^cHealth & Wellbeing, Beamish Museum, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK; ^dKids Kabin, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

ABSTRACT

This paper presents Dovetails, an intergenerational co-creative participatory design project, and explored ways of working with recipients of care through Craft methods leveraging reciprocity to support wellbeing and Citizenship. Working alongside older adults from Beamish Museum's wellbeing community and a children's charity, researchers supported the two participating groups to design and make ambitious, novel artefacts for one another using woodwork. Each group learned new skills and sought to improve the lives of the other group's members through making. We came to understand the artefacts created as material embodiments of care and we present transferable insight for future study design to encourage reciprocity through Craft. We contribute new nuanced understandings of Personhood and Citizenship in this context. Participants reported pride in their achievements, confounding expectations, raising ambitions, and reframing their understanding of their own wellbeing, for example in the context of dementia diagnosis. Dovetails bore meaningful benefits for individual participants and the groups themselves, beyond the timescale of our engagement, as they formed ongoing allegiances. We discuss framing design research through a 'Craft Lens', as a multi-faceted way to explore creative engagements, which enriched our understanding of making, and gift-giving to support Personhood through Social Citizenship.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 22 December 2023
Accepted 18 March 2024

KEYWORDS

Participatory design;
dementia; intergenerational;
citizenship; craft;
personhood; reciprocity;
care

CONTACT Henry Collingham  henry.w.collingham@northumbria.ac.uk  School of Design, Northumbria University, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK

© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Introduction

Dovetails was a co-creative participatory project lasting three-months between two communities in the North East of England. The participating groups were:

1. Beamish Museum's Men's Group, a support group for men over sixty experiencing challenges with their mental health.
2. Kids Kabin Cowgate, a community creativity charity providing free creative activities in disadvantaged communities to children.

People with dementia, a diagnosis of which the majority of our adult participants were living with, face complex social challenges (Kitwood et al. 2019), stigma (Lion et al. 2020), and the risk of becoming lost in our communities (Rowe, Feinglass, and Wiss 2004). Likewise, children from underprivileged backgrounds in UK face barriers to social connection and civic voice (See and Kokotsaki 2016). Access to the arts has been highlighted as beneficial to both groups and is seen as essential for children's development (Nutbrown 2013). Increased access to creative arts is linked to the potential mitigation of broader systemic barriers faced by underprivileged children (Butcher and Clarke 2021). For people with dementia, the arts can foster reciprocity of experience between experts and older people with dementia (Zeilig, Killick, and Fox 2014). Sharing creative processes with people with dementia is found to disrupt established dynamics of power between actors in the context of care (Killick and Craig 2012). Intergenerational arts practice, involving younger and older participants, has been shown to have a range of benefits; promoting social sustainability, building, and strengthening intergenerational bonds, and supporting psychological wellbeing, particularly across long-term engagements (Canning, Gaetz, and Blakeborough 2020; Perez et al. 2020). These benefits are evident across diverse participant groups, including older adults with dementia, their circles of care, young people, and professional artists (Jenkins, Farrer, and Aujla 2021). Adults living with cognitive impairments such as dementia have restricted access to the arts, which are increasingly shown to be beneficial interventions for tackling the social changes experienced by people with dementia, such as social exclusion, lack of autonomy, and stigma (Zeilig, Killick, and Fox 2014). Our motivation going into Dovetails was to explore ways designing and making *for others* could reveal insights related to Personhood, Citizenship, and Craft.

We draw together these concepts of Citizenship and Personhood, unpacking some of the acts of creativity and care which emerged during the project, and the ways in which acts of making scaffolded connection between members and groups. We have come to understand, new relational ways of being, and the roles Craft practice can perform in the context of care.

While our research design was grounded in the experience and practice of expert researchers and partners, threads of theoretical understanding, principally Personhood (Kitwood et al. 2019), formed a jumping-off point which allowed us to be led, as much as possible, by our participants, rather than theoretical stricture. We have come to understand links between Citizenship and Personhood (Swinton 2021) in the context of community-based participatory design (Manzini 2015). We lay the foundation for this theoretical understanding and reflect further on the reciprocal trust and good-faith inherent in this project's design and the resulting richness that came about, through material practice, and lived-experience.

We will start by introducing the participating groups in more detail, giving a brief overview of how the project ran, and what was made. We then foreground certain relational aspects of the project by presenting some of our participants' experiences as short vignettes. These stories are chosen to highlight elements which we found revealing through analysis in concert with theory, relating to the links between Personhood and Citizenship, and the ways in which Craft practice may help make these learnings transferrable for the wider Design for Health community.

We discuss how these relational elements of work within the structure of the project developed, what their foundations were, how new relationships were formed, and what we believe is important to the legacy of a project like Dovetails.

Background

The first group of participants are the Men's Group, based at Beamish Museum in County Durham, within their Health and Wellbeing hub. It is a weekly group for older men living with mental health challenges. While the men have been referred through Social Prescribers or Social Prescribing services and Adult Mental Health Teams to the group because of these challenges (e.g. dementia, depression, loneliness) and the majority of participating men did have a diagnosis resulting in dementia, these weren't often discussed by the group. Rather, the conversation centred-around shared experiences of daily life, sometimes, but not necessarily resulting from diagnosis. This is reflective of the supportive environment of the group and its ethos – that people are brought together through shared experience rather than just a shared diagnosis. Six members of the group participated in Dovetails, supported by volunteers and staff from the Health and Wellbeing team.

The second group of participants are from Kids Kabin, a creativity charity for children living in disadvantaged communities in the UK. The group who we collaborated with are based in Cowgate in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Kids Kabin have been delivering workshops for over 30 years in the community.

We were able to work with a group of around 20 children, with numbers fluctuating in each workshop, supported throughout by Kids Kabin staff and volunteers.

To introduce the positionality of the research team briefly, we had a mixture of levels of experience with people with dementia, for some this was our first time working in this context, and others are experts. We are all designers specialized in different things. The role of the first author was to function as a bridge between these research priorities, building on well-established relationships between both the Men's Group our third author, and Kids Kabin our fourth author. We all took a making-first approach with the engagements described in this paper, led by materials, processes, and people.

Personhood, citizenship, and craft

In dementia studies, Personhood refers to the completeness of self, upheld through one's social world (Kitwood et al. 2019), and is central to contemporary care provision, referred to as Person-Centred Care (PCC) (NICE 2018). Designers have worked previously to support Personhood distinctly (Wallace et al. 2013), through participation and individualization (Branco, Quental, and Ribeiro 2017), and ethical scrutiny of the power of aesthetics in dementia (Fleetwood-Smith, Tischler, and Robson 2022). Creative Ageing (Thwaite 2017) is a growing movement which seeks to uphold Personhood through access to the arts for people with dementia, part of a growing body of evidence for the positive efficacy and impact of creative approaches in the context of care (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing 2017) often employed in intergenerational practice, including co-design (Perez et al. 2020).

Citizenship is increasingly understood as a component of Personhood (Brannelly 2011; Collingham et al. 2022; Sund and Fjetland 2023) whereby civic inclusion can sit counter to the social isolation and stigma surrounding a dementia diagnosis. Encompassing individual's rights, relationships, and ability to have their voices heard in society, active Citizenship has the potential for people living with dementia to challenge ways in which they may be undermined in a social context (Hughes et al. 2021; Swinton 2021). In our framing of Citizenship, we understand the two participating groups working to improve each other's lives through creative practice, as political '*with a small p*', which is relational, reciprocal, and social. Swinton (2021) refers to Kitwood's definition of Personhood as partly socially constructed, 'A standing or status that is bestowed upon one human being by others, in the context of relationship and social being' (Kitwood et al. 2019, 7). This positioning of Personhood focusses on the value of each individual as they contribute to

society and vice versa. This relational way of understanding Personhood has been otherwise articulated as *dividuality* (Davis 2020) wherein the value of a person's self is inextricably linked to the societal structures around them. Davies argues, a view of the individual as an autonomous, bounded self, limits our understanding of Personhood. In contrast, the concept of 'dividual personhood' sees individuals as composite beings formed through their relationships and interactions with others.

Swinton (2021) argues that whilst relational models of Personhood which emphasize the social and communal aspects of identity are important, they need to be complemented by a focus on Citizenship, as an understanding of Personhood based solely on interpersonal relationships may leave those with dementia at risk given societal stigma, while an individual's civic life may be separate to their personal relationships, strengthening their perception of self. Swinton proposes 'Social Citizenship', combining people's Personhood with their political rights. As such, Citizenship offers a – small p – politically situated lens on Personhood, to highlight the shared humanity between all people, regardless of diagnosis. We came to understand participants' individual creativity in the context of Citizenship as we presented the opportunity for the Men's Group and Kids Kabin to undertake caring acts for one another through Craft. The framing of Social Citizenship as a component part of Personhood (Bartlett and O'Connor 2007) helped us to understand the psycho-social relationships at play in dynamic often denied to people with dementia.

Design development

Dovetails was conceived of within the Centre for Digital Citizens project and centred around acts of making to seek understanding if they could benefit groups of very different ages. Following ethical approval from our host university (Reference 33256) we ran workshops over three months, at the end of 2021. Consent was given by each of our participants, co-signed by a family member when appropriate due to age or cognitive impairment informed by PCC frameworks (Dewing 2007; Slaughter et al. 2007), including approval to include their names in research dissemination.

Over the course of the workshops, each group developed, designed, prototyped, and ultimately built two woodwork artefacts for the other group, in an act of reciprocal gift giving. The workshops were participatory, as each group decided, under our guidance as expert designers, what they would ultimately make for each other. The two groups didn't meet in person until the end of the project when all participants met at Beamish to exchange the things they had made. Both group's sessions ran on the same day each week, but at different times, the practical limitations of transport, compounded by Covid-19 restrictions made co-working unfeasible. As such, we decided to use short

videos as an asynchronous medium for the groups to communicate with each other, as well as to document their work through the project.

Our weekly workshops foregrounded designing and building, with researchers facilitating, documenting, and then planning the next week's workshop for each group. The busy schedule of workshops allowed participants to establish a dialogue with satisfying immediacy, scaffolded by the short weekly video of each groups' progress.

Firstly, each group was asked to share things about themselves with the other group, highlighting any challenges to their activities, and potential for designed solutions to be created. These initial messages, and subsequent weekly updates, were recorded with each group and edited by the research team, before being presented to the other group the following week. In this way, the groups learned about the other's lives as they started to generate proposals for designs to help support one another.

Video was thus one of the design elements within the project in among physical materials, prototypes, and tools. The wider range of design materials established the project's foundation of reciprocity and dialogue, without the groups having to meet each other in person at first, mitigating the social pressure often felt by people with dementia (Mok and Müller 2013). Instead, groups got to know each other slowly, on their own terms, by which we mean the use of video as a workshop material was distinct to each group. At Kids Kabin, the video was in the hands of children themselves, only referred to when they needed, and quite sporadically. At Beamish, watching the video was a group activity, though videos were also used as memory-aides to refer back to a previous week's activity to help scaffold workshop activities in the moment. This exchange allowed a documented conversation to take root, while allowing each session to be facilitated in an appropriate manner for each community, addressing individual needs and each group's own pace.

Typically, Men's Group members would arrive at Beamish and sit around the fire, with a pot of tea, to watch that week's update video from Cowgate quietly before discussing, agreeing a plan, and starting work. We would work for an hour or so, around the table or in the shed, before reconvening by the fire for a second cup of tea, and to plan the following session.

In Cowgate, we would keep each week's Beamish video on a laptop at hand, and only bring it out when relevant to the activity of each child in case they had a question or needed an update on Beamish. At Kids Kabin, Dovetails was only one of many activities available to kids in each session, so they may have only worked on their Dovetails project for a few minutes, before rushing off to do something else, (art, games, cooking, or building a fire). The frenetic pace of Kids Kabin sessions was a joy for the Men's Group to see through weekly videos and ignited the project's sense of urgency and momentum. Videos afforded the creation of asynchronous dialogue, gentle

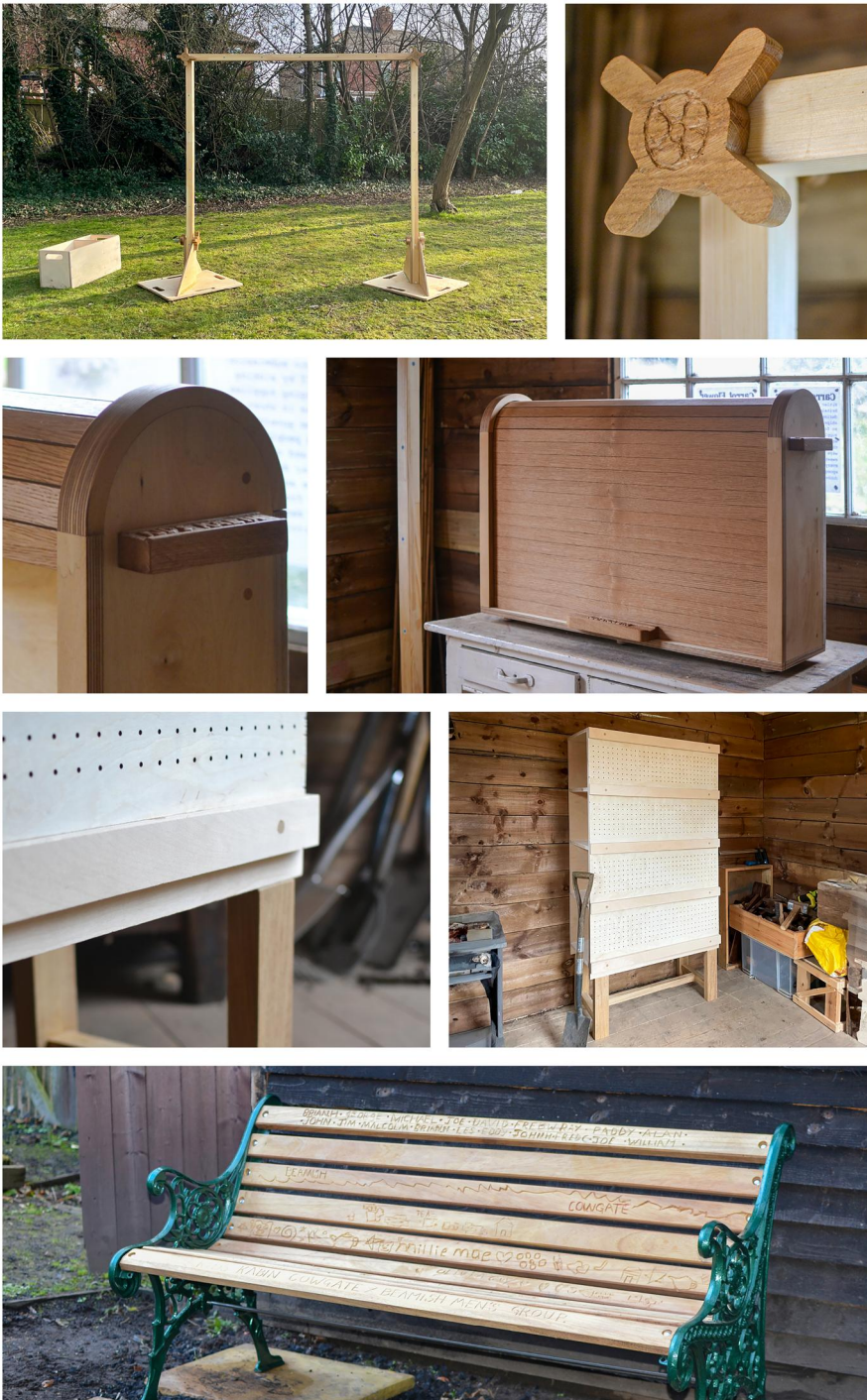


Figure 1. Dovetails projects, by row: (1) FlexiGames, (2) Tambour door cabinet, (3) Our lucky Shelves, (4) Garden bench. Images credit: Henry collingham.

introductions, and familiarity over time and at a distance whilst each group worked on their projects (Figure 1) for one another.

Besides the co-creation of woodwork and acts of reciprocal gift-giving, Dovetails was also an exploration in design for social innovation (Murray, Caulier-Grice, and Mulgan 2010). The role of design was also to create a supportive environment in which diverse, previously disconnected, communities could meet to build new relationships and enhance their capacity to act (Ehn, Nilsson, and Topgaard 2014; Manzini 2015). We were curious to see whether the design of the collaborative process may serve as a base for ongoing collaboration beyond the lifespan of Dovetails, or as a model for others to be replicated and adapted.

Four woodworking projects

FlexiGames

The morning group at Beamish (Alan, William, and Brian), were inspired by the improvised games they saw Kids Kabin playing in their first video message. They decided to build a flexible system for indoor and outdoor play. The idea of a system of large wooden pieces emerged, affording flexibility for pieces to be connected into all sorts of shapes, inspiring all sorts of games. William named the project 'FlexiGames'. The modular nature of FlexiGames dictated the build of repeatable parts, requiring accuracy and consistency. Careful attention was paid to the aesthetic and mechanical quality of parts and materials. Having created designs for over-sized oak handles for the giant bolts which held FlexiGames together, Brian chose to engrave them each with forget-me-nots, the symbol of Dementia Friends.

Tambour door cabinet

The afternoon group at Beamish (Joe, Fred, and Les), chose to build a cabinet to store Kids Kabin's tools. Les suggested the addition of a rolling door, 'like a garage'. The design-phase for this piece centred principally around the creation of a scale model in card including its own tiny tambour door, which was greeted with delight by the kids in Cowgate. The model-making process allowed for a mixture of communication styles from the Men's Group to each contribute to its design, either through verbal comments, non-verbal gestural negotiations on size or scale of pieces, or physical manipulation of pieces and parts, problem solving with our hands as we worked. Following model making, the group made the final cabinet from plywood and oak. The afternoon group decided to hand-carve handles for the cabinet with the names of each participating group, and the year of its creation.

Joe, a retired schoolteacher, suggested the addition of a blackboard onto the back of the cabinet which afforded the Men's Group a hidden surface,



Figure 2. Kids kabin’s graffitied workbench (above) and hidden graffiti from the men’s group on the Tambour door cabinet, which was hidden by the addition of a blackboard on its back (below). Images credit: Henry collingham.

behind the blackboard, where they decided to add graffiti to the piece, to match the graffiti all over Kids Kabin’s existing furniture (Figure 2).

Our lucky shelves

The oldest member of Kids Kabin, Lucky, decided to design a storage solution for the men’s messy shed, to store their materials, and display their tools accessibly. Like the afternoon group, Lucky started work on a sketch model straight away. Refined card models, progressing to a full-scale mock-up in scrap wood, were sent to the men for critique and comment, making

sure the final piece would be a useful and beautiful addition to the shed. Lucky worked diligently to create a beautiful wooden cabinet of shelves with a pegboard for the Men's Group to store their tools and materials. Seeing Lucky's careful commitment in video-updates each week, the Men's Group became increasingly impressed with Lucky's work, over time we saw Lucky galvanized as a character within the Men's Group itself, as they asked more probing questions about his family, school, and aspirations. Before the groups met at Beamish at the end of the project the men decided to name the shelves in Lucky's honour, 'Our Lucky Shelves'. They arranged to have a brass plaque engraved, to be unveiled for Lucky as a surprise during our end-of-project celebration.

Garden bench

To encourage engagement of their youngest members Will, Kids Kabin's Chief Officer, suggested a group project made from a collection of parts that individual kids could work on, and take home between sessions, which would eventually be joined together into a collaborative final piece. The Men's Group's need for a garden bench proved the perfect opportunity, and team of 10 members of Kids Kabin (7–14 years) each worked on individual bench slats to decorate them with hand-carvings (Figure 1). As a demonstration and induction to using carving chisels we created the top slat of the bench collaboratively. The Men's Group suggested a roll call of all the group's members, past and present. Laid-out by the Men's Group, these names served as a perfect introduction to the techniques needed to carve wood, while also inspiring a gentle dialogue between the groups, with multiple kids asking the research team about the man whose name they were carving, as they worked. The Men's Group suggested imagery from around their cottage the kids could use as inspiration, but also encouraged the kids to decorate their slats with their own ideas, messages they wanted to send, or their favourite things.

Relational components: four vignettes

We now present four short vignettes as narrative research tools (Bruce et al. 2016), each focussed on a different participant. Vignettes are increasingly common within Social Sciences, Bruce et al. (2016), as narrative research methods develop towards 'legitimizing peoples' stories as important sources of empirical knowledge (Hyvärinen 2010). These methods are more established within Design Research literature, 'It is uniquely the role of the design ethnographer to express the relevant context of one culture to another, to narrate the acts' (Salvador, Bell, and Anderson 1999, 5). These glimpses of the relational components of our fieldwork are intended to paint a person-centred picture and illustrate some of the ways in which participants underwent personal

challenges and development, beyond the central focus on physical-material Craft. We have chosen to foreground details which illustrate the ways in which participants took creative and personal risks, and the resulting challenges to their self-image following Dovetails. Participants found small ways to look after one another, and guide each other as they worked, dependent on their individual abilities and experience. Cumulatively, these creative acts of care created a bustling working atmosphere and galvanized the participating groups together, even before they met in person.

Ava

Having only been a member of Kids Kabin for a few weeks prior to Dovetails, Ava found it hard to speak to others at first, both children and grown-ups. This made it difficult for her to engage in activities with anyone, let alone share her creative thoughts and ideas. She kept the hood of her puffer jacket up throughout sessions and would often answer questions in a whisper. However, as she immersed herself in woodworking over the weeks, Ava began to break out of her shell, become more confident, and find her voice.

In the first few weeks, Ava chose not to get involved with Dovetails, until we brought the offer of the collaborative bench project to the group in Week 7. Ava not only expressed an interest in working on the bench for the Men's Group, but she also chose to build her own wooden mallet before she started carving. Having never even used a saw before, Ava worked slowly, and her confidence grew as she completed her mallet over two sessions. Ava's mallet became an object of pride, and the Men's Group were suitably impressed. Ava's Mum reported that she slept with it under her pillow the night she completed it. When it came time to design her slat of the bench, Ava worked diligently to create illustrations of her favourite things, including a basketball which was a previously hidden passion. Ava also chose to engrave the words 'be happy and smile,', and 'never give up'.

Woodwork allowed Ava to hold meaningful conversations with adults, bridging the gap between her home life and Kids Kabin and it was a milestone in her journey towards greater confidence.

Though silent at first, through the project Ava revealed her hidden passion for basketball. Once it had been delivered to them from the Men's Group, she asked to make a basketball hoop for FlexiGames, and then went on to teach the other kids basketball using the hoop she made from wood (Figure 3).

On the day the two groups met at Beamish to exchange their gifts, Ava was too shy to be included in any of the group photos. However, a few weeks after Dovetails. Ava asked her parents to take her back to Beamish, where they found their way into the garden (which is not open to the public) so that her parents could take a photo of her with the bench.



Figure 3. Sequentially from top row: Ava making her mallet, explaining her ‘be happy and smile, and never give up’ designs, carving, family photos at beamish showing her work, building her basketball hoop for FlexiGames. Images credit: Henry collingham and ava’s stepdad.

Ava's story is an example of the trust exchange that appeared during the project. She learned to trust both herself and her abilities, and others learned to trust her too. This exchange helped Ava push herself out of her comfort zone, as she became more willing to take risks and try new things.

Lucky

Aged 14 at the start of the project, Dovetails was to be Lucky's last project as a member of Kids Kabin, having been attending the group since the age of 7. Lucky's eagerness was clear from the beginning. He was the only one-person team across the project, and he invested a terrific amount of effort in every session. Lucky wanted to deliver an object he could be proud of, and he relished the opportunity to earn new skills in joinery and woodworking. Lucky chose a simple mechanical problem to solve, which was to create storage in the men's group's messy shed.

Lucky's dedication to his Craft was infectious, and he raised the bar for all the other groups in terms of ambition, progress, and what constituted good work.

He was interested in digital technical drawings and was fascinated by the product design process. He was keen to do *what the professionals did* and not just the *kid* way of doing things. Lucky's hunger for learning served to level the playing field between adults and children. Researchers involved him meaningfully in design conversations, which helped him see the technical things they did behind the scenes.

The men's group open-heartedly engaged with Lucky's iterative prototypes, which led to a material conversation back and forth, their growing relationship scaffolded by practice. Lucky's care for the Men's Group, through his dedication to practice, making the best possible project he could wasn't only clear to us, but to the members of the Men's Group too. We saw this reflected when they met in person as Lucky took the time to introduce himself to each member of the Men's Group, shaking their hands and shrugging off their compliments about his beautiful work (Figure 4).

William

William repeatedly expressed uncertainty about maintaining his membership in the Men's Group, literally keeping his coat on during some sessions. He would joke that we'd not see him the next week and made several comments that his involvement was denying someone else access to the service, despite his social prescription. Preceding the project, he saw his involvement in the group as strictly limited to the six weekly sessions he had been told to attend via social prescribing. During the first few weeks of the project



Figure 4. Sequentially from top row: Lucky describing and prototyping his idea, building a rough 1:1 model, designing the legs, building the final piece, CAD drawings, finishing work, meeting the Men's Group at beamish, the finished piece, and the name plate made in lucky's honour reading: 'our lucky Shelves' images credit: Henry collingham & beamish museum.

however, William became increasingly comfortable with the idea of attending the group as a member in the long-term.

Dovetails was initially structured as 10 distinct weeks, due to take place beyond William's original six-weeks. This structure allowed William to further relax into the group for a discreet period, without having to see his membership as indefinite. The collaboration with a university also seemed to legitimise the work the men were doing for William, beyond an activity to improve their mental health, into something of material use to the members of Kids Kabin. William reported that there was some *helpfulness* to what he was doing. He was generating valuable insight for the researchers, while using his skills to help the members of Kids Kabin.

William became increasingly comfortable through the project and started showing more and more care towards his fellow members. He often looked after Brian, whose dementia would cause him to struggle at times. William would pat Brian on the back as they worked, encouraging him with friendly comments, 'I can tell you've done this before!' This caring role was, in turn, therapeutic. Looking after Brian helped William see himself in a capable, supporting, and helpful light.

Towards the end of the project, William progressively undertook more work at home, in between sessions. Firstly, he designed and fabricated a metal prototype for the folding mechanism that was eventually simplified into FlexiGames final design. He turned some of the oak handles for the project's giant nuts and bolts on his lathe. In the final week, having seen the design of Lucky's shelves taking shape, he created a metal tool for shaping custom pegs to fit into Lucky's pegboard, which he spent 10 minutes talking Lucky through in the shed on the day of the Beamish meetup at the end of the project (Figure 5).

As Dovetails reached its end, William was also the participant who was most concerned with the idea of material reciprocity. He asked how many children were coming to meet the group, because he wanted to buy each of them gifts. Watching the update videos from Cowgate, William made comments about Kids Kabin's work, 'They've done far more than we've done.' Seeing Kids Kabin's work inspired William to add scope to the FlexiGames project, trying to equal his perception of their labour.

Fred

In the Men's Group's afternoon sessions, Fred was also initially hesitant to participate, but not due to shyness. Fred was more than happy to buoy the group along with a song, a joke, and sometimes even a dance. Fred professed his '*hatred*' of woodworking, and a reluctance to take part in any woodworking projects consistently over the first few weeks. He was, however, happy to turn his hand to anything outside his perception of



Figure 5. Sequentially, from top row: William working on early prototypes, helping Brian, designing handles, pieces brought in from home (lathe-turned handles and peg-maker), seeing FlexiGames used by the kids, and showing lucky how to use the peg-maker he'd designed and built. Images credit: Henry Collingham & Beamish Museum.

woodworking, sweeping, making tea, drawing, painting, and carrying tools for the other members. During group sessions, he would often tell the story of his relationship with his father who was a cabinetmaker. Due to Fred's dementia, his story would change a little each time.

In early weeks, Fred would recount that his father flatly refused to let him try woodwork, because Fred was so useless at it, instead encouraging Fred to join the military. The group was careful not to pressure Fred into taking part, allowing him to opt-in to tasks if he felt comfortable. This



Figure 6. Sequentially, from top row: Fred observing sessions, singing with Joe, holding wood for Les, wafting away dust, sanding, carving, finishing, and assembling the Tambour cabinet. Images credit: Henry Collingham.

gentle approach allowed Fred to increase his involvement in the project incrementally, week by week. Over time, he gradually became involved, holding down pieces of wood in week 6, and clearing away dust and doing some sanding in week 8, encouraged by the other members. We began to hear Fred's story about his dad change. During the middle of Dovetails, Fred would tell us how his father would interrupt Fred doing woodwork, instead encouraging him to raise his aspirations and get a better job than he had done. By the end of the project, Fred took part in



Figure 7. The groups meeting for the first time at beamish image credit: Jill brewster.

woodwork just as much as the other members, carving his own wooden handle for the cabinet, and finally helping assemble the finished piece. By this point, Fred would tell us how he and his father used to do similar woodwork projects to the cabinet the afternoon group had built, and that his father would be blown-away if he could see what Fred had made now (Figure 6).

Discussion & conclusion

As we hope these vignettes reveal, through *Dovetails*, we not only saw ways in which a project can enable relational components to thrive, building ongoing relationships between our participant groups, but also foster stronger personal self-image. Here, we discuss some of the ways in which *Dovetails* was successful, and how these may transfer into other projects in the context of Design for Health.

Artefacts as material embodiments of care

As participants exchanged design materials alongside the weekly videos, we saw their confidence grow, without the pressure of meeting a new group of people straight away. This had the effect of a shift in the focus away from the traditional pursuit of Craft as a technical skill, and towards Craft as good work to help improve the lives of other people, which became the project's main focus by its conclusion. In most cases, we were able to leverage Craft practice to increase participants' confidence. However, Fred's story explains a lot about the approach to inclusivity behind *Dovetails*, by making space for him to participate in his own way, in his own time, with his engagement in making evolving as the project progressed. In this way the design materials, and artefacts of Craft, helped softly broker a relationship, and lay common ground between the two groups before they met for the first time.

It is in this context, of Citizenship and Personhood, that we came to see Craft, the acts of making and gifting which participants undertook during *Dovetails*, as not only a way into their individual creativity through practice,

but as an act of care itself, establishing and strengthening meaningful relationships between participants with and through Crafted artefacts. Bartlett and O'Connor (2007) advocate creative practice as a way that academics can meaningfully involve people with dementia in research. Beyond this inclusion, we found the notion of Craft itself becoming a valuable analytical lens through which we could come to understand participant's experiences. This approach has added depth to our understanding of a Craftsperson doing good work (Sennett 2008, 48), whereby good work can embody good intent, alongside physical and material practice. While we took an inductive approach, and the material design that emerged was led by participants themselves, which we have come to *understand* as a reflection of Personhood, this material practice also offers insight into designing for Personhood itself, a full methodological analysis of which is beyond the scope of this paper, but is being codified into actionable design methods such as Branco et al.'s Materializing Personhood (Branco, Quental, and Ribeiro 2020).

Craft practice allowed participants to develop their own self-image by presenting manageable tasks, which could be built upon each week through subsequent successes. In Fred's case, we saw how these small creative acts culminated to literally shift the way he described himself to others, through the story about his father.

While we feel that this project offers a transferrable model other researchers could adopt, this would require a distinct structure to be as easy to follow as possible for fellow researchers. We acknowledge that this embedded, longitudinal approach to research calls for a lot on the researchers' part but advocate for ambition here, in the scope and reach of future work. Working with two groups in this way, in proximity to one another, asynchronously, and over a long period of time, allowed participants to approach the acts of making and relationship-building which took place at their own pace. We supported participants to take creative risks, which resulted in skills-development and resultant artefacts which represented the designs of participants, rather than the research team.

A craft lens: reciprocity and the dynamics of care

Craft practice formed the foundation of our workshops in Dovetails. Bringing a theoretical lens to our analysis helped us unpack some of what occurred and derive transferable insight for the context of Design and Health. Participants added layers of depth and meaning through practice, as their ambition, skill, and Craft evolved. Lucky's was a narrative about someone eager to learn and engage in a Craft activity in a traditional sense, to the best of their ability. Ava and Fred show the ways participants used practice

to build relationships and change their self-perception over time. This polyphonic approach to Craft, as a way of exploring the world, informs our understanding of a Craft Lens.

We knew from our previous relationships with both groups independently that making can support a plethora of wellbeing attributes, but we were less sure how we could bring groups that had a shared focus on making, but who were otherwise very distinct from one another, together to explore the potential within intergenerational, reciprocal modes of making at distance. Leveraging these existing relationships helped us build on prevailing trust in both groups, as we introduced them to one another through this new work.

Further to this, we saw in Dovetails meaningful ways design researchers can fill the role of expert to various degrees, as designers and makers. Our presence legitimized the work undertaken in the eyes of some participants, such as Lucky and William, illustrating the potential for social good and purpose to the work. This, in turn, encouraged ambition in the projects themselves, which we then came to see as an expression of care between participants as they developed.

We were able to build our developing relationship with both the Men's Group and Kids Kabin organically, over time and lay a strong foundation for ambitious design research with a focus on creative trust and risk-taking. Furthermore, the first author was able to conduct 3-4 months volunteering with each group during the initial phases of study design, to better get to know prospective participants, their circles of care, and to inform the ethics and study design itself to reflect the participants' own ways of working. As the project unfolded, we started to understand participants' creative practice as an expression of Citizenship, but this was led principally by participants themselves working to improve each other's lives, rather than an explicit intention from the offset. This is where we also identify the main areas for improvement in the project. We call for future work to take these principles of reciprocity further, seeking opportunities to involve participant groups at earlier stages of study design in hopes of greater ownership, accounting for issues seen in Dovetails such as the disengagement of young participants until the introduction of the bench-making project. We also call for further long-term collaborations with community groups beyond the scope of typical academic project funding, through ongoing community research in line with models like the living lab (Ehn, Nilsson, and Topgaard 2014). The momentum built through Dovetails and helped develop an environment of openness, care, and beneficence, where people gained a lot through the making and giving of gifts reciprocally. The mutual exchange of value mirrored mutual learning, relating directly to the principles of participation in participatory design (Simonsen and Robertson 2013), whereby participants both contributed valuable insight into their collective experience, and also

learned technical skills with and from the research team. This came about through researchers and participating community groups feeling comfortable enough with each other's ways of working to trust an inductive, participant-led approach, and simply working to best support each participant in what they wanted to achieve. The notions of Citizenship, reciprocity, and citizen-alliance which emerged, followed this opportunity.

Understandings of citizenship for personhood

We came to understand participants working to establish reciprocity as an act of Citizenship, itself a core component of Personhood. However, it should be clarified that this is a perspective that unfolded over time and became clear through analysis, rather than being reported by participants themselves. These terms, Citizenship and Personhood, were part of a reflective lens and a guide for us as researchers, but they were never part of the language of workshops. With participants, we talked about giving value and helping etc. this language formed constituent parts of citizenship, but not using that distinct terminology. It started with reciprocity, and the term citizenship increasingly emerged both through the work and the analysis through the prevalence of these constituent parts e.g. care, helping, interest, work, labour, contribution, giving etc. William's experience revealed how acts of care being given, rather than received, was of the utmost importance to some participants. This interpretation of Craft practice as a caring act, and an act of Citizenship, helps us better frame our understanding of the roles Craft can play in upholding Personhood. This understanding of the interplay between Craft, Citizenship, and Personhood is a novel, and hopefully valuable contribution for the Design for Health community going forward.

We have come to see a shift in our role as designers over the course of Dovetails. While initially each group worked under our guidance and facilitation, as their familiarity and confidence with making processes and each other grew, they increasingly took ownership over the design process. After the end of the project, and independent of the research team, Dovetails' creative Citizenship action has continued by both participating groups into other works of Citizenship beyond Cowgate and Beamish. Both groups decided to create pieces of furniture for the garden of a local youth hostel in the summer following Dovetails. Some members of our research team were invited to join them for another celebration as they gifted their projects to this new third-party community (Figure 8). We understand this process as the creation of a 'living lab' in the sense of Manzini (2015) and Ehn, Nilsson, and Topgaard (2014). The mode of collaboration, as trialled through Dovetails, provided a model for an independent design development process outside the university doing citizen-led work. Through this continuous work, new long-term relationships have been



Figure 8. The men's group and Kids kabin meeting up to celebrate giving newly built furniture to a third charity, a youth hostel in seahouses, the summer following dovetails. Images credit: Henry collingham.

formed and new open-ended social innovations are co-created, still based on practice of making as an act of care.

Ethical considerations made throughout the research process, informed by PCC frameworks (Dewing 2007; Slaughter et al. 2007), ensured that the participants were respected, and their voices were heard, and this dialogue extended to the fieldwork, the artefacts created, and beyond. The discourse between people and materials reinforces the roles making can play to uphold acts of care, giving opportunities for reflection and escape while opening the door for emotional reflection through the ease of shared practice.

Through this approach we found ways Personhood can play out in a way that isn't commonly reported and saw in a new light the ways community-centred research design can foster Social Citizenship (Brannelly 2011) in complex contexts. We encourage others to undertake creative projects in this spirit and feel that there is opportunity for future work which involves intergenerational communities in similar future projects. We see the inclusion of Citizenship as a key element of understanding Personhood as key to equal success in future work and champion the potential of Craft as a facilitating force to enable relational and care bonds to grow between people. We leave the final words to Les, a man of few words, who was the driving force behind the tambour door cabinet design and novice woodworker at the beginning of the project, he leaned forward during a tea-break in the penultimate week of Dovetails and offered the group the following, bringing the research team to tears:

I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's six months ago. The doctor tells you something like that, and you think everything's going to end. But I met people like you, and got to work on this, and it's been the best thing I've ever done.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank all our participants, including their families and circles of care, who have participated in this study. Special thanks also to the staff and volunteers of who made this work possible, John Altoft, Paddy Clough, Ian Bean & Simon Harrison at Beamish, and Colin Ridley, Jude Billate, Tyler Reese, Yurery Marin & Stephanie Beckman at Kids Kabin. Thank you also to Johnny Hayes, Senior Technician, for all his support.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This research was supported by the Centre for Digital Citizens, with UKRI funding through EPSRC Project EP/T022582/1

Notes on contributors

Henry Collingham is a Product Designer and Innovation Fellow, based in CoCreate design research studio in Northumbria University's School of Design. Principally working alongside people with dementia, his work focuses on democratizing design, the aesthetics of care, and design participation. He works with a diverse range of participants in the contexts of care, health and wellbeing, and citizenship.

Jayne Wallace is Professor of Craft, Digital Creativity and Wellbeing at Northumbria University and leads the CoCreate research studio. She works across Design, Human Computer Interaction and Health fields on research predominantly related to ageing, dementia, and continuing bonds in bereavement. Central here are creative, participatory

methods. She co-founded the Research Through Design conference (RTD) in 2013 and co-founded the Journal of Jewellery Research (JJR) in 2018.

Jill Brewster is a designer, maker, and researcher with a background in working on collaborative projects with communities and partner organizations, such as the NHS, healthcare providers, local authorities, community groups, culture, and heritage organizations. Her research interests are on the impact of practice-led research with a focus on participatory design and social practices.

Rickard Whittingham works as an Assistant Professor at Northumbria University. He has 25 years of teaching experience in various contexts from higher education through to community-based projects. Whilst teaching on the BA (hons) 3D Design programme he co-ordinates both the Designers in Residence scheme and the making-led research project Tools for Everyday Life at Northumbria University.

Sebastian Prost works as an Innovation Fellow at the Centre for Digital Citizens at Northumbria University's School of Design. His work explores the role of design-led participatory innovation and digital technology in responding to systemic issues, such as climate change, poverty, and discrimination. He is committed to work with marginalized communities in equitable research partnerships for social justice, sustainability, and democracy.

Dr Justin Marshall is Professor of Craft and Digital Making based in the Design School at Northumbria University. For over twenty years he has been investigating the integration of digital design and production technologies into craft practices. More broadly he is interested in how craft, as ethos and practice, can have value in multidisciplinary research projects that bring together diverse teams to investigate areas beyond the normal scope of craft practitioners.

Michelle Kindleysides is Head of Health & Wellbeing at Beamish Museum, a large Open-Air Museum in the North East of England. Since 2013 she has been developing a new and unique programme of health and wellbeing activities at the museum, working in partnership with, and learning from, local NHS Adult Mental Health Teams, Occupational Therapists and Social Prescribing Link workers. Michelle has become a well-known advocate for the benefits of combining arts and health practice, specializing in the use of museums and heritage; regularly presenting at national and international conferences and workshops, contributing case studies to publications and welcoming peers from other cultural venues across the globe to share her knowledge and experience.

Will Benson is the Chief Officer of Kids Kabin, a charity based in the North East of England. Kids Kabin works with young people and their communities, enabling learning and promoting well-being through creative, practical, problem-solving workshops. Will works closely with partner organizations, including community organizations, schools, and Universities, co-delivering projects and empowering low-income communities to contribute to research.

ORCID

Henry Collingham  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4911-4845>

Jayne Wallace  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2532-3047>

Jill Brewster  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0511-6745>

Rickard Whittingham  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3069-6729>

Sebastian Prost  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8114-9162>
 Justin Marshall  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4304-1163>

References

- All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing. 2017. *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing (Short Report)*. Inquiry.
- Bartlett, R., and D. O'Connor. 2007. "From Personhood to Citizenship: Broadening the Lens for Dementia Practice and Research." *Journal of Aging Studies* 21 (2): 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2006.09.002>.
- Branco, R. M., J. Quental, and Ó. Ribeiro. 2017. "Personalised Participation: An Approach to Involve People with Dementia and Their Families in a Participatory Design Project." *CoDesign* 13 (2): 127–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15710882.2017.1310903>.
- Branco, R. M., J. Quental, and Ó. Ribeiro. 2020. *Materializing Personhood: Design-Led Perspectives*, 111–129. Cham: Springer.
- Brannelly, T. 2011. "Sustaining Citizenship: People with Dementia and the Phenomenon of Social Death." *Nursing Ethics* 18 (5): 662–671. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733011408049>.
- Bruce, A., R. Beuthin, L. Sheilds, A. Molzahn, and K. Schick-Makaroff. 2016. "Narrative Research Evolving: Evolving through Narrative Research." *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 15 (1): 160940691665929. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406916659292>.
- Butcher, J., and A. Clarke. 2021. "Widening HE Participation in the Arts: Impacts of an Access Module on Learner Preparedness." *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* 20 (4): 403–425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14740222211004884>.
- Canning, S. E., M. Gaetz, and D. Blakeborough. 2020. "It Takes Time: Building Relationships and Understanding through an Intergenerational Ballet Programme." *Dementia* 19 (2): 270–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301218772895>.
- Collingham, H., J. Wallace, J. Brewster, R. Whittingham, S. Prost, J. Marshall, W. Benson, and M. Kindleysides. 2022. "Co-Creating a Virtuous Cycle: Fostering Citizenship-Alliances through Making and Gifting." In *Participatory Design Conference 2022: Volume 2 (PDC 2022 Vol. 2)*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: ACM.
- Davis, A. E. 2020. *The End of Individualism and the Economy: Emerging Paradigms of Connection and Community*, Routledge.
- Dewing, J. 2007. "Participatory Research: A Method for Process Consent with Persons Who Have Dementia." *Dementia* 6 (1): 11–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301207075625>.
- Ehn, P., E. M. Nilsson, and R. Topgaard. 2014. *Making Futures: Marginal Notes on Innovation, Design, and Democracy* (p. 392). The MIT Press.
- Fleetwood-Smith, R., V. Tischler, and D. Robson. 2022. "Aesthetics and Dementia: Exploring the Role of Everyday Aesthetics in Dementia Care Settings." *Design for Health* 6 (1): 91–113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24735132.2022.2074207>.
- Hughes, J. C., J. Baseman, C. Hearne, M. L. S. Lie, D. Smith, and S. Woods. 2021. "Art, Authenticity and Citizenship for People Living with Dementia in a Care Home." *Ageing and Society* 42 (12): 2784–2804. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X21000271>.
- Hyvärinen, M. 2010. "Revisiting the Narrative Turns." *Life Writing* 7 (1): 69–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14484520903342957>.
- Jenkins, L. K., R. Farrer, and I. J. Aujla. 2021. "Understanding the Impact of an Intergenerational Arts and Health Project: A Study into the Psychological Well-Being of Participants, Carers and Artists." *Public Health* 194: 121–126. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2021.02.029>.

- Killick, J., and C. Craig. 2012. *Creativity and Communication in Persons with Dementia*. 1st ed. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Kitwood, T., D. Brooker, C. Bryden, R. Cheston, J. Dewing, R. Elvish, R. Guss, et al. 2019. *Dementia Reconsidered, Revisited*. London: Open University Press.
- Lion, K. M., D. Szcześniak, K. Bulińska, S. B. Evans, S. C. Evans, F. L. Saibene, A. d'Arma, et al. 2020. "Do People with Dementia and Mild Cognitive Impairments Experience Stigma? A Cross-Cultural Investigation between Italy, Poland and the UK." *Aging & Mental Health* 24 (6): 947–955. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2019.1577799>.
- Manzini, E. 2015. *Design, When Everybody Designs: An Introduction to Design for Social Innovation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Mok, Z., and N. Müller. 2013. "Staging Casual Conversations for People with Dementia." *Dementia* 13 (6): 834–853. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1471301213488609>.
- Murray, R., J. Caulier-Grice, and G. Mulgan. 2010. *The Open Book of Social Innovation*. Madrid, Spain: NESTA.
- NICE. 2018. "Dementia: Assessment, Management and Support for People Living with Dementia and Their Carers." NICE Guideline [NG97] Published date: June 20, 2018 [online]. <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng97>
- Nutbrown, C. 2013. "Conceptualising Arts-Based Learning in the Early Years." *Research Papers in Education* 28 (2): 239–263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2011.580365>.
- Perez, M. E., S. T. Jones, S. P. Lee, and M. Worsley. 2020. "Intergenerational Making with Young Children." ACM International. Conference Proceeding Series, New York, NY, 68–73. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3386201.3386225>.
- Rowe, M. A., N. G. Feinglass, and M. E. Wiss. 2004. "Persons with Dementia Who Become Lost in the Community: A Case Study, Current Research, and Recommendations." *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* 79 (11): 1417–1422. <https://doi.org/10.4065/79.11.1417>.
- Salvador, T., G. Bell, and K. Anderson. 1999. "Design Ethnography." *Design Management Journal (Former Series)* 10 (4): 35–41. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1948-7169.1999.tb00274.x>.
- See, B. H., and D. Kokotsaki. 2016. "Impact of Arts Education on Children's Learning and Wider Outcomes." *Review of Education* 4 (3): 234–262. <https://doi.org/10.1002/rev3.3070>.
- Sennett, R. 2008. *The Craftsman*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Simonsen, J., and T. Robertson, eds. 2013. *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Slaughter, S., D. Cole, E. Jennings, and M. A. Reimer. 2007. "Consent and Assent to Participate in Research from People with Dementia." *Nursing Ethics* 14 (1): 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0969733007071355>.
- Sund, M., and K. J. Fjetland. 2023. "Activistic Citizenship in Nursing Homes: Co-Ownership in the Mundane." *Dementia (London)* 22 (3): 594–609.
- Swinton, J. 2021. "Re-Imagining Personhood: Dementia, Culture and Citizenship." *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging* 33 (2): 172–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15528030.2020.1845278>.
- Thwaite, A. 2017. *Growing the Creative Ageing Movement: International Lessons for the UK*. London, UK: The Baring Foundation.
- Wallace, J., P. C. Wright, J. McCarthy, D. P. Green, J. Thomas, and P. Olivier. 2013. "A Design-Led Inquiry into Personhood in Dementia." Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems – CHI '13, Paris, France, 2617. <https://doi.org/10.1145/2468356.2479560>.
- Zeilig, H., J. Killick, and C. Fox. 2014. "The Participative Arts for People Living with a Dementia: A Critical Review." *International Journal of Ageing and Later Life* 9 (1): 7–34. <https://doi.org/10.3384/ijal.1652-8670.14238>.